

BEII METAL INDUSTRY IN GHATAL IN PRE- INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Prof. Tapan Hazra, Associate Professor
Gourav Guin Memorial College
Chandrakona Road, Paschim Medinipur

Abstract

India is the cradle for metal handicrafts. Nile Valley Civilization may be traced back to the birth of metals arts in India. Indian metal dates back 5,000 years, as shown by the finding of a bronze statue just at ancient site of Mohenjo-Daro. Many emperors ruled the craft, and it saw many highs and lows. Since then, the Gupta Period has indeed been largely viewed as India's greatest artistic epoch. The Vijayanagar dynasty's royal patronage in the 9th century led to the highest growth of the art inside the Deccan plateau (Government of India, 2006). During the era of a Malla dynasty of old mediaeval India, the art of bell but instead brass metal craft thrived in Bankura. In aside from working with precious metals, medieval artisans also utilised their skill and ingenuity to make everyday objects from brass, iron, and other metals. The items were very common as a result of the king's assistance, and over time the breadth and diversity of the crafts increased. There is a long tradition of quality and distinctive skill in metal crafts. Bankura's handloom as well as handicraft industries have a rich history of artistic expression. It's renowned for its terracotta temples, palm fabrics, conch shell carving, and the fine craftsmanship of bell but instead brass metal engraving. As much as this handicraft product has a ready market, there are still certain unresolved issues that need to be addressed as soon as possible. It is the goal of this study to determine the nutrition, socioeconomic situation, as well as potential health risks of Bankura's bell but instead brass metal workers.

Keywords: Metal, Ghatal, Raw materials, Silaboti, Rupnarayan, Dwarakeswar

Introduction

In the colonial period, the bell metal Industry was a very popular industry in Ghatal. Essentially agriculture based and flood affected sub division Ghatal took prominent place in undivided Bengal in the field of manufacturing cottage industry, especially the bell-metal industry. Bell metal industry here was highly organised and such highly organised industry would not be found in any other parts of Midnapore, even in Bengal in colonial times. (Dhal, 2012) It had also its artistic beauty and inventive variety. The demand of the bell metal industry in Ghatal was very high in Bengal and also outside in Bengal. It was heard that various utensils for the use of Viceroy, Lieutenant and other dignified officers in the colonial government were taken from Ghatal. It was also told that the members of the Royal families of England were impressed watching the artistic beauty of bell metal wine pot of Ghatal. Lady Curzon sent her servant to purchase the well artistic wine pot from Ramjibanpur. (Sahu, 2011)

Reason for the growth of the bell metal industry in Ghatal: - In this perspective it is necessary to know the background for the rise of bell metal industry in Ghatal. There were lots of reasons for the growth of this industry.

- (1) Some geographical factors were partly responsible for the growth of this industry. Being a flood affected area Ghatal did not suit for the growth for the heavy industry, therefore the local entrepreneuring class choose the cottage industry to build up here. So, the bell metal industry was being favoured by the local manufacturing class.
- (2) Rivers in this sub division such as Silaboti, Rupnarayan, Dwarakeswar played an important role to build up the industry. Continuous supply of raw materials and marketing of the industrial products were accomplished through these river. W.W.Hunter (Statistical accounts of Midnapore) wrote that both Silaboti and Rupnarayan were navigable. Therefore it was easily understandable that these river played crucial role for growth and development of bell metal industry in Ghatal. (Institution, 2004)
- (3) Humidity in the climate was also helpful for the growth of the bell metal industry because it was possible for the artisans to make the metal products for a long time at a stretch sitting beside the furnace. Therefore it was visible that the bell metal products were produced many times more in winter in compare to summer season.
- (4) Existing of numerous ponds also played avital role for the development of the bell metal industry in Ghatal. After making the products it was necessary to immerse the products in the water for getting cold, the pond were utilize to serve this purpose. Therefore it was seen some big businessmen dig pond adjacent to his factory.
- (5) One factor may be added to these geographical components – that was dense population of this region. The dense population of the sub division of Ghatal helped to develop of the bell metal industry in two ways – firstly, population created a stable local market for selling the finished products of bell metal and secondly, the population supplied artisans at low wages continuously. Extensive study may reveal that the socio economic factors, structure of society, religion caste community inter relation, society's rule and regulation, flexibility of society etc. and other various elements also helped in the growth and development of bell metal industry in Ghatal.

Beginning and Raw materials of the Industry:- The rich, prosperous and well organised bell metal industry in Ghatal was started in the first decade of 20th century. O. Malley in his Gazetteer (1911) observed that “recently the manufacturer of bell metal utensils chiefly badnas (water vessels) had been started”. (Bhaumik, 1997)

This manufacture begun first in the sub division of Ghatal at Dangabhanga, Nischintapur adjacent to Ghatal town and gradually it spread to Gambharnagar, Rajpur, Garprastappur etc. subsequently it expanded at Ramjibanpur, Kharar, Khirpai, Chandrakona Daspur. etc. The chief raw materials of the industry copper, Rung and Tin were mainly came from Calcutta. Copper wire was partly came from the western side of Midnapore District. O. Malley has indicated that copper came from Japan and Tin from Strait – settlement.

Chief Centres:- Whenever the bell metal industry in concerned in ghatal Sub division, the name of Kharar came in First. The town Kharar situated six K.M. north from Ghatal and it became a municipal town in 1888. Kharar was transformed as town with development of bell metal industry. It was known from Cummingham Report (Review of the Industrial position and Prospect of Bengal – 1908) that the Kharar was the famous for the production of bell metal industry. Daily production in Kharar at that time was more than 100 *mon* (1Mon = 40kg). O. Mallely had informed us that out of the 7000 people then in Kharar, there was more than 4000 people were engaged in the manufacture of bell metal products.(Tarunde Bhattacharya, 1979)

Here are the picture of daily production of kharar at that time.

Sl	Name of Businessmen	Location of Factory	Daily Production(in Mon)
1	Braja Maji	Kharar	15 - 16 Mon
2	Ishan Kabiraj	Dalpati, Kharar, Suultanpur	12 – 14 Mon
3	Ramlal Chakraborty	Kharar	12 – 14 Mon
4	Ramnath Ghosh	Kharar	8 - 10 Mon
5	Hriday Kamilya	Kharar	8 – 10 Mon
6	Hari Bandopadhyay	Kharar	10 - 12 Mon
7	Nabakrishna Mukherjee	Kharar	10 - 12 Mon
8	Priyanath Bhandari	Kharar	10 - 12 Mon
Source- Ghataler Katha – Pranab Roy			

After watching such huge production of bell metal industry in Kharar the historian Cummingham wrote “the whole village resounds with the beat of the hammer on the bell metal”

Ramjibampur was another focus point in the bell metal industry in Ghatal. The artistic exposure on the products of the bell metal was unique. Ramjibanpur was highly lauded for its artistic beauty and these artistic products were exported from Ramjibanpur and Britishers also purchased these products for their home use. Apart from these main centres Khipai, Chandrakona, Radhanagar were the other important places for bell metal production. The village Ajuria in the Daspur police station area was one of the oldest centers of bell metal industry.

The bell metallic utensils is being manufactured for about two hundred years. The industry in its glorious period got some awesome efficient and talented artisians such as Narayan Chandra Roy, Hari Roy, Madhav Roy, Bipin Pramanik, Tarapada Karmakar. Bell metallic

products were mainly thala (flat dish), Ghati (small water Pot), Garu, Badnas, Jug, Gamla (tub) Palar, Glass, Pilsuj, Hanri, Bhinngar etc. small size cannon was also made in Ghatal.

Production System:- The whole production system of bell metal industry from the collection of raw materials to the marketing of finished goods was conducted in a particular process. The whole process was accomplished in many steps – one came after another. There were skillful artisans at every steps. This can be called in modern term as “specialization”. This specialized artisans were called by different titles in the entire production system.

Here is the different titles of artisans at the various level of production and their particular kind of activity in production system for making finished goods.

Sl	Title	Name of the Activity
1	Autdar	Melting the metal
2	Garandar	Making the size and the products
3	Pitaidar	Hammering
4	Mathiye	Determining the final size
5	Kshudiye	Cleaning the products
6	Majiye	Polishing the products
7	Jaliye	Joining the various parts of products by Rung
8	Bapari	Reaching the finished goods at trading places.

Source - Ghataler Katha by Pranab Roy

Management system: -In pre-independence era the management system of entire bell metal industry were conducted by the three different categories. There were (a) The management of private money lenders (putting out System) (b) The management of cooperative system and (c) The management of Private enterprise (Factory system). (McCutchion & David J., 1972)

In the putting system the bell metallic products were essentially manufactured by the poor artisans with the help of his family members in the leisure period, especially after the completion of agricultural work. The poor artisans knew the entire production but he hadn't the capital to manufacture. Therefore he compelled to borrow the capital from money lenders for purchasing raw materials and the manufacturing he was forced by the money lenders to sell the products to the same money lenders whom he borrowed the capitals. When the demand was high the artisans were compelled to produce more and more taking advanced capital from money lenders, sometimes the money lender help him by providing raw materials, furnace and other things. The artisans didn't any kind of freedom during the entire production process. He was being paid for his labour.

In the management of cooperative system of production, government – run cooperative sanctioned loan to the artisans and the artisans collected raw materials and other ancillary material by this loan with minimum interest. In this production management the artisan

enjoyed freedom in production and marketing. It was noted that many cooperatives were established in the Ghatal sub division to save the artisan of bell metal industry from the exploitation from money lenders and various agents of this industry. In the management of private enterprise system of production, the local rich and wealthy businessmen collected the efficient and skillful artisans from the different parts of the sub division at his factory and provided the raw materials and tools to the artisans for the production of bell metallic utensils. The artisans came to the factory to participate in the production and returned home at the end of the day taking his daily wages. He hadn't any idea of production system apart from his own work and he became here a labour given wage enjoyed daily worker in the management of private enterprise system of production.

Marketing:- Marketing was one of most vital parts for making the success of the industry. Generally the finished products of bell metallic industry were marketed in Barabazar in Calcutta. Businessmen like Amritalal Kundu, Taraknath Pramanik, Hiralal Das purchased the lion share of the produced in Ghatal. (Chatterjee, 1987)

These businessmen were entangled with re- cycle trade. They supplied Rang and Copper for manufacturing the utensils and after manufacturing it they purchased it from the traders whom they supplied raw materials. The other chief trading centres of the of the bell metallic industry were Dhaka, Patna, Delhi, Bankura, Burdwan and so on. It was visible from the above statement that the bell metallic utensils of Ghatal was not confined in Bengal, it had an all India demand. The demand was gradually increasing in the colonial period. Around 1915 the monthly production was nearly 1500 Mon in Ghatal sub division. The statics rose high gradually. It was observed in 1939 that the monthly production was as followings.(Riello, Giorgio & Roy, Tirthankar, 2009)

Sl	Places	Production in Mon(Monthly)
1	Ghatal town	2400
2	Kharar	7000
3	Ramjibanpur	1500
4	Daspur	1300
5	Chandrakona	900

Conclusion

It was interesting and make us astonishment that such an orderly, well organised industry has now become a morbid industry. The degradation was not in sudden but it was gradual. The degradation of the bell metallic industry in Ghatal may be indicated in such following reasons.

- (1) The main reason of the decline of this industry was the abundant marketing of alternative utensil made of aluminum, stainless steel enforced the decline of bell metallic products which was very high in price, heavier in weight in comparison with the products of Aluminum and strain less steel. Therefore the common people purchased the low priced production. The use of alternative product was increasing day by day in the domestic life of the common people. This change of mentality of the general people perforce the bell metallic products in its degradation. So, losing market was the essential cause for the decline of the bell metallic industry.
- (2) Partition of India was also partly responsible for the dilapidation of the bell metal industry in Ghatal. Partition reduced the market in East Bengal where the bell metallic utensil was very popular. The decreased market was the disappointed factor both for the entrepreneurs as well as for the artisans. As a consequences of losing market the businessmen frightened to produce more, he forced to reduce the labour and the artisans being losing his work pressurized in the land for his livelihood.
- (3) The partition was responsible for becoming bell metal industry a morbid industry in another way. Before partition the bell metallic products were sold to the businessmen in East Bengal in credit, when the next phase of utensil were marketed to the traders who used to pay the price of earlier products, sometimes the credit was paid annually. After the partition of India the businessmen and the traders of then East Pakistan expunged to pay off the credit price of bell metallic products taking the advantage of the turmoil situation of petition. Therefore the capital for investment in the industry of bell metal became shortfall which brought forth the internal crisis, artisans became dishearten to continue work at low price and they had to compel to abnegate to continue their traditional occupation. They had to leave the bell metal industry, took up other occupation in rural area or pressurized on the land or migrated to Calcutta to be a worker of heavy industries. This may be called the push effect of bell metal industries.
- (4) One factor may be added with these above caused that no technological innovation is applied by the businessmen or by the entrepreneur of bell metal industry to revive the industry, the taste and the temperament of the general people had been changed and it was necessary to bring about change in production, to bring novelty in product with the changing conformity of taste and temperament of general people. This failure of technological innovation made the bell metal industry ruinous and morbid one.

References

1. Bhaumik, P. K. (1997). Amader Medinipur. Kolkata: Book Trust.
2. Chatterjee, G. (1987). History of Bagree-Rajya (Garhbeta): With Special Reference to Its Anti-British Role, from Late 18th Century Till the Present Times. ISBN 9788170990147.

3. Dhal, C. C. (2012). Tribal Peasant Unrest: A paradox in welfare Administration. NewDelhi.
4. Institution, S. a. (2004). Tribes of Orissa. Bhubaneswar.
5. McCutchion, & David J. (1972). Late Mediaeval Temples of Bengal. In *The Asiatic Society* (pp. pages 52,53, 63, 67, 71). Kolkata: ISBN 978-93-81574-65-2.
6. Riello, Giorgio, & Roy, Tirthankar. (2009). How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850. ISBN 9789004176539.
7. Sahu, P. K. (2011). Changing Socio-Economic and Cultural Profile of BhumijTribe of Mayurbhanj. *Proceedings of National Seminar J.N.S.Sachan, B.B.College* (p. p.86). Baiganbadia, Mayurbhanj.
8. TarundeB Bhattacharya. (1979). Paschim Banga Darshan. Kolkata, Medinipur: Firma K. L. M. Ltd.

References:-

1. Centenary Souvenir Published by the Ghatal Municipality
2. Ghataler Katha – Panchanan Roy and Pranab Roy
3. W. W. Hunter – Statistical Accounts of Midnapore
4. O. Malley - Midnapore District Gazetteer
5. Ghataler Katha – Panchanan Roy and Pranab Roy
6. Industry and industrial of Bengal - Cummingham
7. Medinipurer Itihas O sanskritir Bibartan – Edited by B.S, Das and Pranab Roy