Folk-Traditions of Dhaka : Pottery

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[Abstract : Pottery is one of the ancient folk-trades of Bangladesh. In fact, this trade flourished widely not only in Bangladesh, but in this subcontinent many centuries back. The practice of pottery in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is highly significant for its trade, cultural and historical importance. Four hundred years old pottery-factory situated at Rayer Bazar in Dhaka is an important phenomenon of the traditional folk-trade of the city. This paper is concerned, almost exclusively with the study of the glorious history of pottery, materials, production methods and the marketization of the Potteries of the city of Dhaka.]

Pottery is one of the ancient folk-trades of Bangladesh. Since many centuries back pottery flourished widely in this region. Not only in Bangladesh, but also all over India this trade was seen to develop since the ancient times. Scholars think pottery developed on a large area of land extending from the eastern region to Harappa and Mohenjodaro in the subcontinent about five thousand years ago (Gosh, 2004 : 61). Various decorated earthenware, pots, dolls, pitchers, lids, glasses, cups, bowls, plates, spoons, etc., have been found in different areas of India. These things bear witness to the skill of the then potters. It specifically flourished on the banks of Saraswati/Indus river in about 5,500–4,800 B.C.[1] But some scholars think the nude figure of Venus made by clay in Czech Republic dates back 29000–25000 B.C.[2]

The designs and decorations of the potteries of Harappa and Mohenjodaro in the Indus Civilization bear witness to dexterous craftsmanship. During the Vedic era, the potters also decorated earthenware in many ways. Besides, decorated potteries of the times of Morya, Kushan and Gupta are also discovered. It is therefore anticipated that the potters of India have had the same tradition of decorating clay-pots for centuries. Those clay-pots present before us the life-style and various social aspects of the time. The trend of pottery, which was introduced before the birth of Christ, has still been prevailing in this area. In the subcontinent, particularly in different places of Bangladesh, there are small and big centers of pottery. Different earthenwares are is produced in these centers.

The potters of Harappa and Mohenjodaro made various kinds of toys. These toys include humans, cows, buffalos, sheep, monkeys, pigs, birds, tigers, marbles, carts, bats etc. The potters of today's Bangladesh have a wonderful resemblance with the tradition that existed a thousand years ago. Since the time of Indus

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Civilization till today, these toys have been made in the same manner. Like the artisans of Indus Civilization the potters of our country still make dolls by pressing their fingers. The potters of our country have still borne the age old methods and traditions of art.

It has been found that a kind of terracotta method developed in the valley of Ganges and Yamuna from 300-200BC to 200-300AD (Ghosh, 2004 : 29). Terracotta plaques have been discovered in Mahasthangarh, Mainamati and Paharpur of Bangladesh and in Pokharna, Medinipur, Burdwan, Hoogly and Birbhum of West Bengal in India. These terracotta plaques were used to decorate temples. The use of terracotta plaques in decorating temples is Bengal's own artistic tradition.

People, gods and goddesses and animals were used as common motifs on terracotta plaques of Mahasthangarh, Paharpur and Mainamati. These kinds of plaques were used in decorating temples only. But in the religious institutes of Muslims such as mosques and shrines, pictures of trees and creepers were used. The skill of the potters as well as social life of the time is reflected on these terracotta plaques. These terracotta plaques depict not only the skill of the potters but also the social life of the time. The important motifs of the plaques discovered from Mahasthangarh, Paharpur and Mainamati regions by excavation include many deities from the Indian Purana, various pictures from Buddhism, mothers holding babies in their arms, wives carrying pitchers in their laps, newly wed wives waiting for their husbands, farmers with their ploughs on their shoulders, fishermen with nets in their hands and so on.

A rich trend of pottery thus developed in various regions of Bangladesh during the period of thousand years. The city of Dhaka, as a famous centre, has a glorious history of pottery. A about four hundred year old pottery-factory situated at Rayer Bazar in Dhaka is an important phenomenon of the traditional folk-trade of the city.

Pottery at Rayer Bazar in Dhaka

It has already been mentioned that pottery-factories/workshops flourished at Rayer Bazar in Dhaka about four hundred years ago. Once the potter-hamlet of Rayer Bazar was extended to a large area. This potter-area covered one mile in length and half a mile in width ranging from Tenarir Morh to Satmasjid. During the period of development of the pottery-region, nearly 800 families of pottery-artisans lived in this area. In a research, it is seen that once the number of artisans of pottery was about fifteen thousand. (Glassie, 1997 : 225)

The pottery of Rayer Bazar has lost its past glory. On a changing situation, pottery has now reached its miserable state. Yet the dedicated community of potters has made this branch of traditional folk-trade survive and thus they have borne the glorious tradition of Dhaka. We have made an effort to know various

aspects of this craft from interviews with artisans of pottery working at Rayer Bazar now. The artisans of pottery with whom we had interviews include Shambhunath Pal, Krishnaballabh Pal, Nibaranchandra Pal, Maranchand Pal, Haripada Pal, Gaurangachandra Pal, Nepalchandra Pal, Mohammad Ali and others. We have presented the following aspects of pottery in the light of information we gathered from the interviews with them. Not only interviews but also our experiences gathered from our participatory observation have worked as a research methodology here.

Methods of Producing Pottery

The methods the potters use to make various earthen goods can be divided into some stages. Those are as follows:

1. Collecting materials;
2. Clay preservation and preparing it for making pots;
3. Giving shape to different things by hand or by the wheel;
4. To dry produced goods in the sun;
5. To dye and decorate the goods made ready; and
6. Giving final shape to the produced goods by burning in fire.

Collecting Materials

A very vital component of pottery is clay. So collecting proper type of clay is the main task of procuring materials of this craft. Generally the potters themselves select a place for collecting clay from. Various types of clay are collected for pottery. Types of clay are as follows :

Clayed soil : The potters of Rayer Bazar make earthen goods generally by clayed soil[3]. It is usually of black or grey colour. This type of soil contains a little sand. It is not available in all types of land. It is found in the land by the river-bank. The layer of clayed soil is usually found by digging four or five feet into the ground. Clayed soil is collected by digging wells up to 10 feet by spades and other digging tools. The potters of Rayer Bazar collect clayed soil from the land adjacent to the banks of the Buriganga and the Dhaleswari. No payment is required to collect the clay except for the labour cost of digging and conveyance.

Sandy soil : The soil containing much sand is called sandy soil. A type of soil which is made up of sandy and clayed soils is loamy soil. The potters of Rayer Bazar use loamy soil to make small pots, kitchenware, tubs for flower-trees and different other pots.

Korha soil : The potters of Dhaka sometimes make goods with *Korha* soil. The colour of this soil is light yellow. The soil lying on the top layer of land is termed

Korha soil. The clay-modelers usually use this soil for giving a cover on the images made with straw.

Red soil : A kind of soil is found on the highland of Bangladesh, which is called red soil. The potters use red soil for dyeing and decorating earthen pots. The artisans of pottery at Rayer Bazar generally collect this soil from the region of Mymensingh.

White soil : Usually the potters of Rayer Bazar do not use white soil. This soil found at Bijoypur of Mymensingh is used in making ceramics. Sometimes the potters use white soil to produce superb quality goods to export to foreign countries.

The names of soil vary from region to region in Bangladesh. For example, the potters of Rayer Bazar call clayed soil 'Bali Mati'. It is called in Faridpur 'Rang Mati', in Jamalpur 'Adal Mati', in Mymensingh 'Athalia Mati' and so on. Similarly, the potters of Rayer Bazar call sandy soil 'Abol Mati'. Sandy soil is known in Faridpur as 'Pakak Mati' and in Tangail 'Chara Mati'. It has been found that these soils also differ in colour and quality in accordance with localities.

It is essential to mention here that after the collection of soil from the ground, the more days it can be kept piled, the more its quality can be increased. If the soil collected can be kept piled for more days, it becomes easy to make it as smooth and appropriate for modeling pots and to make them as more durable. The potters of Rayer Bazar keep soil piled up to two months to one year[4].

Pottery requires more components besides clay. Of those components, there are sand, bamboo, wood, straw, fuel, lime and paint. Lime is used for decorating earthen pots. Wood, fuel and dry leaves are usually used for making fire. Straw is used to make big images of men or deities. First a structural shape of body is made with straw. Then a coating with clay is given to model the shape of an image. According to modern technology, Plaster of Paris, various kinds of oxide and quality colours are used to model high quality earthen pots. As for the earthen goods the famous potter of Rayer Bazar Maranchand Pal uses these components to export his artifacts to foreign countries.

Preserving Soil and Making it Suitable for Pottery

When the clay is collected from the ground, they have to preserve it and make it suitable for modeling pots. The clay collected is kept in the room or on the yard under a thatched roof. It is because if it is kept in an open place under the sky, its quality may be destroyed either by getting dried in the sun or by being wet in rains. The potters of Rayer Bazar adopt two methods for preserving the clay. A group of potters preserve the clay on the yard of the house or on that of the factory under a thatch. Those who do not have a place under a thatch on their yards keep the clay collected in a hole dug there. The mouth of the hole is

covered with water-hyacinth and a piece of tin. The potters keep a keen eye over it so that the sun or rains cannot spoil the quality of the clay put in the hole.

The potters make the clay suitable in different processes for moulding pots or other goods. The clay-processing of the potters can be divided into five categories as follows :

a. From the preserved soil a required amount of clay is separated and put in a corner of the yard.

b. The clay is cut thinly with a spade. Then it is cut more delicately with an iron rake.

c. After that the clay is kept on a coarse mat with sand thrown on it. It is trampled with a little water sprinkled on it. As a result of trampling, the clay starts to be soft. At this time, stones, gravels, pieces of wood, etc., mingled with it are brought out. The clay gets smooth when it is done seven and eight times.

d. At the fourth stage, the main job for preparing clay to make pots or other goods starts. A required amount of clay is first made round and separated. Then the clay is cut into small and thin pieces with a knife of wood or iron. At this time, the potters remove carefully very small particles of things from the clay with their thumbs massaging on it. An important aspect of this stage is that the work of mixing another soil with the clay is now done. Both kinds of soil are treated in the same ways to make it suitable. This process continues until the clay gets properly soft.

e. At the final stage, a cover is made with this clay on a coarse mat of date leaves. Now this cover is hammered strongly with a wooden hammer. Then the clay gets perfectly prepared for giving shape to a particular pot or other goods.

It is necessary to mention here that it is the female members of the families of potters who do the aforesaid work of processing the clay almost in all factories of Rayer Bazar. It is true not only for Rayer Bazar, but for any other region of Bangladesh as well.

Giving Shape to Earthen Goods either with the Wheels or Manually

For giving shape to earthen goods after processing the clay, the following methods are adopted :

a. After processing the soil, equal amounts of clay for making pots are separated and made round. This method is usually called ‘Buti’.

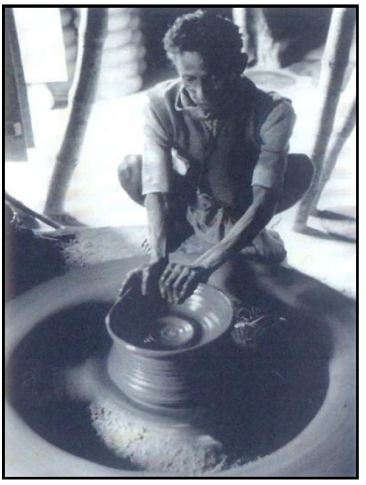
b. Then pots are shaped with the help of wheels. There is another method still prevalent in one or two regions of our country to shape the pot manually. At first, the wheel of the machine is turned round with a

stick to make it move speedily. When the wheel moves quickly, one 'Buti' or a circular piece of clay is kept in the middle of it. At this stage, the potter gives shape to the pot with his or her hands as he or she wishes.

c. After giving shape to a pot, its outside surface is very carefully made smooth. In the same way, the inside of the pot is also smoothed.

d. At the end of shaping the pot, the lower part of the clay-pot is cut off with thread and separated from the wheel.

The skilled potter gives shape to a particular thing in one or two minutes after putting the circular clay on the wheel. Of all these works, it is the most difficult job. There are about twenty-five skilled artisans for this work at Rayer Bazar. It is to be noted that where the female artisans do everything for processing the clay for pottery, the male artisans do the job of modeling the pots or other goods. Big pots, flower tubs, dishes, etc., are modeled on the wheel.



Gaurangachandra Pal is making clay-pot by wheels



Rajeshwari Pal is smoothing the surface of the clay-pots

Besides the wheel, the form is also used to model pots or other things. The female artisans of Rayer Bazar produce several goods on the form. It takes much time to make pots on a form compared to the wheel. The processes adopted to model pots on the form are as follows :

a. A circular 'Buti' is put first on the form. Then it is beaten to be thin with a wooden hammer. This process is called 'to massage,' ('dala deoa').

b. After that the clay is attached carefully to the form with the fingers massaging on it. Thus the portion of the clay assumes the size of the form.

c. Then the form is put in the sun for 10 to 20 minutes.

d. After that the model is separated from the form with a steel or iron chakti (a round and flat thing).
e. Then the outside surface is rubbed with a piece of wet cloth to smooth it. The pot or other goods are again kept in the sun for ten to twenty minutes. After that, the goods are put in a room and covered with gunny. When the pot is covered with gunny, it does not get hard soon.
f. Then, to smooth its inside the excess parts of clay are cut off with a cockle-shell.
g. After that, pots or other goods are kept in the yard with a shed on it. When it is properly dried, it is brought into the room for the next work.
h. Then starts the work of smoothing the pot finally. For that, the potters use a thing made of clay called "Bokka".
i. At the end of smoothing, the pot is again kept in the place on the yard with a thatch on it. When the pot is perfectly dried, it is again brought into the room after 20 to 25 days for the next job.

The carpenters make the wheels or the forms the potters use to give shape to the pot. The potters at Rayer Bazar buy the wheel or the form from the carpenters.

To Dry the Produced Goods in the Sun

The goods modeled on the wheel are kept in the sun to be dried. How many days they will take to be dried depends on their sizes and weight. Comparatively big and heavy goods take more time to be dried. The produced goods are arranged in rows on the yard. At first, all the pots are turned upside down to dry. When the lower parts of the pots are dried well, their front sides are kept facing the sun for drying out. A pot, at this stage, gets dried in 8 to 10 days in summer. In the rainy season, it takes much more time. The potters sometimes use electric fans to dry out the pot when it rains incessantly. When the pots or other goods are dried out white, they are brought into the room. They are then perfectly ready for dyeing.

Dyeing and Decorating Earthen Pots and Other Goods

The potters of Rayer Bazar like those in other regions of Bangladesh also use a special red colour on earthern goods. The usual colour of clay disappears after this colour is used. The potters themselves prepare this colour. For this purpose red clay is collected from hilly regions. The colour is prepared by mixing catechu and washing soda with this red clay in right proportion. In Chittagong areas certain bark is also mixed with this to make the colour lasting.

At first one hundred grams of catechu is mixed with two litres of water and then it is boiled. After that, soda is put into it and then red clay-powder is mixed with it. When the water cools, they are mixed well with hands to turn it into a liquid colour. Sometimes a wooden stick is also used to mix it well. Then this mixture is

put into 10 or 12 litres of water and is again boiled. When it cools, the mixture of colour is kept into separate pots.

The potters dye the pot slowly with a piece of cloth. When the work of dyeing ends, the pot is dried out in the sun. After 20 to 30 minutes it is again brought to the shade, and decorating on it starts. The potters draw various designs on the pots using different colour components. Female potters of the family also take part in decorating designs with the male members. The potters decorate carefully Laksmi's lids, fancy pots, clay-dolls, flower tubs, ash-trays, earthen animals, etc. In most cases, they draw *alpana*, leaves and creepers, fruits and flowers, birds, different motifs of folk-culture, human faces, etc.

Giving Final Shape to the Produced Goods by Burning in Fire

The potters finish their final job of burning in an earthen furnace after their clay-pots and other goods are dried out in the sun. The furnace in which earthenware is burnt is generally called 'Payin' by them. Almost all the potters of Rayer Bazar have their own 'Payin' or furnace. They observe some rituals before burning their clay-goods. At first, incense is fumigated around the furnace. Then water mixed with gold and silver is thrown into the furnace. After that the clay-goods are arranged in rows inside the 'Payin'. In the spaces among the pots arranged, firewood is put. Then everything is covered with a coating of mud. Little holes are made around the coat to let the smoke out.

First, cow-dung, straw and dried leaves are used to make fire. The 'Payin' is thus made hot by continuing this fire for at least two hours. To increase the fire slowly firewood is given into the 'Payin'. When the fire burns well, adding firewood is stopped. It is kept in this state for two days. The earthen pots or goods burnt with the firewood inside the *payin* grow red. When the *payin* becomes normal, the coating of mud is broken away and the pots are carefully taken out. Next the earthen products are used or sold. At present, the produced earthen goods are burnt in 3/4 gas-stoves besides the earthen furnace at Rayer Bazar.

Potteries

Like the potters of Bangladesh at large, the potters of Rayer Bazar mould various clay-goods. In accordance with the age-old traditions, they make household goods, dolls, various birds and animals, fruits, vegetables, fishes, toys, images of deities and so on. On certain orders placed, they also sometimes make terracotta images. The female members of the family usually make dolls, different kinds of birds and animals and toys. A list of the goods the potters of Rayer Bazar make is given below :

a. *Household Utensils*

   Cooking pots, pitchers, jars, bowls, plates, clay-furnces, jugs, glasses, candle-holders, lids, frying pans, flower-vases, ash-trays, clay-banks, etc.

b. *Dolls*

Mother and her child, babies sucking its mother's milk, rural woman carrying pitchers in their arms, the bride farmer, a woman with her wedding dress on, the bride and the bridegroom, kings, queens, etc.

c. *Birds and Animals*

Lions, tigers, bears, elephants, horses, deer, monkeys, oxen, cows, dogs, cats, crocodiles, snakes, peacocks, parrots, ducks, magpie robins, mynas, weaver-birds, cocks, etc.

d. *Fruits*

Mangoes, oranges, jack-fruits, blackberries, pineapples, bananas, papayas, apples, green-coconuts, guavas, etc.

e. *Vegetables*

Tomatoes, lady's fingers, lemons, pumpkins, olives, coconuts, water-melons, green bananas, brinjals, etc.

f. *Fishes*

Ruis, *katlas*, *mrigels*, shrimps, the walking fish, catfish, *puntis* (fresh water tiny-fish), etc.

g. *Toys*

Boats, cars, steamers, launches, aeroplanes, trains, cricket bats, balls, flutes, etc.

h. *Images of Deities*

Durga, Shiva, Manasha, Shitala, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Kartik, Ganesh, Kali, etc.



Clay-pots for making curd



Pitchers made by Nibaranchandra Pal

In addition to the images of deities, the potters of Rayer Bazar also mould the images of nationally and internationally renowned personalities at home and abroad. These images include Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Lalan Sha, Gautam Buddha, Vibekananda and others. Of the potteries of Rayer Bazar, Lakshmi's lids and fancy pots deserve mention. These two potteries find a nice expression of its dextrous decoration. The Lakshmi's lids are generally made to be used in the worship of Lakshmi. This lid with the image of Lakshmi drawn on it is hung in the houses of Hindu farmers in

Bangladesh. The Lakshmi's lids of Rayer Bazar have a characteristic that only the image of one deity is drawn on them. The image of the goddess, Lakshmi is drawn on the middle of the lid with *alpanas* painted around. Like the Lakshmi's lid the fancy-pots are also decorated with different pictures. Fancy pots generally resemble a standard size curry-pot. People go to houses of their relatives with sweets in this pot on the occasion of a wedding ceremony or in any local function. The fancy pots of Rayer Bazar are primarily painted yellow. Red, green and yellow lines are drawn around the neck of the pot. Sometimes motifs of leaves and creepers, birds, fishes, horses, the bride, etc., are drawn on the pots. People buy these pots on the occasions of Hindu worships, festivals and *Maharram*.



Clay-pots made by Krishnaballav Pal

Marketization of the Potteries of Rayer Bazar

The marketization of potteries at Rayer Bazar is not at all satisfactory like in other regions of Bangladesh. For want of proper marketization this traditional folk-craft is now on the verge of extinction. It is seen that the prices of the same goods differ in many ways as there is no well-controlled marketization for it. The experienced people think the wholesale buyers take this opportunity to exploit the potters. Most of the potters of Rayer Bazar opine that they incur loss as there is no specific price-list and the law of intellectual rights of the potteries.

There are two main impediments for developing a market for the potteries of Rayer Bazar. First, most of the potters have no permanent arrangements for preserving their goods. Second, they lack transportation for carrying goods for sale to the market. It is, in fact, for these two reasons that the prices of

earthenware of Rayer Bazar have gradually come down posing a great threat to the existence of this industry. For want of proper places for preservation the potters cannot mould their products in large quantities. Or they are bound to sell them at a very cheap rate.

The potteries produced at Rayer Bazar are usually sold in two ways. Firstly, the wholesale pottery-traders from all over the country purchased goods from here. Secondly, the government or many export-organizations buy fancy potteries to export them abroad. But every potter cannot avail himself of this opportunity. The exporting authorities buy earthenware only from one or two skilled potters.

Nowadays a favourable situation for buying and selling potteries is prevailing in Dhaka on the occasion of the Bengali New Year celebrations, Ekushe February and *Muharram* or in the *Bhaishakhi* fair. For this reason, most of the potters have said they make more goods before these festivals or occasions. To them, potteries are sold well from September to February. On the other hand, the period between June and August is a dull season for this business. The potters mould their clay-goods according to the festivals or celebrations. For, every festival or celebration has a demand for a particular pottery.

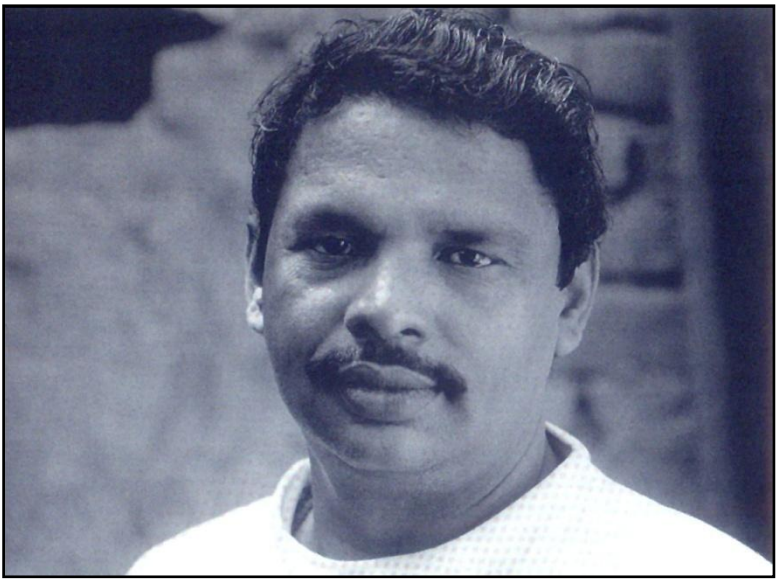
Particulars of Some Potters of Rayer Bazar

Once pottery flourished largely at Rayer Bazar. About two hundred years ago, there were more than fifty factories of pottery here (Glassie, 1977 : 226). Then skilled potters worked here. Due to poor economic condition and the threat of modern technology, the number of skilled potters has come down to a very few. Of the potters of Rayer Bazar, those who have earned fame as skilled potters are Maranchand Pal, Mohammad Ali, Amulyachandra Pal, Subhashchandra Pal, Haripada Pal, Manindra Pal, Santoshchandra Pal, Gobindachandra Pal, Nepalchandra Pal and others. Of them, we shall give accounts of two skilled potters, Maranchand Pal and Mohammad Ali. We believe the accounts of these two skilled artisans will help us know about the pottery of Rayer Bazar.

Maranchand Pal

All concerned with pottery have known the name of Maranchand Pal, one of the skilled potters of Rayer Bazar. He was born at Rayer Bazar on 4 September 1946. His father Shri Gopalhari Pal and mother Surbala PalÍboth were potters. Since his boyhood, he was interested in helping his parents in their works more than study. As a result, he did not progress so much in his formal studies. He studied up to class six. When he was 14, he, of his own accord, enrolled

himself into the then Dhaka Art School to learn ceramics. At the end of his studies, he sat for the Certificate Course Examinations in 1963 and stood first in first class.



Potter Maranchand Pal

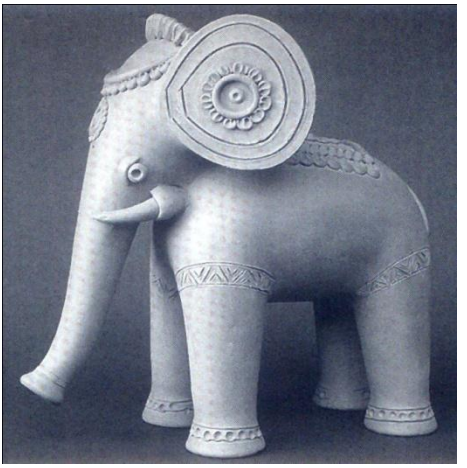
An artisan, Maranchand Pal has added a new dimension to the pottery of Bangladesh. He has superbly made a harmony between the old and the modern methods in his works. He was acquainted with the concept of harmonization between the two methods from his teacher Mir Mostafa Ali. Maranchand Pal has brought about a new era in the pottery of Bangladesh striking a balance between the old and the modern methods. He has already received many awards in recognition of his artistry. He taught ceramics at the Institute of Fine Arts in Dhaka University.

Craftsman Maranchand Pal makes various goods for everyday use with modern materials. He moulds different clay-pots. But his craftsmanship in modeling toys and other earthen articles for decorating houses earned him specialty. A folk trend of pottery finds expression in different dolls and toys moulded by him. He has harmonized the know-how of modern technology in the age-old pottery of Bengal. Maranchand Pal has used wheels to make the dolls and toys more attractive. Though he uses local materials in his factory, he has chosen gas-stoves in place of the old *Payin*. When questioned about the harmonization of the old and the modern methods, he said, “When I intend to mould flower-vases, I think

of sizes or samples of cooking pots, pitchers, pots, casks, little jars, etc. I prepare a model of flower vases from these samples. I have collected dolls like elephants, mother and child dolls, horses, etc., from various regions of Bangladesh. Using these samples I model toys and dolls with modern techniques. Various *alpanas* are used in the houses or on yards in the Lakshmi worship or other festivals of rural Bengal. I use the designs of these goods also on flower tubs, flower vases or on other earthen pots."[5]



Maranchand Pal in his workshop

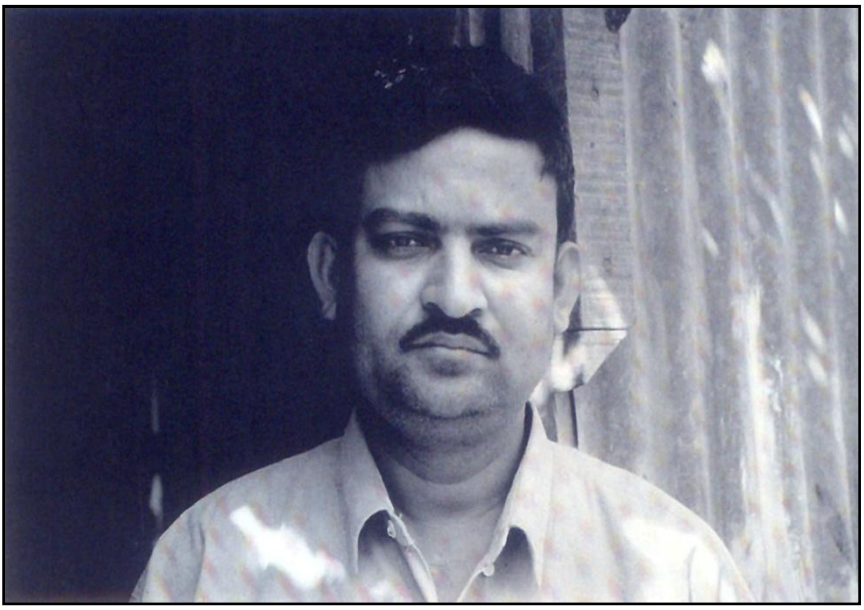


Elephant made by Maranchand Pal

He has grown very skilled in modeling various clay-pots and decorated earthenware. The earthenware he makes includes mother and child dolls, elephants, horses, cycles, cycle-riders, peacocks, candle-holders, elephant candle-holders, Bogra-horses, horses with wheels, tortoises, monkeys, boars, Bankura-horses, designed ash-trays, flower vases, flower tubs and others. He sells these goods to wholesale buyers; sometimes he sells those things to the shops of Karika, Kumudini Trust, etc. The potteries of Maranchand Pal are exported to more than fifty countries of the world including Holland, England, France, Germany, Japan, Australia, China and the United States of America. He always wants to model new things. But it is not always possible for him to make new things as he remains busy with orders placed to him. This is why, the born craftsman Maranchand Pal has much discontentment in him. So he said, "I always want to make new things. But I can do nothing as I remain busy to work for the export. I get money, but I do not have peace in mind, I don't enjoy it."[6] Yet, amidst this discontentment, the contributions of Maranchand Pal to the history of the pottery of Dhaka will be remembered.

Mohammad Ali

Of the potters of Rayer Bazar, Mohammad Ali has earned fame. He was born at Fulbaria in Dhaka on 8 August 1948. It is from his childhood friend Maranchand Pal that he received his first lesson in pottery. He did not have any knowledge in pottery by his paternal profession. Rather he grew interested in this work by seeing earthen work in the pottery factories of Maranchand Pal and one or two other potters and mastered knowledge about different stages of the trade. After he had involved in this profession fully, he would primarily make flower tubs only. He moulds dolls, pots, toys, etc., only in the old methods burning those goods with firewood in the furnace.[7]

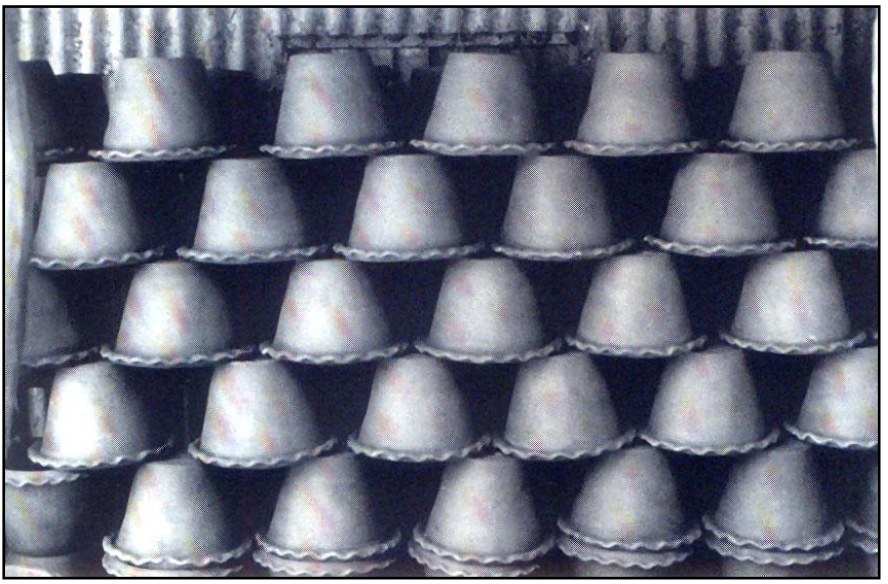


Potter Mohammad Ali

Though he had no formal education, inspired by Maranchand Pal, he started to study ceramics in secret. Besides, to observe and learn the work practically, he has gone to the industries of Munnu Ceramic, National Ceramic, P.C.I., etc., and gathered practical experience on it. But he could not keep pace with it long because it needs much money. Rather he began modeling earthenware using local clay with the help of ceramic technology. Thus he introduced a new trend in pottery.

Mohammad Ali makes flower vases, ash-trays and other earthenware very skillfully. The potteries he has produced are flower tubs, ash-trays, flower vases, toy-elephants, horses, ducks, soup-bowls, salt-pots, sugar-pots, jugs, foot-brashes, etc. The potteries moulded by Mohammad Ali are also exported abroad. He usually

models earthenware with a kind of white clay called ‘Mymensingh Clay’. Like Maranchand, he also burns his potteries in a gas-stove. This role of Mohammad Ali for developing pottery at Rayer Bazar deserves special mention.



Flower-vases made by Mohammad Ali

Conclusion

Pottery is a remarkable part of the traditions and glories of our national identity. With the amazing rise of technology, pottery loses its past glory. In fact, the glorious tradition of pottery is now about to face extinction. As a result, thousands of workers and craftsmen who had depended on this trade directly and indirectly, are now living an uncertain life. They have no pecuniary security. Many of them have been compelled to leave this profession for want of money. A dearth of government and social patronage is being widely seen in this sector. For lack of proper care, this traditional trade of Bangladesh is now on the verge of extinction. Though BSIC assists it a bit, that is insufficient compared to its requirement. As a result, many of them have moved to other jobs or taken up another profession by giving up the glorious profession of their ancestors.

Pottery is facing a great challenge today with the rise of modern industries. Aluminum, melamine and plastic have now occupied the place of the potteries. For many reasons, pottery cannot survive any longer in competition with the modern industrial technologies.

We all concerned shall have to play an initiative role to protect this ancient trade of Bangladesh from tremendous ruin. Specially the government shall have to come forward for this. It is essential to make arrangements to distribute the raw

materials, fuel or firewood, dyeing materials, etc. of pottery at a low price. It is necessary to sanction loans on easy terms to the potter community. BSIC and other organizations can play a positive part for developing a market for earthenware. All associated with the with the heritage of pottery think. if these initiatives are taken, it would be possible to protect this age-old folk-trade.

Notes

1. See, "No. 359 : The Dolni Vestonice Ceramics". Uh.edu. 1989–11. 1989–11–24. Also See, Proceedings, American Philosophical Society (Vol. 85, 1942). ISBN 1-4223-7221-9.
2. Wu, X; Zhang, C; Goldberg, P; Cohen, D. et al. (June 29, 2012).
3. Information received from the Interviews with Maranchand Pal and Subhashchandra Pal. Interviews taken on 25.07.1999 and 26.07.1999. "Early Pottery at 20,000 years ago in xianrengdong Cove, China. Science, 336 96089); 1696–700.
4. Ibid
5. Information received from the Interview with Maranchand Pal. The Interview taken on 28.07.1999 (Interview with Maranchand Pal, 1999).
6. Ibid
7. Information received from the Interview with Mohammad Ali. The Interview taken on 30.07.1999 (Interview with Mohammad Ali, 1999).

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