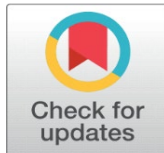
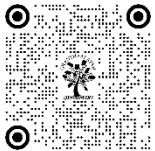


WOMEN BEHIND WHEELS EXPLORING THE CLAY POTTERY FROM THIRUCHIGADI, NILGIRIS, TAMIL NĀDU

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ABSTRACT

Black pottery made by the women of Kota tribe of Nilgiri Hills holds a unique identity of their craft and craftsmanship. A group of these women potters are names as “Kov” by the natives.

This research study on Black pottery focuses on the traditional art of clay pottery in Thiruchigadi, a small town in Tamil Nadu's gorgeous Nilgiris region. This study strives to reveal the historical significance, cultural context, and modern relevance of the age-old trade by focusing on the often-overlooked role of women potters. The extraordinary artistry, its evolution over ages and relevance of preserving the art and craft for the modern age. Adding lights on the sophisticated, unique, environmentally sustainable processes, designs, motifs, and the ritualistic essence that passed down through generations of female craftspeople through ethnographic observations, interviews, news articles, archival data, and research.

The research shows these women's strong sense of individuality, strong spirit, added contribution to the cultural skillset and a contribution towards retaining a thriving craft legacy by examining the socioeconomic dynamics and obstacles they encounter.

Keywords: Clay Pottery, Crafts of India, Women Potterer, Kota Tribe, Tamil Nadu

1. INTRODUCTION

Thiruchigadi is already special because only women in the Kota tribe manufacture ceramics. The Kota people refer to their settlements as "Tirchkaad," although they use somewhat different names. The hamlet is located in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, in the Udhamandalam taluk, close to Kotagiri town. [Aiyar \(2023\)](#)

What makes them even more remarkable is that they have made a commercial activity such as pottery an essential part of their culture.

Pottery is a ritual performed with heart and spirit in this community, not a technique. The clay is retrieved at the start of their 50-day annual winter carnival. The head priest and his wife lead a procession of artisans to the site of clay extraction. The tribe regards this location as sacred. Consider a lushly green hilly place with bristling chilly air. While the female artisans pull up clay from the earth, musicians perform a particular tune called 'Mann et kod' (Take the clay) and traditional musical instruments like the flute and drums. This lovely image is simply the beginning of the pottery-making process. Similar joyful rites are performed for the next four months while the pots are being manufactured. During this time, no strangers are permitted. The entire winter season is dedicated to pottery since the winter sun and air help the pots dry rapidly. To protect them from deadly stings, their pottery is oxidized by sprinkling it with saamai husks before baking. The finished pots are utilised in rituals. Some pots are designed in such a way that their porosity diminishes, making them appropriate for use as culinary tools [Govindharaj \(2023\)](#).

The ancient tribes are wonderful in how they bring out the best in nature and their beliefs and maintain them even in current times. The ladies of this tribe have consistently followed the art of pottery throughout the millennia. Women have been the driving force behind every step of the process, from digging clay from neighbouring lands to expertly moulding and shaping it [David \(2017\)](#). The males, on the other hand, shared their knowledge by creating the wheel. Before stainless steel and plastic took over the market, the Kota's magnificent clay pots adorned the homes of these hills.

The objective of this research paper is to examine the primitive Kota tribes of Nilgiris from Tamil Nadu, focusing on the Pottery made by the women by using black clay, process involved in making from material extraction to a complete finished product. The craftsmanship involved to make every black clay pottery culturally, ritualistically, and spiritually an object of worship.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Kota Women Making Pots

Source [The British Library. \(2008, September 12\)](#). Kota Women, Making Pots.

2. THE TRIBE “KOTA COMMUNITY STRUCTURE”

The Kotas are a small community of roughly 1,500-2,000 people who live in seven villages in South India's Nilgiris Hills. The government of India has identified

them as Scheduled Tribes, and they are known in Indian-language titles such as *divsi* (original dweller) and *paankui makka* (ancient-race people). Kotagiri was once known as 'Kota-Keri,' which literally means the street or lines of the Kotas' house. Members of the Kota tribes who still follow ancient customs and live as craftsmen showing their talent in baking, terracotta, and pottery primarily inhabit Kotagiri. The British utilised these buildings as a summer resort, following which the Kota tribes relocated to Aggal hamlet in 1911. With the latest advancement technology, the town is quickly becoming commercial [Kota Pottery](#). (n.d.).

About the year BCE, the South Dravidian subgroup split off from the Kotas' own language, which is connected to the Dravidian language family. Dravidian linguistics pioneer Murray Barnson Emeneau thoroughly examined their language. Their social structures differed from those of the dominant Indian culture, but they had certain similarities with the Nair caste, the Todas, and other native populations living in nearby Kerala [David \(2017b\)](#).

Wherever possible, it was informed by fraternal polygyny. Unlike Hinduism, Kota religion believed in non-anthropomorphic male deities and a female deity. Many mainstream Hindu deities have also been accepted into the Kota pantheon since the 1940s, and temples in Tamil architecture have been built to suit their devotion. They've had specialised groups of priests to worship their deities on their behalf.

Although they go by "Kota" in English, they are also referred to by synonyms for this term and their ethnonym, kv, in regional tongues. The Toda language of the nearby Nilgiri plateau tribe and the Kota language, kv mnt, are closely related linguistically. Both Tamil and Malayalam are part of the Dravidian language family, and their common ancestor is thought to have split off more than 2,000 years ago. The palatalization rule—which argues that some consonants in modern Tamil, such the word "do or make," *cey-*, show a systematic phonetic shift in some syllables from the velum in the back of the mouth to the roof of the mouth—is the basis for this dating. The first consonant in the Kota cognate, *key-*, is an archaic characteristic that has been lost in Tamil and Malayalam [Aiyar \(2023\)](#).

Figure 2



Figure 2 Map of Nilgiris

Source <https://badaga.co/2018/04/27/the-nilgiris-district-150-years-old/>

Figure 3



Figure 3 Black Pottery

Source <https://ruralindiaonline.org/media/images/Women-at-the-wheel-in-the-Nilgiris-NewDesi.max-1400x1120.jpg>

Figure 4



Figure 4 Sculptures and Pots Made from Black Clay

Source <https://ruralindiaonline.org/media/images/Women-at-the-wheel-in-the-Nilgiris-PotCloseUp.height-560.jpg>

In their isolation from the rest of the world, the kotas are artisans and mechanics. They manufacture clay pots for everyday usage, as well as metal equipment such as axes, knives, jewellery, and other metal works. The kota village, known as a kokkal, is a linear style of residence with thirty to sixty dwellings organised into two or three 'Keris'. The kota people are fair skinned with a copper complexion, of average height, and of solid build. According to kota tradition, a man's hair should not be cut short or shaved. A shirt and a mundu (lungi) are worn by men, and a single piece of white coarse cloth called 'Kir' is worn by women. Their traditional dress is known as 'varad,' which is a white bed-spread material thrown around the body by both men and women. Kadk (earrings) are worn by both men and women.

The kotas are the only artisan community on the Nilgiris' hills. The Kota women are pottery experts. Their tribal council, known as koot, upholds the community's conventional customs. The kotas practise Hinduism and revere their deities, Kambatrayan and Kambatiswari, as Ayyanor and Ammanor. In present times, a few family continue to practise the trade of creating clay potteries, whilst the kota tribe

embraced formal education, obtained positions in various institutions, and formed leadership within their seven villages. The Kotas and the other native people in the area have coexisted for many years. According to historian Dr. Paul Hockings (1980), "there is not a settlement anywhere on the plateau that would be more than a morning's walk from a Kota village and thus conveniently accessible to all Badaga as well as Toda settlements," the Badaga and Toda communities are closely related [Redscarab. \(2012\)](#).

3. THE STATUS OF KOTA WOMEN

Compared to other traditional Indian groups, women were more involved in various economic endeavours and had greater control over who they married. They had a right to separation.

Besides, all they were doing was ceramics. Observers from the west in the past saw that Kota women avoided strangers, but Toda women welcomed guests into their villages. In religious ceremonies, priests from Kota's wives played an equally important role as ritualists. Women known as "pembacol," who are enthralled with flute music, were involved in important communal decisions. In addition, women had specific duties in social events, farming, and household chores.

4. THE CRAFT OF MAKING CLAY POTTERY

Women of the Kota tribe make black clay ceramics. Unlike most other clay handicrafts, Kota pottery employs black clay. The products feature fine, intricate designs that set them apart. The women handle the entire process, from material extraction to moulding, sculpting, planning, and firing. The tribe's stone ceramic goods are utilised not just for sacred purposes, but also as everyday things for cooking, cleaning, water and grain storage, utensils, clay oil lamps and pipes, and so on [Redscarab. \(2012\)](#).

The extraction of clay begins with a 50-day annual festival honouring their deity Kamtraaya and his wife Ayanoor. It begins in December/January on the first Monday after Amavasya (no-moon night). The procession is led by the senior priest and his wife to the sacred clay place. Musicians perform a special tune called 'Mann et Kod,' which translates to "take the clay." On the 'Kolle' [played on the flute], the tappit and dobbar [played on drums], and a Kobb [played on Bugle a brass trumpet], as first the Karpmann denoting the extraction of [Black clay] and later the avarmann denoting the extraction of [Grey clay] [Govindharaj \(2023\)](#).

The black clay pots are made over a four-month period in September, October, November, and December, with the winter weather utilising sunlight and air to naturally dry the pots. Sometimes black clay is blended with sand. It takes hours to shape the cylindrical pot into a circular shape by scraping it from the inside with a smooth round stone and smoothing it out with a wooden paddle. In order to prevent stress cracks from forming, the stone and paddle must move in unison as this also reduces porosity [Govindharaj \(2023\)](#). Although some of these clay pots are handcrafted, the most are wheel turned. Some vessels are decorated with basic linear designs such as wavy lines, Chevrons, or oblique lines, and fingertip impressions are sometimes used to create decorative patterns. The majority of black clay pottery is manufactured for everyday use; however, a few are designed for ritual and funeral uses [David \(2017b\)](#).

The pot making craft is a joint venture in which both men and women take part. Men participate in the creation of the wheel and assist the women with the excavation and heating of the clay. The women are solely responsible for shaping

the pots and padding the wheel. The book says that although there are no limitations on men working with clay to make pots, such situations are uncommon [David \(2017b\)](#).

A potter never works by herself. She has at least one less talented but equally capable assistant. Her job is to turn the wheel as the pot is being formed by the master potter. When it appears that finer motions are being made, the co-potter always seems to know when to turn the wheel quickly and when to slow it down [Kota Pottery. \(n.d.\)](#).

5. UNIQUENESS AND EVOLUTION OF THIRUCHIGADI CLAY POTTERY

This thousand-year-old ceramic tradition has evolved across centuries, with women playing an important role in its preservation and development. We dig into the uniqueness and design of Thiruchigadi's clay pottery in this exploration, tracking its evolution over the decades under the skilled hands of women artists. Thiruchigadi's pottery history extends back to antiquity, possibly to the Sangam period. Pottery made in this region was used for both utilitarian and decorative purposes, and evidence of this art form can be discovered in archaeological sites all over the Nilgiris region. These artefacts not only provide information on the people's way of life, but also on the everlasting beauty of Thiruchigadi pottery [Haldorai \(2012\)](#).

Distinctive Designs: Thiruchigadi pottery features a diverse range of designs that are culturally meaningful as well as aesthetically beautiful. Peacocks, elephants, floral designs, and geometric shapes are among the traditional motifs. These motifs are frequently hand-painted with natural colours, resulting in vivid and detailed works of art. Thiruchigadi pottery is not only ornamental; it also serves a variety of utilitarian and ritualistic uses. Clay pots are used to store grains, water, and other domestic supplies, whereas ceremonial pots are utilised in religious rites and rituals. The flexibility of these works illustrates the local culture's deep affinity to art.

Natural Materials: Thiruchigadi pottery is distinguished by its use of locally obtained clay and natural colours. This environmentally friendly approach not only protects the environment, but it also contributes to the distinct earthy aroma and texture that distinguishes these clay pieces.

All Kota pots are burnished, which means that they are polished with a small round stone before they are completely dry. By giving the surface a sheen, burnishing improves the texture and durability of the pots. During Kota festivals, clay collection is seen to be auspicious, and a lengthy ceremony is held. The sound of trumpets summons villagers to the village's focal point. Following the musicians, who are the first people to leave the hamlet, everyone else makes their way to the mud gathering area. To represent the activities, the priest's wife starts the digging first, followed by other women. The digging is subsequently taken up by the guys [Kota Pottery. \(n.d.\)](#).

"Kota pottery played a crucial part in each of the Badaga homes because it was used for cooking, making prasadam at temples during festivals, hosting housewarming celebrations, and even holding funerals. Due to poor communication and transportation infrastructure, Kota pottery was the only locally accessible supply of cooking utensils in the hill area before Independence. The Kota pots were an essential component of these communities up until the 1930s. According to Matha Gowder, a local elder, they were replaced after Independence by inexpensive

clay pots and aluminum and stainless-steel utensils acquired from outside the region. They are now unemployed due to the invention of aluminum in the 20th century, and they are forced to labor as landless laborers in the potato and tea gardens. Their customary terracotta jewelry has been swapped out for gold, driving them almost completely into poverty [Aiyar \(2023\)](#), [Haldorai \(2012\)](#).

In addition to making pots for use in cooking and ceremonies, Kotas also crafted metal equipment like axes and knives for use in cutting firewood, and they gave these things to the Badaga villages close to Kota hamlets. I want to entice visitors and young people from the Nilgiris to the Art Gallery," he declared. Recently, there has been support for conservationists.

6. WOMEN IN EVOLUTION

When the Europeans arrived, Kota women worked in their huts, lacking the bravery and kindness of Todas. They carry out housework, gather firewood, and make earthenware for cooking and dairy products out of black clay. Indian farmers known as kotas grow staples for the market, including rice, vegetables, beans, potatoes, and carrots. They employ artificial fertilizers and cultivate tea without thinking about the environment or public health.

Kotas own domestic animals such as sheep, dogs, cats, and beekeeping. They serve a variety of foods, rice, udk, and soup every day. Compared to other tribes, the Kotas consume leaves and vegetation, are vegetarians, and give mutton or poultry to Hindu deities. They also use opium less frequently. Their areas of expertise include roof thatching, blacksmithing, silversmithing, woodworking, leatherworking, and making musical instruments [Haldorai \(2012\)](#).

For domestic and religious uses, women make ceramics, while some artists fashion hand-carved weaponry out of iron that was purchased on the open market. Baskets, tabatk, and brass drums were purchased from marketplaces or dealers. Up until the 1930s, the Kotas were intimately associated with the Badagas, Kurumbas, and Todas. They lived off of dairy products, cereals, textiles, wood items, and Kota music. The custom of offering buffalo as sacrifices during Toda funeral rites was rejected by Kotas. Other tribes, such as the Irula, Kurumba, Tamil, Kanarese, and semi-Western, substituted money, food, and beverages for Kota music [David \(2017b\)](#).

Figure 5



Figure 5 Kota Women

Source <https://nilgirishistory.weebly.com/all-stories/kota-pottery>

Women of Thiruchigadi have been the keepers of this old craft throughout history. Their participation in the pottery-making process has been varied:

Generational Transfer of Skill: For millennia, mothers have passed down their expertise and abilities for making Thiruchigadi pottery to their daughters. Apprenticeship is used to learn the craft, ensuring its continuity within the female bloodline. Women artisans have not been satisfied with simply maintaining the existing quo. They have helped to shape the growth of Thiruchigadi pottery by introducing new designs, techniques, and forms to meet changing market demands [Redscarab. \(2012\)](#).

Economic Empowerment: Thiruchigadi's pottery-making heritage has also acted as a source of economic empowerment for women. Many have gone on to become business owners, opening their own pottery studios and marketing their products to a wider audience.

7. EVOLUTION IN MODERN TIMES

Thiruchigadi pottery has seen tremendous transition in recent decades, adapting to contemporary tastes while conserving its traditional legacy. Among the notable developments are:

Product Diversification: Women craftsmen have broadened their repertory to include modern home design goods such as lampshades, vases, and tableware, allowing them to access new markets. While traditional handcrafting processes remain important, the incorporation of technology for marketing and production has helped reach a worldwide audience and boost productivity.

Collaborations with artists and designers have given Thiruchigadi ceramics new views, fusing traditional aesthetics with modern sensibilities.

8. THE EXPANSION HORIZONS

8.1. CRAFT EVOLUTION

In Thiruchigadi, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, the art of clay pottery has significantly evolved over time, taking into account modifications to customs, environmental factors, and the socioeconomic conditions of the Kota community. Traditionally, only female members of the Kota tribe have engaged in this craft, and its development may be shown in a number of ways:

Environmental Adaptations: The availability of suitable clay and the effects of seasonal fluctuations have formed the clay pottery craft, much as the local environment has shaped the potters' techniques and methods. For instance, the challenges posed by the clay's inadequate drying throughout the course of the year have impacted the traditional methods for producing pottery, maybe leading to inventions and adjustments.

Socio-Economic Shifts: The shifting socioeconomic landscape has an effect on the craft of pottery production. The Census figures, which show a very small number of women practicing this skill, together with the possibility of discrepancies in the figures given by the community elders, are indicative of the Kota tribe's changing social and demographic landscape. The craft's ability to survive and be passed on to future generations may be impacted by these modifications.

Efforts to Modernise and Preserve Kota Pottery: These modernization and preservation efforts demonstrate the craft's growth as well. The society's wish to

conserve art for ceremonial purposes and the prospect of modernization through techniques like glazing demonstrate how it maintains a balance between upholding cultural traditions and adapting to new demands.

Difficulties and Revival Efforts: The challenges and efforts for resuscitation associated with the skill also influence its development. The impact of changing times is detrimental to the survival of the craft since it leaves younger generations with less time to engage in customary practices. Attempts to reinvigorate and update the craft, such as modernization projects and calls for younger women to continue the tradition, are a reflection of the dynamic history of the craft and its potential for resurrection.

8.2. ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

Employment Creation: Given the growing potential and ceramics market scenario, the clay pottery industry in Thiruchigadi, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, has the potential to become a significant employer in the area. The rise of this industry has the potential to offer a considerable number of jobs, particularly in local areas, as evidenced by the extensive regional study of the global pottery ceramics market, covering the business growth of numerous sectors at the regional and country levels.

Economic diversification is a crucial component as well, since it can stabilise artists' livelihoods and increase revenue by expanding the line of pottery goods and attracting new clients. Creative patterns and functional pieces can draw in a wider range of consumers, which raises the pottery industry's financial potential. Furthermore, Thiruchigadi pottery's uniqueness and authenticity make it a viable export commodity. With the right infrastructure and promotion, it may establish a presence in global markets and advance the economic development of the area. Furthermore, by highlighting the cultural and economic significance of pottery in the area, the study of ceramic artefacts aids in the formulation of ideas on the structure, state of the economy, and cultural evolution of the communities that made or acquired pottery. Consequently, the Thiruchigadi clay pottery industry is a vital asset for the economic and cultural development of the region since it not only has economic potential but also contributes significantly to the preservation of cultural history and customs.

9. PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

Thiruchigadi pottery must be based on the preservation of traditional talents if it is to flourish again, as demonstrated by the role that traditional craftsmanship start-ups play in bringing long-lost skills and processes back to life. The goal of craftsmanship start-ups is to preserve traditional crafts that are in danger of disappearing and bring them back to life in the contemporary world. The cultural and economic significance of pottery in the area is further highlighted by the study of ceramic artefacts, which aids in the formulation of ideas on the structure, state of the economy, and cultural evolution of the communities that made or acquired pottery. Furthermore, the preservation of traditional crafts in developing nations—as demonstrated by the case study of Pakistani handicrafts—highlights the need of tackling challenges by traditional craftsmanship and the need for their preservation.

The study's exploration of the possibility of re-imagining traditional craft pottery through the production of new goods fit for export highlights the significance of maintaining and updating traditional skills to satisfy current needs and increase market opportunities. Furthermore, despite the passing of time, the

Thiruchigadi pottery's cultural and economic relevance is demonstrated by the ceremonial and spiritual ties that have preserved the art in Kota communities. By creating ceramic museums, heritage trails, and workshops, visitors can learn more about the historical and cultural significance of Thiruchigadi pottery, which in turn enhances its economic and cultural significance. As a result, the craft has the potential to become a focal point of heritage tourism.

Because they not only boost the craft's economic potential but also significantly contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and traditions, traditional skills are therefore crucial to the growth and sustainability of Thiruchigadi pottery, making it a valuable asset for the region's economic and cultural development.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Traditional methods, locally obtained materials, and a strong dedication to ecological harmony make Thiruchigadi clay pottery unique among environmentally sustainable crafts. This art form is sustainable in a number of ways throughout the creation process.

First and foremost, a key component of the sustainability of Thiruchigadi pottery is the use of locally obtained clay. Craftspeople minimise the environmental impact of raw material extraction and the necessity for long-distance transportation by using clay that is easily accessible in the area. This approach lowers the carbon footprint of pottery production while also promoting the health of the regional ecology. Thiruchigadi wood-fired kilns are used to carry out the firing process, which is an essential step in the creation of ceramics. This approach is ecologically benign and energy-efficient. The biomass used in wood-fired kilns, as opposed to industrial kilns driven by fossil fuels, includes organic materials and wood scraps. By using renewable resources, this not only complies with sustainable principles but also lowers the emission of pollutants.

Furthermore, a circular economy strategy is emphasised in the traditional knowledge that Thiruchigadi's ancestors have passed down. Leftover clay is regularly recycled and used by artisans, guaranteeing that little waste is produced. Broken or unsold parts are frequently crushed down and recycled into new products, demonstrating a dedication to waste minimization and resource efficiency, it frequently uses natural dyes and finishes made from plant extracts as part of its creative approaches. This not only makes the pottery more aesthetically pleasing but also removes the need for artificial and perhaps dangerous materials. The application of environmentally friendly colouring and finishing techniques is in line with the current concerns in the crafting industry regarding sustainable and biodegradable substitutes.

Essentially, Thiruchigadi clay pottery's ecologically friendly qualities result from a comprehensive strategy that includes the use of readily available materials locally, energy-efficient firing techniques, and a dedication to minimising waste and dangerous materials. This kind of art is an example of how traditional crafts may survive and still be environmentally friendly.

11. INNOVATIONS AND MODERNIZATION

Product diversification: To meet the demands of contemporary consumers, Thiruchigadi pottery might increase the range of products it offers. In order to satisfy a diverse clientele, this may entail creating contemporary pieces like sculptures, contemporary dinnerware, and décor pieces.

Collaborations with artists, designers, and even other craftspeople can bring new insights and improvements to Thiruchigadi ceramics. These collaborations can produce one-of-a-kind and limited-edition collections that appeal to a broader and more diversified audience.

Since 1989, the C. P. R. Environmental Education Centre has worked to protect the Nilgiris' ecosystem, particularly the forests and wildlife. Purchasing jewellery or pottery from the Kotas can help to preserve the Nilgiris' lush forests while also giving them a legitimate source of income [Aiyar \(2023\)](#).

Digital Transformation: By establishing a strong online presence via e-commerce platforms and social media, artisans can reach a worldwide audience. This digital revolution has the Potential to improve sales, brand recognition, and connection with pottery fans all around the world.

12. GOVERNMENT AND NGO INITIATIVES

Financial Assistance: Government grants, subsidies, and microfinancing alternatives can give artisans and cooperatives with much-needed financial assistance for skill development, infrastructure renovation, and marketing activities. With funding from the C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation and help from the Indian government's Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Kotas have been able to revive their finely wrought terracotta necklaces and transform their ceramic traditions into an art form [Aiyar \(2023\)](#).

Skill Development Initiatives: NGOs and government agencies can organise training programmes, workshops, and skill development initiatives to help local craftspeople improve their skills. This keeps them competitive in the market and allows them to continue honing their skill.

Hiring terracotta artists from Chennai to assist them in improving their abilities and teaching them design innovations with market demands.

Market Links: Facilitating access to wider markets, both local and international, can open up new options for the growth and development of Thiruchigadi pottery. Collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and artisans can aid in the establishment of these critical market links.

13. CONCLUSION

Thiruchigadi, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, has enormous and multi-dimensional potential for the development of clay pottery. The beautiful art of Thiruchigadi pottery can go on a road of amazing growth and development through utilising economic opportunities, protecting cultural legacy, embracing eco-friendly practises, fostering innovation, and using government and NGO initiatives, specially keeping in mind the women of the given tribal community, this will allow them to have a more secured way of making the craft earn what it deserves and also the kind of security and recognition women need to stay motivated to pursue and connected with the craft.

Thiruchigadi pottery bears the promise of not only preserving its rich tradition but also considerably contributing to the economic well-being of the local community and the region's sustainable development as it adapts to the modern world while remaining true to its roots. It is a voyage that connects the past and the future, allowing this ancient art form to thrive for future generations while also enhancing the lives of those it touches.

Exclusive to the women of the Kota tribe, the tradition of pottery-making has been passed down through generations, with the craft being a central element of the community's cultural and spiritual identity. Despite the challenges posed by the region's climate, which makes the clay difficult to dry, the women have remained steadfast in their commitment to keeping the craft alive. The pottery produced by the Kota women is not only a reflection of their cultural heritage but also holds ritual significance, being an essential part of religious practices within the community. The craft has the potential to become a focal point of heritage tourism, as it offers insights into the historical and cultural value of this art form. The women's dedication to preserving their craft is evident in their efforts to rejuvenate it with the younger generation, as well as their openness to modernizing the pottery to meet contemporary demands. The significance of the Kota women's pottery-making extends beyond its utilitarian and aesthetic value, playing a central role in preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of the community. By supporting and celebrating the craft of the Kota women, India can continue to enrich and preserve its diverse cultural legacy.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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