

Cottage Industries in the Age of Globalization: A Study on the Artistic Heritage of Santiniketan and Hatibagan Markets of West Bengal

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Abstract

Cottage industries of any state heighten its folksy artistic heritage. Summun bonum of its citizens is the main objective of any welfare state in the globe. India's current status in art and craft is in between ancient and modern, and village haats and grandiose shopping malls. The craftsmen of Santiniketan, *Karmabhumi* of R. N. Tagore, are well known for their coruscating design and perfection of craftsmanship with their eloquent antiquity and they are always searching for new destinations and opportunities in this glocalized world. Santiniketan of West Bengal is famous for its folk arts and crafts, like- batik print, kantha stitch, jute products, junk jewellery, mini leather products, and to some extent clay toys. Folksy crafts are gradually losing their significance in India with the onset of financial crisis, eye-catching machine made products, negligible raw materials, mimesis, exploitation by middlemen, inability to e-marketing etc. led to annoyed these village crafts. To find out the causative analysis of revivalism along with some feasible findings are objectives of this article. Data has been collected from primary and secondary sources. A questionnaire based comparative and analytical method of *Sonajhuri Haat* of Santiniketan and Hatibagan of Kolkata has been followed by a conceptual framework of inclusion. Findings suggested that efforts to improve quality products, financial support, technological assistance and building trust are crucial stepping stones to aggrandize handicraft industries. One collective inclusive model comprises of both central and state government, business groups, entrepreneurs, designers and civil society is needed to promote and preserve West Bengal's cultural heritage.

Key words: *Cottage industries, Sonajhuri, Summon bonum, Glocalized, Craftsmanship*

1. Introduction:

India, as a non-segregated hybridism, is fighting against the consequences of inequalities and ostracisms. It is relentlessly fostering and taking care of shared prosperities of ethnic culture for equal opportunities to develop and recognize them as a part of the modern culture of this glocalized world. In this glocalized where global and local products have equal opportunities to move freely and every one can get equal opportunities to portray themselves. All the migrated people of the Aryans, the Mongoloids, the Dravidians, the Austric, the Turkish, the Jews, the Persians, the Kushans, the Khens, the Sakas, the Huns and the Arabs brought with them their own artist's impression, sculptures, religious rituals, music, wedding rituals, festivals, dresses, philosophy, and more specifically their own food habits to India. All these elements make India a melting pot of different ethnic groups. Moreover, as a welfare nation, India is always working for the summon bonum of its heterogeneous citizens and Indian civil society who also accepted it and is doing a great job in this context. The intrinsic characteristics of new India is to allow all these migrated people to maintain their distinctive cultural identities, values and practices which were accepted here greatly.

But a critical understanding of this unity in diversity sometimes creates some sort of socio-cultural distinctiveness which helps to generate ethno-nationalist sentiments in one hand and cultural revivalism on the other. With this inspiration, these ethnic minorities try to mobilize themselves in order to protect and promote their socio-cultural and economic right. In the light of significant excluded craftsmen of *Sonajhuri haat* of Santiniketan and Hatibagan market of Kolkata, this study intends to explore the nature and extent of the degradations of the century-old handicrafts culture. Governmental initiatives are there which had a mixed impact on them. On the one hand, a section of them felt empowered as the state initiative had included them into the national mainstream. On the other hand, a sizable selection of them interprets the state inclusionary initiative as a ploy to destroy their cultural specificities. As a rights-based conceptual framework of social inclusion of the craftsmen encapsulates the principle of social equity and the active participation of public sector, private sector, civil society, and the improvement of infrastructure, technological up-gradation and skill development & training programmes for craftsmen are very much essential, so that modern pop culture along with ethnic folk culture can exist side by side.

2. Statement of the Problem:

This article intends to examine the root causes of declining of eloquent artistic artifacts like- kantha stitch, batik print, junk jewellery, jute products and mini leather works of the craftsmen in order to understand the real issues involved with. So, this analysis will help us to identify the actual factors that are responsible for job alienation of the excluded groups, like- craftsmen of Santiniketan. Therefore, the gradual abolishment of bounteous cultural and antique artistic heritage is the problem in the process of inclusion.

3. Review of literatures:

There are lot of books, articles, journals, anthologies and research works which have highlighted on many things pertaining to the handicrafts, handloom, and traditional textiles of different parts of the country and abroad. Some of them have pointed out dying conditions of the traditional process of creating the craft, relationship between the artisan and consumer community, some other have portrayed the revivalism conditions of the traditional artifacts and many of them have discussed about the raw materials, techniques, and environment friendly production process of craft industries. These studies also revealed the customer's choice approach to purchase the products. A few of them have reviewed here.

In this article 'Study of Handicraft Industry Strategies and Its Implications in Marketing', author Oza Megha S. argued how handicraft industries form a cultural heritage of any country in the world. Some of the Strengths like- development of strong supply chain; Weaknesses like- lack of adequate finance and technological skills; Opportunities like- large scale trained and skilled labour and Threats like- high price of hand made products and low quality has been pointed out here. Role of the middlemen for finance, raw materials and market for the finished products also discussed here with some probable suggestions. (Megha, pp. 874-877)

In their work 'Handicraft Sector: The Comforting Sector of Employment Review', Jahangir Ahmad Bhat and Pushpender Yadav tried to explain the importance of employment in the handicraft sector in India along with many other sectors like- agricultural, modern industries and public sectors in today's competitive and demand driven market. They also highlighted on economic value of handicrafts industries for individual and as well as for the national economy with some initiatives such as- introduction of vocational courses at school level and strategies for technological use in to this field; craftsmen will be brought under the provisions of the act of employment laws and lastly, the active participation of the entrepreneurs in the events of craftsmen. (Bhat and Yadav, pp. 111-117)

Report of the Steering Committee on Handlooms and Handicrafts consists of ten chapters and nine annexure. Chapter 2-5 talked about Handlooms and 6-9 which deals with Handicraft and chapter 10 illustrated some of the recommendations for handloom and handicrafts sectors. Several Schemes/Programmes for the Handloom Sector in the Eleventh Plan have been taken such as- Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme (IHDS), Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS), Diversified Handloom Development Scheme (DHDS), Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS) etc. Major Challenges facing by the Handloom Sector are- Welfare and Livelihood of Weavers including Women, Rising Input Costs, Sparse Credit Coverage and High Cost, Marketing Bottlenecks, Poor Institutional Management, Poor Policy Dissemination, Infrastructure gaps, Monitoring and Evaluation, Education, Skills, Research and Training etc. Schemes/Programmes for the Handicrafts Sector in the Eleventh Plan: The Schemes are aimed at providing welfare measures to the artisans for holistic and sustainable development of the handicrafts sector. These Schemes are- Babasaheb Ambedker Hastshilp Vikas Yojna (AHVY), Design and Technology Upgradation Scheme (DTUS), Marketing Support and Services Scheme (MSS), Human Resources Development Scheme (HRD), Handicrafts Artisans' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme, Research and Development Scheme (R&D) and Scheme for Infrastructure/capital. Major challenges of craftsmen are lack of resources like- lack of resource mapping and handicrafts census, credits and raw materials, Infrastructure and technological gaps, Monitoring and Evaluation, Regional Imbalances, Limited role of private enterprise etc. Major recommendations for craftsmen or artisan class are cluster development interventions, credits, design and technology up gradation, marketing promotion, infrastructure, human resource development & training and social security in the twelfth plan. (Report of the Steering Committee on Handlooms and Handicrafts constituted for the Twelfth Five Year Plan 2012 – 2017)

4. Research Gap:

On reviewing the existing literatures on gradual declining of craftsmanship and their exclusion, one can identify a noticeable research gap. Some scholars and researchers have identified multidimensional aspects of exclusion and inclusion of the downtrodden sections on the grounds of culture including the inclusive role of the PRIs, women's representation in politics from backward classes, their empowerment, etc. But there is hardly any study on the true nature of cultural inclusion of craftsmen of Santiniketan. The present article is a humble attempt to fill this above mentioned research gap.

5. Objectives of the Study:

Interacting with 200 'stakeholders' i.e. people who make and sell their artifacts at Sonajhuri *haat* of Santiniketan and Hatibagan market of Kolkata, the present study attempts to examine the root causes of socio-economic distinctiveness of craftsman community of Santiniketan and its adjacent areas of Birbhum district and as well as of craftsmen of Hatibagan market. It focuses on the process of inclusion that can ensure the socio-cultural development of craftsmen. To find out causal explanations of revivalism along with some probable findings are objectives of this article. The specific objectives of the article are: i) to explore the paths through which the process of gradual declining of the handicrafts industries under the influence of commercialization has been started; ii) to analyze various socio-cultural and economic factors that have been contributed to the growth of modern factory made craft culture; iii) to find out the relationship between modern factory made popular products and ethnic ancestral handicrafts products; iv) and also try to identify strategies for promoting product of handicraft industries.

6. Methodology:

To reach the objectives, data has been collected from primary and to some extent from secondary sources to get detailed information regarding handicrafts industries and ethnic folk culture. An extensive study has been done on a questionnaire-based comparative and analytical method. It has been adopted to get elicit information regarding gradual abolishment of handicrafts industries and at

the same time, the role of the modern factory made popular products and handmade ancestral goods like- junk jewelries, kantha stitch, batik print, jute products and mini leather works which unite all ethnic ancestral artifacts in a common basket by using the methodology of cultural inclusion.

7. Technique of the data collection:

A simple random data collection technique has been used in this study. In some cases (variables), 5 points Likert scale (Strongly yes, partially yes, Indifferent, Partially no and strongly no) has been used to get in-depth data on this fields. Two different markets (Sonajhuri *haat* and Hatibagan market) have been chosen and respondents were the sellers alone. Some electronic gadgets have been used in the study.

8. Universe of the study:

Two different markets i.e. Sonajhuri *haat* of Birbhum district and Hatibagan market of Kolkata have been purposively selected as the universe of my study.

Sonajhuri *haat*: Popularly known as the Sonajhuri *haat* which is a shopping heaven every Saturday on the banks of Khoai River. It is an open air market where you can buy tribal items and many more stuffs while listening to wonderful baul songs, sung by some local *bauls* (local folk artists) sitting aside.

Hatibagan market: Hatibagan is one of the oldest traditional markets in Kolkata city. One can buy typical Bengali silk and cotton saris here. Above all this market is famous for factory made junk jewelries and to some extent handmade artifacts.

Table no 1	Sample Size
Sonajhuri <i>haat</i>	100
Hatibagan market	100

This table portrays the universe of the study of two selected markets. These are Sonajhuri *haat* (market) of Santiniketan, Birbhum district and Hatibagan market of Kolkata. 100 respondents each from these two markets have been selected and interviewed for this study.

9. Hypotheses:

Socio-cultural, economic and to some extent political factors are leading to the socio-cultural and economic up-liftment of the people associated with the handicraft industries. Hypotheses suggest that incremental growth of the modern popular culture may further lead to the gradual process of declining of ethnic ancestral craft culture.

10. Research Questions:

This study tries to inter-relate the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that are responsible for the growth of deprivation among craftsmen. In this study, through the process of inclusion, the emancipation of craftsmen has been discussed. Keep all these considerations in mind, this study attempts to find out some rational answers to the following questions-

- Why are the traditional handicraft products of craftsmen of society declining and losing its importance gradually?
- Why are modern machine made junk commodities become more popular?
- How far are the socio-cultural, economic and political factors responsible for the declining of ethnic ancestral artifacts with the advent of the craftsmen of Sonajhuri *haat*?

Concept of handicrafts/artifacts: "UNESCO clearly defines handicraft as artesian product are those produced by artisanal products are those produced by artisan either completely by hand or with help of mechanical devices which are utilities, authentic, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously, socially symbolic and significant in nature." (Oza Megha S.) By analyzing multi-dynamic factors covering raw materials, middlemen, income, education, culture, marketing of finished products, role of the new social mass media, financial institutions and political parties, one conceptual framework of inclusion has been used to explain the root causes of the gradual declining of the ancestral handicraft cultures.

11. Governmental initiatives:

Both central and state government has taken various programmes and policies for the betterment of cottage industries in India. The National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP), a national government initiative includes such various schemes and components such as the Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme; Block-level cluster; Handloom Marketing Assistance; Weavers' MUDRA Scheme; Education of Handloom Weavers and Their Childers; India Handloom Brand; Yarn Supply Scheme; E-commerce; Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme (IHDS); Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme; Mill Gate Price Scheme (MGPS); Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme; Revival, Reform and Restructuring Package; Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS) etc. The objective of these schemes and measures is to develop mega handloom clusters with better storage facilities, financial assistance, technology up-gradation in pre-loom/on-loom/post-loom operations, weaving shed, skill up-gradation, design inputs, health facilities etc. in popular geographical locations which must have specific products.

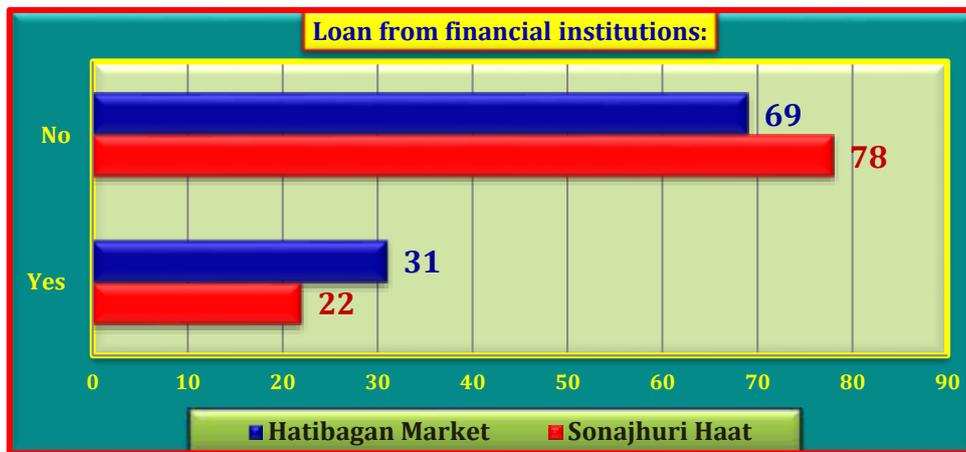
Government of West Bengal also has taken some initiatives through the West Bengal Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited under the direct control of the Department of MSME and Textiles Department. For these purpose outlets of MANJUSHA is being

used systematically. Marketing of handicrafts and handloom products produced by folk artists is doing through MANJUSHA outlets/digital platforms/bulk supply. Apart from providing them a commercial platform, MANJUSHA works relentlessly for the capacity building, quality control, financial assistance and technological up-gradation.

12. Analysis of the field data:

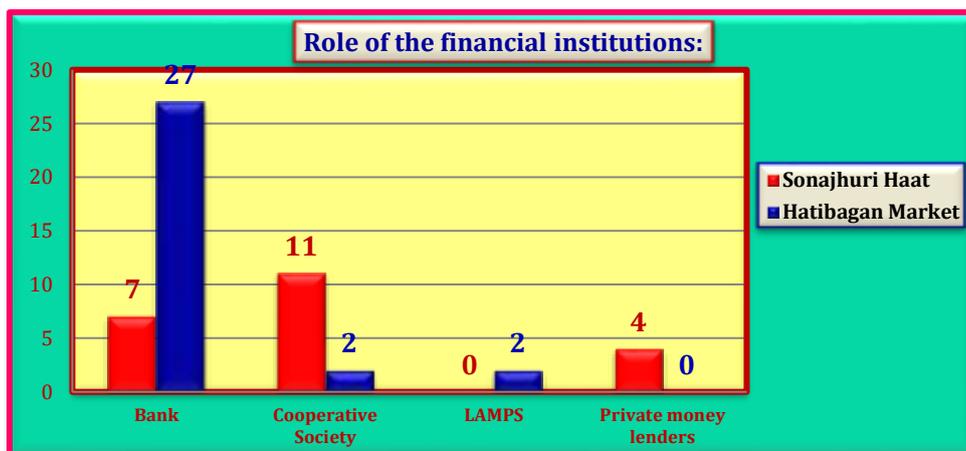
This study has been started with a vision to understand the actual picture of the socio-cultural, financial and political conditions of the craftsmen community in West Bengal and put forward their present status from all sides of inclusion with the help of statistical analysis. This article along with the current profile of the craftsmen of Sonajhuri area of Santiniketan and Hatibagan of Kolkata, give emphasized on some variables such as - financial conditions (loan taken form financial institutions), alternative profession (any other profession other than this one), rate and sale of the handicraft products, educational position, socio-cultural status, gender status, role of the governments and intervention of the political parties. On the basis of these variables by using questionnaire based survey technique, field data have been collected from both these two markets. After collecting raw data from the field, statistical tools like- Excel sheet analysis such as- bar diagram, pie chart, column chart, line chart, bubble chart, and scattered chart etc. had been used for the purpose of statistical analysis. So, keep these all in mind, I have chosen these two extreme opposite market/haat from two different places.

13. Loan from any financial institutions:



This bar chart (No. 2) portrays the financial status of the households of the craftsmen. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 78 of them replied no, they did not taken any loan and 22 of them replied yes they took loans from banks, cooperative society, etc. when they were asked have you taken any loan from any financial institutions?. Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 69 of them replied no, they did not taken any loan and 31 of them replied yes they took loans from banks, cooperative society, etc. when they were asked the same question. The result output is nearly same which means their economic condition is not so bad. A small number of them generally take loans from many financial institutions.

14. Role of the financial institutions:



This column chart (No. 3) also shows the picture of financial transaction of craftsmen from which financial institutions they took their loans? Out of 22 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 7 of them have taken loan from Bank, 11 of them have taken loan from Cooperative society, 4 of them have taken loan from private money lenders and no one has taken loan from Large Area Multipurpose Society, when they were asked from where you are getting a loan? Out of 31 respondents in Hatibagan market, 27 of them have taken loan from Bank, 2 of them have taken loan from Cooperative society, 2 of them have taken loan from Large Area Multipurpose

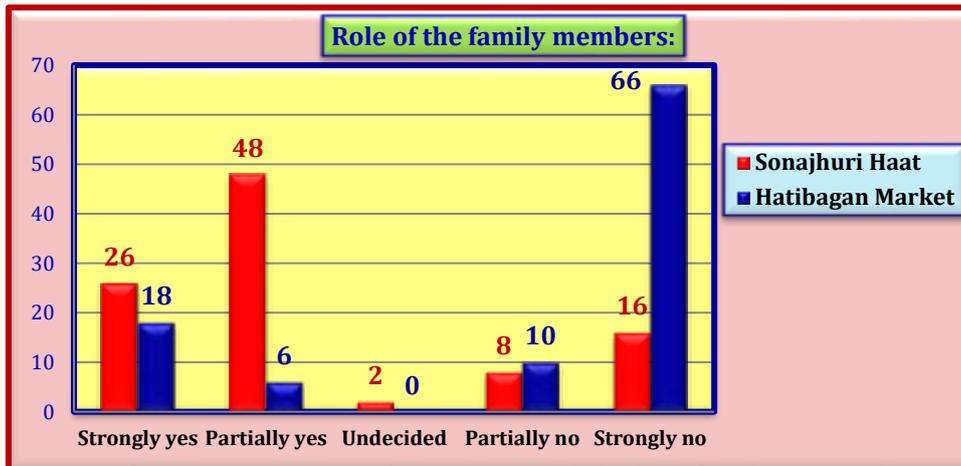
Society and no one has taken loan from private money lenders, when they were asked the same question. In both cases, most of them had taken their loans from bank and cooperative society.

15. Permanent stalls/Shops:



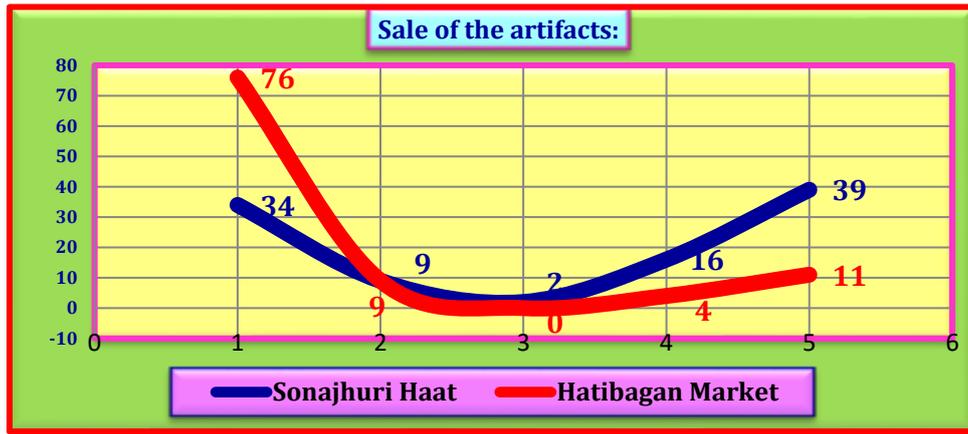
This column chart (No. 4) also shows the picture of permanent stalls other than this one at any places of every craftsman of both these two markets. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 8 of them have their permanent stalls in separated places and 92 of them replied that they don't have their permanent stall when they were asked do you have any permanent stalls other than this one? Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 82 of them have their permanent stalls in separated places and 8 of them replied that they don't have their permanent stall when they were asked the same question. In this case, two different findings have come out. One of them is the financial conditions of craftsmen of Hatibagan market area is better than the craftsmen of Sonajhuri area.

16. Role of the family members:



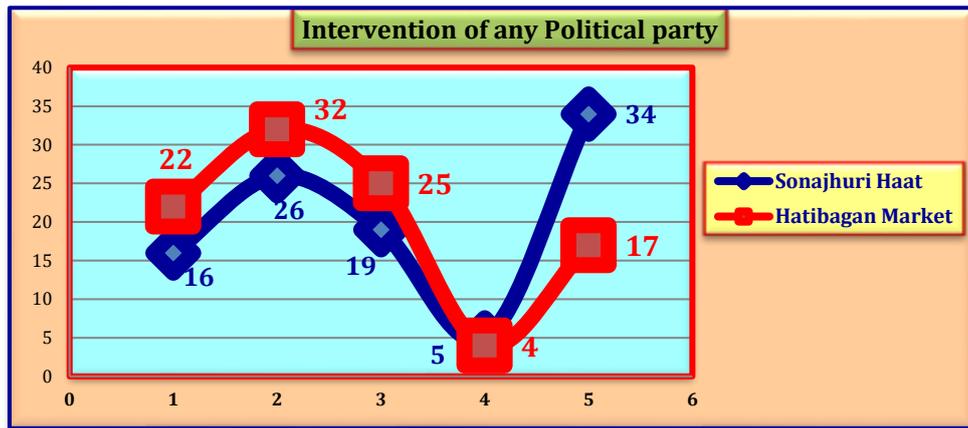
This column chart (No. 5) shows the picture of association of family members of craftsman of both these two markets in to this business. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 26 of them have replied with strongly yes, 48 of them have replied with partially yes, 16 of them have replied with strongly no, 8 of them have replied with partially no and 2 of them remained undecided when they were asked does all the family members of yours attached with this cottage business? Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 18 of them have replied with strongly yes, 6 of them have replied with partially yes, 66 of them have replied with strongly no and 10 of them have replied with partially no when they were asked the same question. In this case, two different findings have come out. On the one hand, 48% craftsmen of Sonajhuri *haat* said that some of the family members have a close connection with their age old handicraft business. At the same time, male members of them have a close involvement with agriculture and students of their family goes to the school. Many of them argued that after coming back from school, they help their family business. While on the other hand, 66% craftsmen of Hatibagan market area said that there is no connection of other family members with them, because they have their own business or job.

17. Sale of the artifacts:



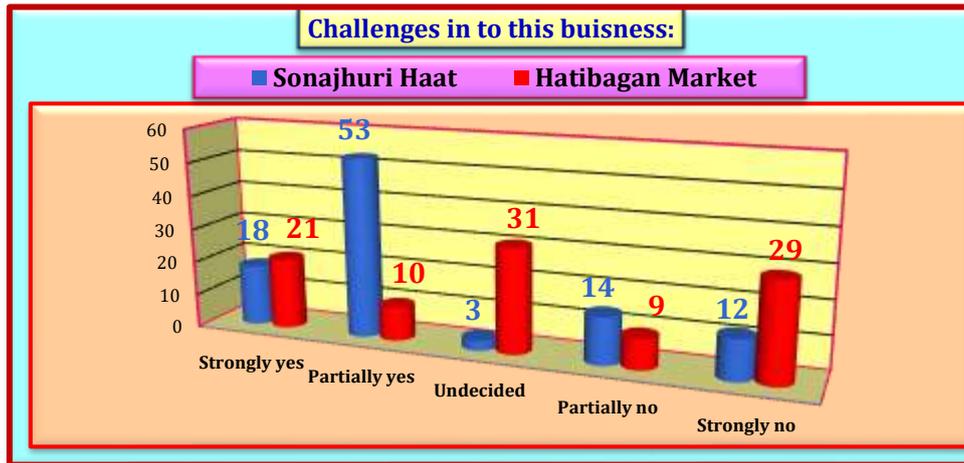
This line chart (No. 6) shows the picture of the sale of handicraft products of both these two markets. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 39 of them have replied with strongly no, 16 of them have replied with partially no, 34 of them have replied with strongly yes, 9 of them have replied with partially yes and 2 of them remained undecided when they were asked does the sale of these artifacts increase occasionally? Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 11 of them have replied with strongly no, 4 of them have replied with partially no, 76 of them have replied with strongly yes and 9 of them have replied with partially yes, when they were asked the same question. In this case, there is a slight difference in between these two markets. Maybe there is a chance of incensement of rate of these products occasionally, but it was absent in Sonajhuri *haat*.

18. Intervention of any political party:



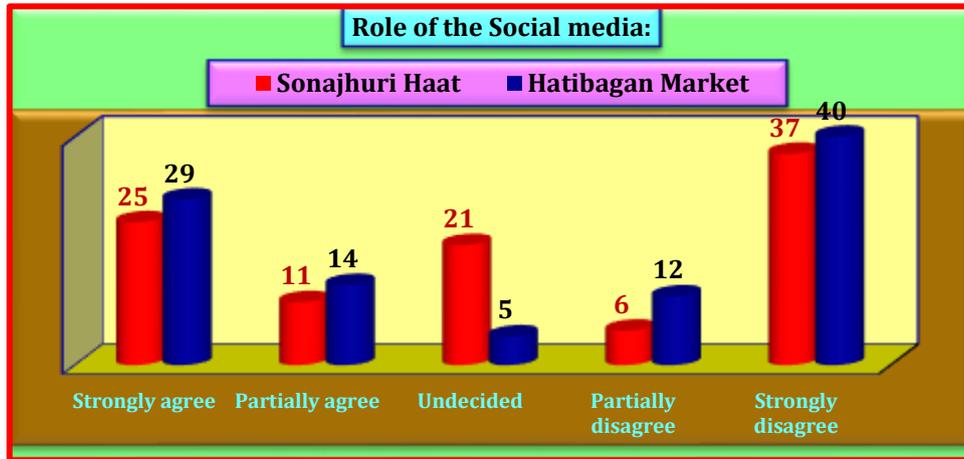
This scattered chart (No. 7) shows the picture of the intervention of any political party to do the business over there in these two markets. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 34 of them have replied with strongly no, 5 of them have replied with partially no, 16 of them have replied with strongly yes, 26 of them have replied with partially yes and 19 of them remained undecided when they were asked is there any intervention of any political party to do the business over there? Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 17 of them have replied with strongly no, 4 of them have replied with partially no, 22 of them have replied with strongly yes and 32 of them have replied with partially yes, and 25 of them remained undecided when they were asked the same question. In both these two markets, one astonishing point is that a huge number of respondents remained undecided. In Sonajhuri *haat* 19% and in Hatibagan 25% of them remained undecided. There is a tendency of remained indifferent whenever asked question relating to the interference of any political party in to this business.

19. Challenges into this business:



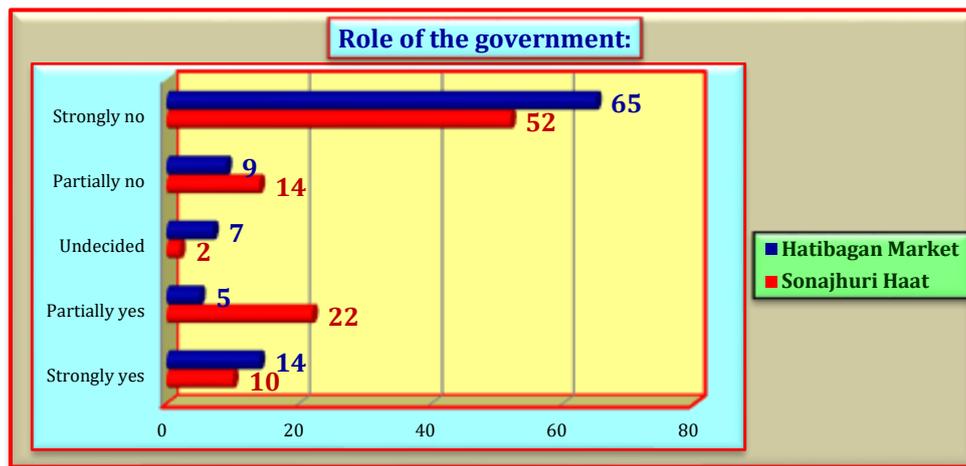
This column chart (No. 8) shows the picture of challenges facing by the craftsmen of these two markets. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 18 of them have replied with strongly yes, 53 of them have replied with partially yes, 12 of them have replied with strongly no, 14 of them have replied with partially no and 3 of them remained undecided when they were asked do you face any challenges into this business. Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 21 of them have replied with strongly yes, 10 of them have replied with partially yes, 29 of them have replied with strongly no and 9 of them have replied with partially no, and 31 of them remained undecided when they were asked the same question. In both these two markets, two different pictures have come out. In Sonajhuri *haat* 53% relied with partially yes which means there are some problems facing by the craftsmen like- financial, administrative, family related and to some extend political whereas in Hatibagan 31% of them remained undecided. But there are common challenges on which Craftsmen from Sonajhuri *haat* and Hatibagan market responded unhesitatingly and agreed on many things while in some cases they argued differently. The problems they are facing in their day to day live are- 1) Financial crisis; 2) High cost of raw materials; 3) Insufficient Marketing; 4) Role of the middleman; 5) Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation; 6) Lack of technological support; 7) Infrastructural gaps; 8) Lack of skill development and training programmes; 9) Inadequate political will; 10) Limited role of private sectors; and 11) Absence of artifacts-exchange programmes.

20. Role of the social media:



This column chart (No. 9) shows the picture of the new social mass media to expand your business. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 25 of them have replied with strongly agree, 11 of them have replied with partially agree, 37 of them have replied with strongly disagree, 6 of them have replied with partially disagree and 21 of them remained undecided when they were asked are the new social mass media helpful to expand your business? Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 29 of them have replied with strongly agree, 14 of them have replied with partially agree, 40 of them have replied with strongly disagree and 12 of them have replied with partially agree, and 21 of them remained undecided when they were asked the same question. Nearly same result has come out from both these two market. Some of them have their YouTube channel where they displayed their products and anyone who is interested to purchase they may contact them through their YouTube channel.

21. Role of the government:



This Bar chart (No. 10) shows the picture of the financial support from the government in this handicraft business. Out of 100 respondents in Sonajhuri *haat*, 52 of them have replied with strongly no, 14 of them have replied with partially no, 10 of them have replied with strongly yes, 22 of them have replied with partially yes and 2 of them remained undecided when they were asked have you received any financial support from the government. Out of 100 respondents in Hatibagan market, 65 of them have replied with strongly no, 9 of them have replied with partially no, 14 of them have replied with strongly yes and 5 of them have replied with partially yes and 7 of them remained undecided when they were asked the same question. Nearly the same result has come out from both these two market. 52% craftsmen of Sonajhuri *haat* have replied with strongly no and 65% craftsmen of Hatibagan market which means they don't have taken any loan from the government.

22. Findings:

The response that has come out from the field study is not homogenous. It is heterogenous in nature.

- A section of the craftsmen agreed with the view that ancient craft culture of them is gradually disappearing due to the expansions of modern pop cultures.
- A sizable section of the craftsmen community interprets the state inclusionary initiatives as a ploy to destroy their ethnic specificities and resorts to asserting their ethnic identities in a social uncertainty.
- A section of them argued differently. To them, they are able to preserve their own ancestral craft practices within the existing socio-cultural, economic and political set-up.

23. Challenges to the Craftsmen:

One noteworthy thing is that craftsmen of both Sonajhuri *haat* and Hatibagan market responded unhesitatingly and agreed on many things while in some cases they argued differently. The problems they are facing in their day to day live are nearly same of these two places. These are – 1) Financial crisis; 2) High cost of raw materials; 3) Poor marketing management; 4) Role of the middleman; 5) Lack of monitoring and evaluation; 6) Lack of technological support; 7) Lack of skill development and training programmes; 8) Inadequate political will; 9) Limited role of the private sectors; 10) Absence of artifacts exchange programmes.

24. Actionable plans may be taken to upgrade this craftsmanship:

For the sustainable development of these antiques artistic cottage industries and the development of this artisan class of Sonajhuri of Santiniketan and Hatibagan market some actionable plans may be taken by the government. These are- 1) Social security; 2) Resource mapping; 3) Infrastructural development; 4) Technological up-gradation; 5) Skill development & Training programmes; 6) Marketing management; 7) Active participation of the private sectors: entrepreneurship; 8) Pro-Craftsmen policies formulation and implementation by the governments; 9) Role of the designers; 10) Role of the civil society; and 11) Craft exchange programmes.

25. Conclusion:

Many artistic artifacts are there in different regions of the whole country. This study opined that there are some cultural differences between the craft culture of Santiniketan and Kolkata. Every notion of crafts culture represents distinct identity of particular community people and this distinction needs to be restored. This study also argued for a rights-based collective conceptual framework of the cultural inclusion of the Craftsmen community as a whole with the principle of social equity and individual dignity. Therefore, the craftsmen and artisan community can enjoy freely their liberty of folk craft practices, and cultural rituals with self-dignity along with the liberty of modern factory made pop culture.

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