

Socioeconomic Development of Pottermen and Washermen Communities in Telangana through the Mission Kakatiya Scheme: An Empirical Assessment

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Abstract: *This paper examines the socioeconomic development of potter and washerman communities under Mission Kakatiya, using field-survey data from 120 potter respondents and 120 washerman respondents from Kamalapur, Kesamudram, Manchiryal, and Khammam. The findings indicate that Mission Kakatiya had a particularly visible effect on pottery production through improved perceptions of clay quality, increased water availability and increased production. Among potters, 89.17% reported increased pottery production, and 65% reported improved monthly income after Mission Kakatiya. Among washermen, 60.83% reported that tank restoration helped their occupational activities, while 63.33% perceived additional employment opportunities. However, the results also reveal persistent constraints, including inadequate modern equipment, irregular income, marketing difficulties, competition from mechanised services and limited government support. The findings from statistical analysis (Chi-square results show significant associations between study location and increased pottery production ($\chi^2 = 16.132$, $p = 0.001$), improvement in monthly income ($\chi^2 = 39.414$, $p < 0.001$), and direct occupational support ($\chi^2 = 57.109$, $p < 0.001$). The study therefore argues that tank restoration can generate multidimensional livelihood effects, but these effects strengthen when physical water infrastructure is accompanied by occupational technology, credit, marketing, skill development, and institutional support.*

Keywords: Mission Kakatiya, Telangana, pottermen, washermen, traditional occupations, livelihoods, tank restoration, socioeconomic development, rural economy, water resources.

1. Introduction

Water resources have historically shaped rural Telangana's economic and social organisation. Tanks and ponds have not merely served as irrigation structures; they have supported a broader rural production system involving agriculture, livestock, fisheries and several traditional occupations. The Government of Telangana describes minor irrigation tanks as an important part of the state's rural economy and identifies tank restoration as a way to strengthen water security and livelihood opportunities. Mission Kakatiya was designed to restore minor irrigation sources through activities including desiltation, repair of feeder channels, strengthening of bunds, repair of sluices and restoration of water-storage capacity. (Telangana). Water is a foundation of life and livelihoods and is key to sustainable development. Successful water management will help achieve many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG6, which aims to ensure the availability and sustainable use of water and sanitation for all (Lal, 2019).

Mission Kakatiya was launched in March 2015 with the broader objective of restoring Telangana's tank system and improving water availability. The programme's official objectives include strengthening minor irrigation infrastructure, improving water availability and promoting community-based management. (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District). Mission Kakatiya has developed as a revolutionary

program in Telangana, restoring traditional tank systems and developing different ecosystems that support rural livelihoods (Lal, 2026).

The economic significance of tank restoration extends beyond crop production. Traditional occupational groups often depend upon local ecological resources. Pottermen require suitable clay and water for production, while washermen need accessible, adequate water resources and appropriate washing locations. Consequently, changes in tank conditions can affect production costs, working conditions, employment opportunities, and household incomes.

Recent empirical research on the Kummari community in Telangana similarly shows that pottery remains an important livelihood for many households, while access to clay, technology, production and marketing remain significant socioeconomic concerns (Harinath & Rao, 2023). (ResearchGate)

The present study therefore examines whether the restoration of tanks under Mission Kakatiya has contributed to the socioeconomic development of pottermen and washerman communities in Telangana. The analysis is based on the field-survey tables supplied with this study.

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2. Mission Kakatiya and the Rural Livelihood System

Mission Kakatiya represents a shift from viewing tanks exclusively as irrigation infrastructure toward recognising their wider economic and ecological functions. Government documentation identifies improved groundwater conditions, agricultural productivity, livestock development, and rural economic revitalisation as expected benefits of tank restoration. (Telangana)

The socioeconomic pathway can be represented as: **Tank restoration → improved water storage → better availability of water/clay → reduced occupational constraints → increased production/employment → improved household income and livelihood security.**

For potters, the relationship is particularly relevant because tank and pond beds can provide clay used in pottery production. The attached survey shows that 85.83% of the potter respondents reported that sufficient clay was available in village tanks and ponds before Mission Kakatiya, while ponds were the major source of clay for 71.67% of respondents. At the same time, 51.67% travelled more than seven kilometres to collect clay before Mission Kakatiya.

For washermen, the link is even more direct because their occupational activities require water and appropriate washing locations. Thus, restoring tanks can potentially improve the physical conditions under which they perform their traditional occupation.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

- 1) To examine the socioeconomic characteristics of pottermen and washermen households covered by the survey.
- 2) To assess the occupational conditions of pottermen and washermen before Mission Kakatiya.
- 3) To examine perceived changes in occupational conditions after tank restoration.
- 4) To analyse changes in production, income, employment and livelihood opportunities.
- 5) To identify the continuing constraints faced by the two communities.
- 6) To suggest policy measures for strengthening the socioeconomic benefits of Mission Kakatiya for traditional occupational groups.

3.1. Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant association between the study location and the reported increase in pottery production after Mission Kakatiya.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between the study location and the reported improvement in monthly income from pottery after Mission Kakatiya.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between the study location and whether potters reported receiving direct occupational support from Mission Kakatiya.

4. Methodology

The analysis is based primarily on the tables provided in the field-survey document. The survey covers 120 potter respondents and 120 washermen respondents, distributed across Kamalapur, Kesamudram, Manchiryal, and Khammam, with 30 respondents from each location for each occupational group.

The pottery tables include demographic characteristics, occupational structure, landholding, access to clay, distance travelled for clay collection, clay quality, pottery production, monthly income, government assistance, marketing, and post-Mission Kakatiya changes. The washermen tables similarly cover occupational conditions, water availability, employment, income, entrepreneurial activities, women's participation, constraints and perceptions of Mission Kakatiya.

5. Results and Discussion

Covering 120 potter respondents and 120 washermen respondents from Kamalapur, Kesamudram, Manchiryal and Khammam. The pottery section documents demographic, occupational, clay access, production, income and post-Mission Kakatiya conditions.

5.1 Socioeconomic Profile of Pottermen

The demographic table indicates that the pottery sample consisted predominantly of men. Of the 120 respondents, 112 (93.33%) were male, and eight (6.67%) were female. The age distribution shows that 41 respondents (34.16%) were aged 46–60 years, while 36 (30%) were aged 36–45 years. Only 19 respondents (15.83%) were below 35 years.

Educational attainment was relatively low. 51 respondents (42.5%) were illiterate, while 31 (25.83%) had primary education and 19 (15.83%) had secondary education. Only a small proportion had higher secondary, graduate or postgraduate qualifications. All 120 respondents belonged to the BC category, and 89.17% lived in nuclear families.

Occupational dependence on pottery was particularly strong. All 120 respondents identified pottery making as their primary occupation and reported that it was their family's traditional occupation.

This finding is important because it shows that pottery is not simply a supplementary economic activity for these households; it is closely connected to occupational identity and intergenerational livelihood practices.

5.2 Pottery Production and Economic Conditions

The survey shows that pottery households combine their traditional occupation with other livelihood activities. Agriculture was the secondary occupation of 48 respondents (40%), wage labour of 51 respondents (42.5%), and small business of 20 respondents (16.67%). This occupational diversification indicates that pottery income alone may not provide sufficient livelihood security for all households.

Landlessness was another important feature. 71 respondents (59.17%) were landless, while 25 had less than one acre and only five had more than two acres. This limited asset base increases the importance of traditional non-farm occupations for household survival.

Production was concentrated at relatively modest levels: 103 respondents (85.83%) reported producing between 20 and 40 pots per day, while 17 produced 10–20 pots.

The income distribution shows improvement when comparing the present situation with the pre-Mission Kakatiya period.

Table 1: Monthly Income from Pottery: Before and Present Situation

S. No	Monthly income	Before MK	Present
1	Below ₹5,000	29 (24.17%)	2 (1.67%)
2	₹5,001–10,000	39 (32.50%)	22 (18.33%)
3	₹10,001–15,000	47 (39.17%)	66 (55.00%)
4	Above ₹15,000	5 (4.17%)	30 (25.00%)
5	Total	120 (100%)	120 (100%)

The attached tables therefore show a substantial shift toward higher-income categories. Before Mission Kakatiya, only 4.17% of respondents reported monthly pottery income above ₹15,000; in the present-period table, the corresponding proportion is 25%. At the same time, the proportion below ₹5,000 declined from 24.17% to 1.67%.

The survey also directly reports that 78 respondents (65%) perceived an improvement in monthly income after Mission Kakatiya, while 42 respondents (35%) did not report improvement. The corresponding location-wise proportions were especially high in Kesamudram and Khammam.

These findings are consistent with the broader argument that improvements in water-related infrastructure can affect rural livelihood systems beyond agriculture. However, income changes may also reflect other factors such as market conditions, technology, prices and government support; therefore, the table should be interpreted as evidence of reported improvement rather than proof that Mission Kakatiya alone caused the entire income increase.

5.3 Mission Kakatiya and Availability of Clay for Pottermen

One of the most important findings concerns clay. Before Mission Kakatiya, 60% of the potter respondents reported difficulty in collecting clay. The problem was particularly pronounced in Manchiryal and Khammam. Moreover, 51.67% travelled more than seven kilometres to collect clay, suggesting substantial time and transport burdens.

The post-Mission Kakatiya findings indicate that 79 respondents (65.83%) reported adequate clay in tanks and ponds after the programme, while 115 respondents (95.83%) reported improved clay quality.

However, the survey also found that only 16 respondents (13.33%) reported that the distance to clay collection had decreased, while 104 (86.67%) said it had not. Similarly, 117

respondents (97.5%) said that expenditure on clay collection had not declined.

This indicates that Mission Kakatiya's benefits for potters were not uniform. Improvements in the physical condition or quality of clay did not necessarily translate into lower collection costs.

This issue is also recognised in research on Telangana's Kummari community. Harinath and Rao (2023) report that although tank restoration creates important water-resource benefits, potters may struggle to obtain clay because desiltation and tank-related processes can reduce access to usable pottery clay. (ResearchGate)

5.4 Increase in Pottery Production

The most prominent occupational finding is increased pottery production. 107 out of 120 respondents (89.17%) reported that pottery production increased after Mission Kakatiya, while only 13 (10.83%) reported no increase. The proportion reporting increased production was 100% in Kesamudram, 93.3% in Kamalapur and Khammam, and 70% in Manchiryal.

Respondents identified four principal ways through which Mission Kakatiya helped pottery workers: Increased clay availability – 30%, Improved quality of clay – 15.83%, Increased water storage – 41.67% and Reduced cost of clay – 12.5%

Thus, increased water storage was the most frequently identified benefit. This finding illustrates the indirect livelihood pathway of tank restoration. The programme is not a pottery-development programme in a narrow sense, yet its water-related interventions can influence a traditional occupation whose production process depends on natural resources.

5.5. Marketing Constraints of Pottermen

Despite increased production, market-related challenges remain significant. The majority of potters- 79 respondents (65.83%)- sold their products mainly through wholesale markets, while 26 used village markets and 15 sold mainly in nearby towns.

The principal marketing problems were: Low prices – 42.5%, Transportation problems - 41.67%, Competition from plastic and steel products – 11.67%, Lack of demand – 3.33% and Lack of market facilities – 0.83%

The results indicate that increased production does not automatically guarantee improved profitability. If producers remain dependent on wholesale markets and face weak bargaining power, a larger quantity of production may not result in proportionately higher household welfare.

Recent empirical research on Telangana's potter community also emphasises the importance of marketing, technology diffusion, and collective organisation (Harinath & Rao, 2023). (ResearchGate)

5.6 Socioeconomic Conditions of Washermen

The washermen community represents another traditional occupational group whose livelihood is closely connected with water resources.

Before Mission Kakatiya, respondents reported several occupational problems. Respondents identified water shortage (39.17%), lack of proper washing places (24.17%), less work or customers (23.33%), and dirty water (11.67%).

The broader pre-Mission Kakatiya condition table identifies low income and unemployment as the most significant problem, reported by 55% of respondents, followed by water scarcity in tanks and ponds (24.17%) and irregular washing work caused by lack of water (17.5%).

These findings establish that water scarcity was not simply an environmental problem; it had direct labour-market and income consequences for washermen.

5.7 Restoration of Tanks and Washermen's Occupational Activities

The survey shows a generally positive occupational response to tank restoration. 73 respondents (60.83%) reported that tank restoration helped their occupational activities, while 47 (39.17%) did not report such an effect.

Location-wise, Kamalapur had the strongest response, with 90% of respondents reporting occupational benefits. The corresponding proportions were 60% in Kesamudram, 53.3% in Khammam and 40% in Manchiryal.

This finding supports the interpretation that restoring tanks can influence occupations that depend directly on accessible water.

The official objectives of Mission Kakatiya emphasise restoring tank capacity, improving water availability, and revitalising rural economies. (Telangana) The washermen survey demonstrates one way in which these broad objectives can be reflected in a traditional rural occupation.

5.8 Employment and Livelihood Diversification among Washermen

The employment effects are notable. 76 respondents (63.33%) reported that Mission Kakatiya created additional employment opportunities, compared with 44 (36.67%) who reported no such effect.

The survey also records several new entrepreneurial activities:

S. No	Entrepreneurial activity	Respondents	Percentage
1	Started a laundry shop	31	25.83%
2	Started modern ironing/press shop	22	18.33%
3	New washing facility	10	8.33%
4	Door-to-door laundry services	20	16.67%
5	No new entrepreneurial activity	28	23.33%

The emergence of laundry shops, ironing services and door-to-door services indicates that the traditional occupation is not necessarily disappearing; rather, some households are

adapting it into more diversified service activities. A similar pattern appears in the table concerning entrepreneurial opportunities: 26.67% opened larger laundry shops, 29.17% opened ironing/press shops, and 15.83% purchased modern washing equipment and expanded services.

This suggests a transition from a purely traditional service model toward a more diversified rural service economy.

5.9. Women's Participation

The washermen tables also provide evidence concerning women's participation. According to the survey, 38.33% reported that women participated in washing work. 20% reported improved employment opportunities for women. 22.5% reported reduced workload because of improved water availability. 10.83% reported increased support to family income, and 8.33% reported women's involvement in other income-generating activities.

The results suggest that improved water availability may have household-level consequences beyond men's occupational roles. Reduced physical difficulty in accessing water can potentially affect women's time allocation and participation in livelihood activities.

However, the relatively modest percentage reporting new income-generating activities indicates that improved water resources alone are insufficient to transform gender roles within the occupation. Additional measures such as women's entrepreneurship programmes, credit access, skills training and collective enterprises would be required.

5.10 Living Standards and Social Status

The survey provides a mixed picture of socioeconomic development among washermen. 63 respondents (52.5%) reported that Mission Kakatiya improved the living standards of washermen families, whereas 57 (47.5%) did not report such improvement.

The impact on social status was considerably weaker: only 27 respondents (22.5%) reported improvement in social status, while 93 (77.5%) reported no improvement.

This distinction is important. Economic or occupational improvement does not automatically result in social-status transformation. Traditional occupational groups may continue to face social constraints even when their income or employment conditions improve.

The results therefore suggest that the socioeconomic impact of Mission Kakatiya is multidimensional but uneven. The programme appears to have a clearer connection with water, employment and occupational activity than with broader social-status transformation.

5.11. Continuing Constraints among Washermen

The survey identifies several major challenges that remain after Mission Kakatiya:

S. No	Major constraint	Respondents	Percentage
1	Lack of modern machines/tools	61	50.83%
2	Irregular income	39	32.50%
3	Competition from machine laundries	17	14.17%
4	Social disrespect	3	2.50%

The dominance of the first two constraints demonstrates that water availability alone cannot modernise the occupation.

Similarly, the survey reports that 95.83% of respondents had not adopted modern washing equipment after Mission Kakatiya, while only 4.17% had. This is a major limitation because technological upgrading is essential to increase productivity and compete with commercial machine laundries.

The findings point toward a broader policy lesson: water infrastructure can create an enabling environment, but productive assets and human capabilities determine whether households can fully convert that infrastructure into higher income.

Hypothesis Testing Results

H₀₁: There is no significant association between the study location and the reported increase in pottery production after Mission Kakatiya.

The table shows that 107 of the 120 potters (89.17%) reported an increase in pottery production after Mission Kakatiya. The location-wise responses were 28/30 in Kamalapur, 30/30 in Kesamudram, 21/30 in Manchiryal and 28/30 in Khammam.

Chi-square results

S. No	Location	Increased	Not increased	Total
1	Kamalapur	28	2	30
2	Kesamudram	30	0	30
3	Manchiryal	21	9	30
4	Khammam	28	2	30
5	Total	107	13	120

$$\chi^2 = 16.132, df = 3, p = 0.001$$

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The table shows a statistically significant association between location and reported increases in pottery production. Although a large majority of respondents reported increased production, the magnitude of the reported improvement varied considerably among the four locations. Kesamudram recorded a universal positive response, whereas Manchiryal had a comparatively larger proportion reporting no increase.

Cramer's V = 0.367, indicating a moderate association. Hence, the reported increase in pottery production after Mission Kakatiya was not uniform across locations.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between the study location and the reported improvement in monthly income from pottery after Mission Kakatiya.

The survey shows that 78 respondents (65%) reported improved monthly income, while 42 respondents (35%) reported no improvement. Location-wise, the proportions

were 46.7% in Kamalapur, 90% in Kesamudram, 30% in Manchiryal and 93.3% in Khammam.

Chi-square results

S. No	Location	Income improved	No improvement	Total
1	Kamalapur	14	16	30
2	Kesamudram	27	3	30
3	Manchiryal	9	21	30
4	Khammam	28	2	30
5	Total	78	42	120

$\chi^2 = 39.414, df = 3, p < 0.001$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The table shows a statistically significant association between location and reported improvement in monthly pottery income. The difference is particularly evident between Manchiryal, where only 30% reported an income improvement, and Khammam, where 93.3% reported improvement. Kesamudram also recorded a high proportion of positive responses.

Cramer's V = 0.573, indicating a relatively strong association. Therefore, the reported improvement in pottery income after Mission Kakatiya differed significantly among the four locations.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between the study location and whether potters reported receiving direct occupational support from Mission Kakatiya.

The survey found that 46 respondents (38.33%) reported that Mission Kakatiya directly supported their occupation, whereas 74 (61.67%) reported that it did not. The location-wise responses were 36.7% in Kamalapur, 16.7% in Kesamudram, 6.7% in Manchiryal and 93.3% in Khammam.

Chi-square results

Sl.No	Location	Direct support	No direct support	Total
1	Kamalapur	11	19	30
2	Kesamudram	5	25	30
3	Manchiryal	2	28	30
4	Khammam	28	2	30
5	Total	46	74	120

$\chi^2 = 57.109, df = 3, p < 0.001$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The table shows a statistically significant association between location and reported direct occupational support. The differences are substantial: 93.3% of respondents in Khammam reported direct support, compared with only 6.7% in Manchiryal.

Cramer's V = 0.690, suggesting a strong association between location and reported direct occupational support. Hence, Perceptions of direct occupational support from Mission Kakatiya varied significantly across the four locations.

Therefore, all three null hypotheses are rejected at the 5% level of significance. The statistical evidence indicates that the reported outcomes associated with Mission Kakatiya—increased pottery production, improved monthly income and

direct occupational support—varied significantly across Kamalapur, Kesamudram, Manchiryal and Khammam.

The results should be interpreted as evidence of significant differences in reported outcomes across locations, rather than as proof that Mission Kakatiya alone caused those differences. Other factors, including local markets, access to

clay, technology, government assistance, transportation and household characteristics, may also have contributed.

5.12 Overall Assessment of Mission Kakatiya

The two occupational groups show different patterns of perceived impact.

Table 2: Selected Indicators of Mission Kakatiya's Reported Impact

S. No	Indicator	Pottermen	Washermen
1	Reported increase in production/occupational activity	89.17%	60.83% reported tank restoration helped occupation
2	Reported improvement in income	65.00%	—
3	Reported additional employment opportunities	—	63.33%
4	Reported improved living standards	—	52.50%
5	Major continuing technological constraint	Modern equipment/training	Modern machines/tools
6	Major market/competitive constraint	Plastic/steel competition	Machine laundries
7	Young generation interested in traditional occupation	7.50%	12.50% interested in entrepreneurship

The results show that the strongest effects are associated with production, water availability and employment, whereas effects on social status, technology adoption and intergenerational occupational continuity are weaker.

Overall, washermen were relatively cautious: 43 respondents (35.83%) described the impact as a good change, while 73 (60.83%) reported no change in overall livelihood security. This is an important counterpoint to the positive findings on specific occupational indicators.

Thus, Mission Kakatiya should not be interpreted as having produced uniform socioeconomic transformation. Instead, its effects appear to operate through particular livelihood channels, with considerable differences between locations and households.

6. Discussion

The evidence supports a broader conception of rural infrastructure. Mission Kakatiya was conceived principally as a tank-restoration and water-security intervention, but its effects can extend through local livelihood networks. The official programme documentation itself recognises that tanks have functions extending beyond irrigation, including groundwater recharge, livestock, fisheries and rural economic activity. (Telangana)

The pottery findings illustrate this mechanism through the resource relationship between tanks, clay and water. Increased water storage and perceived improvement in clay quality were associated with increased pottery production among a large majority of respondents.

The washermen findings demonstrate a different pathway. For washermen, the critical resource is not primarily clay but accessible water and suitable washing locations. Tank restoration can therefore reduce an important occupational constraint.

Nevertheless, the data also demonstrate the limits of infrastructure-led development. Potters continue to report low prices, transportation problems and competition from alternative products. Washermen continue to face shortages

of modern machinery, irregular income and competition from mechanised laundries.

This aligns with the broader literature on traditional occupations in Telangana, which emphasises the importance of technology, market access, institutional support, and collective organisation alongside access to natural resources (Harinath & Rao, 2023). (ResearchGate)

The findings are also compatible with recent empirical work examining Mission Kakatiya's effects across multiple rural livelihood groups, which reports improvements in several occupational outcomes following tank restoration. (ResearchGate)

7. Policy Suggestions

The following are the policy suggestions for better socioeconomic outcomes development

Establish occupational livelihood plans around restored tanks, facilitate sustainable access to pottery clay, provide modern equipment to washermen, improve washing infrastructure, strengthen access to institutional credit, develop producer and service cooperatives, strengthen market linkages, promote skill development, encourage youth entrepreneurship, and integrate women into livelihood programmes. Women should have direct access to training, credit, self-help groups and entrepreneurship programmes. This could convert improved water access into broader household income opportunities.

8. Conclusion

Mission Kakatiya demonstrates how investment in water infrastructure can have socioeconomic implications extending beyond agriculture. The evidence from the 120 potter and 120 washermen respondents shows that tank restoration has been associated with improvements in several livelihood dimensions, although the magnitude and nature of these changes vary across locations and occupational groups.

For pottermen, the most prominent findings are reported improvements in clay quality, increased pottery production, and movement toward higher income categories. Nearly nine

out of ten potter respondents reported increased production after Mission Kakatiya, while 65% reported improved monthly income. The programme's contribution appears particularly connected to increased water storage and better access to productive natural resources.

For washermen, the effects are centred more directly on water availability and occupational activity. 60.83% reported that tank restoration helped their occupational activities and 63.33% reported additional employment opportunities. At the same time, the relatively limited improvement in social status and the continued absence of modern equipment indicate that water restoration alone cannot resolve the structural challenges confronting the occupation.

9. Suggestions

The evidence therefore suggests that Mission Kakatiya has created an important ecological and infrastructural foundation for rural livelihood development, but complementary interventions can deepen its benefits. The next stage of policy should connect tank restoration with technology, credit, entrepreneurship, market access, occupational infrastructure, skills and social inclusion.

In this sense, the development significance of Mission Kakatiya extends beyond restoring physical water bodies. Its larger potential lies in rebuilding the local rural economic ecosystem in which water, agriculture, traditional occupations, entrepreneurship and household welfare are interconnected.

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