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THE CONTENTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SOLAPITH CRAFT PRODUCT: A CASE STUDY OF DHUBRI DISTRICT

JAHIDUL ISLAM HEAD DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PRATIMA BARUA PANDEY COLLEGE DHUBRI

ABSTRACT

This paper is mainly focus on the women empowerment in the production of a specific product. Their skills and hard labour which extract the sola plant to a solapith product. They play a vital role in the production of solapith products vary from the cultivation to the finished product. This is a traditional product, which is being practiced by traditional artisans of a particular community (Malakar) in some villages in Dhubri district. As a traditional craft, skilled handed over from generation to generating.

KEYWORDS

artisans, craft product, sholapith and traditional.

INTRODUCTION

olapith or Sola pith or Kuhila (also referred to as shoal and Indian crock) is derived milky –white & spongy plant matter which can be pressed and shaped into delicate and beautiful object of art.

Sola grows wild in marshy water logged area.the biological name of shoal is Aeschynomene India or Aeschyromene as per a (bean family). It is a harbours plant, which grows particularly in the marshy areas of Bengal, Assam, Orrisa and Dhaka. The Solapith is the cortex of core of the plant and these inner softy milky—white and spongy materials are almost similar to "thermocol" Sholapith is much superior to thermocol in terms of malleability texture, lustre and sponginess and is preferred by the artisans.

The use and practice of solapith craft is very ancient, it cannot be said specifically as to when this craft was first given as artistic from and used. It is believed that solapith craft came into being as soon as idol worship was introduced in Hindu religion and culture, initially this craft was in practice only in Vedic ritual works But, gradually with the passage of time this craft had developed a lot and has been accepted as multi-religious craft still its utility is most significant in Hindu religious.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study in a design to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1. Role of women in the production process
- 2. Observe the nature and origin of solapith craft.
- **3.** Study the manufacturing process of the solapith craft.

METHOD

The study is empirical in nature, which was undertaken based on primary data collected through a field survey. A well-structured schedule is prepared to collect information from the respondents. However, the schedule is finalised after a pilot survey. The information collected through the respondent's schedule were supplemented by the information collected through Focus Group Discussion.

A multi-stage random sampling technique were followed while selecting sample craft man families. In the first stage three circles namely Agomoni, Galakganj Dharamsala of Dhubri district have been selected considering popularity of solapith crafts. In the second stage, three villages from Angomoni block and one village from each of Galakganj and Dharamsala blocks have been selected randomly. Finally, 100 respondents were chosen randomly from the sample villages.

TABLE 1

1 Overall research design:	Empirical and Analytical
2 Sources of Data	i. Primary data
	ii. Secondary data (limited extent)
3 Sampling method	Multistage random sampling
4 Population	Comprising of all the crafts workers belonging to Dhubri district
5 Sample Size	100
6 Tools of data collection	i. Schedule
	ii. FGD Method

WOMEN ROLES AND STAGES FOR PRODUCTION

- 1. Cultivation- The first steps for the production is raw materials which have to cultivate and it grows in the low and marshy areas. Women play a vital role in cultivation from sowing to reaping. It is sowed in between January and March and gradually increases to a height of 1½ feet. As soon as the first splash of main comes, the plants start growing very fast. Finally, the plants reach the height of 7 feet at maturity and are ready to be cut. These grow up into matured one within five or six months. Usually the artisans collect the Sola from the field from the end of September to the middle of October.
- 2. **Drying** After collecting the required shola from the field, second stage arise i.e. drying the shola, they leave the plants in sun and air to dry them completely for more than 10 to 12 days. Then occurs the removal of bark so that the spongy fibber can be extracted, the sizing splitting carving happens sequentially.
- 3. Cutting and Pictorial form- In this stage men and women simultaneously help each other to transform the shola into a product form with the help of various indigenous knives and scissors. The products are of different size, shapes and design according to the demand of that particular locality. The artisans exhibit their cultural and tradition through the artistic form of this craft.
- 4. Colour and Gum- For manufacturing the product both colour and gum is very essential. The original colour of the shola is white so it is required to be coloured for the finished and attractive product. They use both handmade colour like 'Bel' (Palm like fruit), turmeric, limestone, 'Haritaki' (Jerminelia Chebula), Katgua (a kind of betel nut) as well as artificial colour. Gum was made by mixing powdered tamarind seed with ordinary fern namely 'Dhekia' Now-a-days the artisans use maida and barli to make the adhesive. But 'Fevicol' is also in use now.

All the natural process for the production is used just because of the scio-economic condition of the society is poor as well as to reduce the price of the product.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are certain specific places in Dhubri district where Solapith Craft work in done permanently as a hereditary and traditional profession for a long time. Since this traditional art and crafty work was started during the reign of the Jamindars the craftsmen who are called Malakars or Mail were patronised by them and settled in those places permanently. These places are all in rural areas and concentrated in the western most part of this district. Here women play a vital role for the production from the very first stage of production to the last one. On the other hand, men role also cannot be neglected they mainly focus on crafting and marketing. In this paper, it is completely clear that not only the educated women can be self-sustain but the uneducated can also be self-sustain from their hard labour and skills.

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