

# Problems and prospects of thanjavur art plate artisans

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The Thanjavur Art Plate is a world famous one and is being produced only in Thanjavur Town. The making of Thanjavur Art Plate is recognised as small handicraft cottage industry, as the production takes place at the household level. The Thanjavur Art Plate artisans are having minute skill for making Thanjavur Art plate of different size and type. It is a craft consisting of metals such as Silver, Copper and Brass (Alloy) embossed with figures of Gods and Goddesses at its Centre.

Thanjavur Art plate artisans have problems like skilled labours, inadequate knowledge of global marketing and risk taking abilities, poor information technology, failure to raise investment and absence of infrastructure. So, the Art plate artisans are diversified to produce other items like jewel box, key chain, gift items and photoframes etc. The sample size of the study comprised of 200 artisans who are the producers and retailers of the Thanjavur Art plates.

Only male artisans are involved in this type of production. The findings of the study show the different problems faced by the producers and retailers in the field. The present study deals the various problems of the Thanjavur Art Plate artisans, which can be eradicated by the mutual association of Thanjavur Art Plate artisans with the handicraft export marketers and Government of India in order to boost and promote the traditional sector.

## **Introduction**

The making of Thanjavur Art plate is one of the traditional handicrafts with minute and skilful craft work. Art plate comprises of two costlier noble metals like Silver, Copper and alloy like Brass. Now-a-days, purchase of the metals

for making Art plate is very difficult because of the price of metals is going on increasing. The production of Art plate requires different types of skill and experienced labours like heavy metal worker, jewel maker and relief setter. Thus, it is a team work done by the artisans.

They always face different problems particularly financial and marketing to produce and sell their product. Many artisans are working as daily wage earners and no financial institutions are coming forward to help them to become entrepreneurs. This handicraft demands a high degree of skilfulness and patience which is a traditional art of a particular community and is strongly occupied in Thanjavur Town. China and Thailand have produced alloys which is brass like metals. These products are cheaper, lighter and do not lose its shine. The highest problems of Thanjavur Art Plate artisans are product development and marketing, price of the raw materials, globalisation and lack of information technology which makes a major setback to this sector.

### **Literature Review**

Chutia and Sarma (2017) stated that in the age of global competition when the world has become a small trading community, handicraft artisans constantly compete with machine made products and struggle for the sustenance of their age old traditional industries. Changing functional requirements and aesthetics orientation of modern customers are pressing artisans to modify certain traditional features of the crafts and innovate according to market demand. In addition to this, unrestricted flow of imported metal items also offers tough competition to the indigenous sector.

Artisans complying with existing needs of customers, comparatively, do well in economic terms than those producing age-old products.

Artisans also seem to continue the craft in future and encourage their kith and kin to undertake the occupation, since they find it a reliable income source. Kabitha Kalita and Sarma (2016) expressed that the world market has changed drastically for skilled and unskilled workforce and there is a growing need for workers with specialised skills. Brass metal being one of the traditional industries of Assam can become one of the chief contributors towards the revenue generation of the state only if technological innovations are brought about in the revival of the industries, this is only possible when the workers of these industries will be trained and equipped properly.

Medhi et. al (2012) identified that the present situation compels them to switch over to other tertiary activities abandoning their traditional brass metal work. But despite of these a group of enthusiastic Morias are trying to revive their traditional brass work. Attempt has also been made to discuss their traditional occupation and the poor economic condition of the traditional brass artisans.

### **Profile of the Study Area**

Thanjavur has a very important place in world Tourism Map, because of its long run history, rich art, culture and heritage. So, it is daily visited mostly by foreigners and domestic tourists. The aesthetic sense of the visitors makes an affinity towards the products like Thanjavur Art Plate, Thanjavur dancing dolls, Pith work, Thanjavur painting etc. This creates a demand for the

production of Art Plate. This art of making Art Plates was a very precious and prestigious one in the past history of Thanjavur.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Thanjavur Art Plate artisan's socio economic condition was very high during the period of Raja Serfoji. But, at the present time Art plate artisans were very difficult to survive and produce the good quality products. The number of Art plate artisans' families has been reduced from 300 to 200. Many of the artisans were migrated from Thanjavur town and indulge in other labour works. The increasing cost and insufficiency of raw material supply affects the production. Billing of electricity under commercial slab increases the cost of the product. Young artisans from traditional family who were indulged in this art are switching over to other area of works to earn more money.

This leads to lack of sufficient skilled and traditional artisans. Artisans who are willing to start an individual business do not have adequate amount of capital at his own. The problem seems to be worst in the case of Thanjavur Art plate artisans because District Industries Centre is providing a loan of one Lakh Rupees only and other financial institutions are not willing to provide loan to them. The Art plate is purely a decorative item, it has no utility value, and this inhibits the market scope of the product. Altogether, they are facing various problems like financial, marketing, cheaper technological intervention due to globalisation, lack of quality raw materials and non availability of skilled labours etc.

### **Objectives of the Study**

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- To understand the skill and knowledge of Thanjavur Art Plate artisans.
- To analyse the problems faced by Thanjavur Art Plate artisans and
- To know the schemes provided by the government to overcome the problems.

### Research Methodology

- **Data Collection:** The data used for the study is both primary and secondary. Primary data was collected by using interview schedule from Thanjavur Art plate artisans. The Secondary data were collected from reputed journals and research publications.
- **Research Design:** Descriptive and analytical research has been used.
- **Sample size:** 200 Art Plate artisans from Thanjavur Town.
- **Sampling Technique:** Simple Random Sampling
- **Statistical Technique:** Percentage Analysis, Chi-square test and Karl Pearson correlation.

### Limitations of the Study

1. The questions in the interview schedule are close-ended questions which limits the artisans' problems.
2. Limited sample size was due to unavailability of artisans at the time of data collection.
3. The study findings cannot be generalised.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 Demographic profile of the Thanjavur Art Plate Artisans

Demographic Variables Frequency Percentage

### Monthly Income Below

- Rs. 10, 000 121 60. 5
- Rs. 10, 001 to Rs. 20, 000 46 23. 0
- Above Rs. 20, 000 33 16. 5
- Total 200 100
- Age 20-30 Years 34 17. 0
- 31-40 years 61 30. 5
- 41-50 years 66 33. 0
- 51 years and above 39 19. 5
- Total 200 100
- Type of Family Joint 107 53. 5
- Nuclear 93 46. 5
- Total 200 100
- Educational
- Qualification Illiterate 41 20. 5
- School 99 49. 5
- College 49 24. 5
- Professional 11 5. 5
- Total 200 100
- Source: Primary Data

The above table shows that the demographic profile of the respondents of Thanjavur Art plate artisans with respect to Monthly Income, Age, Type of family and Educational Qualification. Out of 200 artisans, 60.5 per cent of the Art Plate artisan's income is below Rs. 10,000 per month. The majority (33 percent) of the artisans belongs to the age group between 41 to 50

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years. 53.5 percent of the artisans are living as joint family system.

Regarding the Educational qualification, 49.5 percent of artisans are school leavers and 20.5 percent are illiterate.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between Age group of the artisans and the problems facing by the artisans

Table 2 Result of Tests of independence between Age groups and different problems of Art Plate artisans

Problems of Art Plate Artisans Chi- Square P value Statistical Inference

- Raw materials related problems 14.10 0.07 P; 0.05  
Not significant
- Technical and skill based problems 25.55 0.00 P; 0.05  
Significant
- Marketing and infrastructure problems 35.15 0.00 P; 0.05  
Significant
- Information and policy problems 23.15 0.00 P; 0.05  
Significant
- Financial problems 14.55 0.06 P; 0.05  
Not Significant

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is inferred that:



- a. There is no significant relationship between age group of the Art Plate artisans and Raw materials related problems. So, accept the null hypothesis
- b. There is significant relationship between age group of the artisans and Technical, skill based problems. Hence, reject the null hypothesis.
- c. There is significant association between age group of the artisans and Marketing, infrastructure problems. Therefore null hypothesis is rejected
- d. There is significant relationship between age group of the Art plate artisans and information, policy problems. Hence, reject the null hypothesis, and
- e. There is no significant relationship between age group of the Art plate artisans and financial problems. Therefore null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3 Correlation between selected demographic variables and the Problems of Art Plate Artisans

Demographic Variables Problems of Art Plate Artisans Correlation

Age Pearson Correlation . 478\*\* Significantly Positive Correlation

- Sig. (2- tailed) 0 Educational Qualification Pearson Correlation . 428\*\* Significantly Positive Correlation
- Sig. (2- tailed) 0 Marital Status Pearson Correlation 0. 007 Not Significant
- Sig. (2- tailed) 0. 919 Monthly Income Pearson Correlation -0. 003 Not Significant

- Sig. (2- tailed) 0. 967 Size of the family Pearson Correlation . 591\*\*  
Significantly Positive Correlation
- Sig. (2- tailed) 0 \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0. 01 level (2 - tailed)

The above table shows that there is a strong correlation between the age, educational qualification, size of the family and the problems of Art Plate artisans. It is also inferred that there is no significant correlation between marital status, monthly income and the problems of Art plate artisans.

### **Findings of the Study**

1. Government schemes not reaching the genuine artisans.
2. Lack of credit facilities is the most remarkable challenge to an artisan.
3. Artisans mainly depend on Trade fairs and exhibitions to sell their products.
4. The artisan is not recognized.
5. The artisan suffered a serious dearth in marketing customers' expectation.
6. Poor infrastructure and less remuneration are forcing artisans to choose other profession.
7. Most of the artisans expressed that the non-availability of working capital.
8. Marketing, export avenues and linkages are limited.
9. Lack of encouragement of commercial collaboration between enterprises.
10. Dissemination of market information was not done at the right time to develop their markets.

11. Hazardous air pollutants released during melting of brass, cause respiratory diseases amongst the artisans and their families.
12. Exploitation of artisans by middlemen.
13. Higher raw material prices and costlier electrical power have created an increased need for more capital.
14. Art plate artisans are struggling to compete with the cheaper, low quality and more availability of global machine made brass products.

### **Schemes Provided By the Government to Overcome the Problems**

Government had implemented two programmes in the name of Rajiv Gandhi Shilpi Swasthya Bima Yojana and Janshree Bima Yojana for artisans in the age group of 18-60 for health and life insurance for the artisans along with three dependents.

Ministry of social justice and empowerment has initiated Shilp Sampada scheme to improve the economic standard of artisans and handicraft. It will provide loan upto 10 lakhs for traditional Artisans of Backward class to upgrade their entrepreneurial skills.

Welfare scheme of USTTAD (Upgrading skills and Training in Traditional Arts for Development) aimed at upgrading and promoting the skills of artisans from minority communities.

### **Recommendations**

More health related schemes have to be implemented for security of the artisans.

Financial Assistance for taking up issues relating to brand building and sales

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promotion of Traditional handicrafts should be implemented.

Dissemination of Government schemes, loan facilities, about trade fairs and exhibitions, knowledge of E-Commerce, widening of export avenues and linkages, market information should be done at the right time to improve their markets.

Raw materials like noble metals, alloys and electricity should be given in subsidised rates.

Programmes should be coined for direct marketing of the Art Plates at a profitable rate produced by the artisans.

### **Conclusion**

The Government of India have to open an Institute for all traditional arts where a senior artisan can get a permanent job to teach new artisans.

Moreover, measures should be taken to boost and improve the interest of artisans to continue their skilful and aesthetic work without compromising the traditional and quality of the Thanjavur Art Plate.

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