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## **SURVEY REPORT ON POTTERY AS PRACTISED BY HIRAS IN ASSAM**

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## FOREWORD

The Indian handicrafts are known the world over for their rich variety, grace, elegance and skilled craftsmanship. Nevertheless, a number of handicrafts because of their stiff competition with factory made products, non-availability of raw materials, exorbitant increase in the manufacturing cost, lack of proper marketing facilities for finished products or due to a variety of other reasons have either become extinct or have reached the moribund stage. After independence, however, a number of schemes were introduced by different government agencies for their growth and development but still this sudden impetus have helped only a few crafts to flourish and thereby become spinners of foreign exchange for the country.

Despite the unique position being enjoyed by the handicrafts especially in the realm of national economy the general awareness among the people in the country about our crafts and craftsmen had been deplorably poor. Nothing was practically known about the commodities produced, techniques employed for the manufacture of different objects, raw materials used, their availability, methods adopted for the sale of finished products etc. An attempt was therefore made in connection with the 1961 Census to study about 150 crafts from different parts of the country with a view to provide basic information on those crafts which were selected for the study.

At the 1971 Census, the study on handicrafts was not taken up but this was again revived in connection with the 1981 Census. There has been, however, some difference between the studies taken up in connection with the Censuses of 1961 and 1981. While the 1961 studies have covered both rural and urban crafts, the 1981 studies have focussed their attention only on traditional rural based crafts. That apart, the 1981 studies besides touching upon those aspects which were covered under the 1961 series, have laid emphasis on matters that are vital for the revival of rural crafts and thereby for the rejuvenation of the economy of the region particularly the villages. This is in consonance with the policy of the government to give due importance to the rural sector with focus on employment intensive strategy of development in which next to agriculture, the small scale industries and handicrafts play a significant role.

The formats required for undertaking the study were formulated by Dr. K.P. Ittaman under the able guidance of Dr. N.G. Nag, the then Deputy Registrar General, Social Studies Division. Dr. Ittaman who succeeded Dr. Nag as Deputy Registrar General, Social Studies Division co-ordinated the study undertaken in different States/Union Territories by the Directorates of Census Operations. The reports received from the Directorates were examined by Shri M.K. Jain, Senior Research Officer with the help of Smt. Suman Prashar, Assistant Director of Census Operations and Shri Shyam Singh Jr. Investigator. I am grateful to all of them for organising this study.

The present report is the outcome of a study undertaken on Pottery as practised by the Hiras in Assam by the Directorate of Census Operations, Assam. I have immense pleasure in acknowledging the services rendered by Shri J.C. Bhuyan Deputy Director and his colleagues in the Census Directorate for bringing out this publication.

New Delhi,  
the 1st June, 1988

V.S. VERMA  
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## PREFACE

Pottery in Assam has its origin many centuries ago and occupies a very important position in the handicraft scenario of the state. The Kumars and the Hiras are the two principal castes who earn livelihood from practice of this craft in Assam. Normally the very word 'pottery' conjures the vision of a man at work with a potter's wheel which according to Dr. B.K. Roy Burman, formerly Deputy Registrar General India and an eminent sociologist, "... in a way symbolises the epitome of civilization. From dust and clay it gives shape to forms and designs which contain the early dreams of man..." But, curiously enough the Hira potters in Assam never use a wheel, instead they use a handy wooden log in shaping the wares which is a unique feature distinguishing the Hira Potters from other potters. Another significant characteristics peculiar to Hiras alone is that only their womenfolk are the actual makers of the earthenwares while their males lend a helping hand mainly in procuring the raw materials and marketing the finished products.

Hiras are to be mostly found in the villages of the districts of Nagaon, Kamrup, Goalpara and Darrang in the Brahmaputra valley. For the purpose of the present study we selected one village in each of the districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nagaon which are famous as traditional habitat of Hira potters with a glory of manufacturing exquisite pottery and which can be considered as truly representative villages in so far as the practice of pottery by Hira community is concerned and where in spite of many ups and downs suffered by the artisans over the decades in the pursuit of their traditional occupation, life and living still rotates around pottery and they legitimately take pride in it.

The schedules devised for this survey were canvassed in two sets of selected households in each of the three selected villages having a sizeable concentration of the artisans. The first set consisted of those households where the craft is still practised by one or more members of the households and the second set comprised those households where the craft was once practised but has now been given up owing the various constraints.

Utmost care was taken to elicit as much meaningful information as possible from the respondents in the villages. In this report an attempt has been made to study the various aspects of the traditional handicraft in its rural setting. The analysis and observations are obviously based on the data thrown out by the field survey.

The field work was undertaken by Dr. S.K. Baruah, Investigator, Shri T.D. Sinha, Statistical Assistant, Shri A.C. Deka, Assistant Compiler and Shri S. Swargiary, Assistant Compiler. Shri T.D. Sinha has done a commendable job in compilation and tabulation of data of Household Schedules canvassed during field survey and incorporated in this report either as inset tables or in the Appendices. In this work he has been ably assisted by Sarvashri D.N. Barman, Statistical Assistant, Shri A.C. Deka and Shri S. Swargiary. Dr. S.K. Baruah had prepared the first draft of the report and also revised the same in the light of the comments received from the Social Studies Division in the Registrar General's office. The typing of the script for the press was done by Sarvashri D. Das and L.K. Das. N. Bhattacharjee, Assistant Director(T) has very creditably done the arduous task of editing the report.

We are much grateful to Dr. K.P. Ittaman, Deputy Registrar General, Social Studies for providing us with very useful technical guidance and most valuable suggestions in improving the report. A word of thanks must be said of Shri B.P. Jain, Deputy Director in Registrar General's office who took great pains in seeing the report through the press.

Above all we place on record our deep sense of gratitude to Shri V.S. Verma, Registrar General, India for his patient and unfailing guidance and constant inspiration in every stage of production of this report.

Guwahati  
April 10, 1989

J.C. Bhuyan  
Deputy Director of Census Operations  
Assam



## **Photographs :**

1. A very young girl shows keen interest in making pottery
2. A skilled potter at her work
3. Hiramati being carried by boat
4. A heap of Hiramati
5. Cutting and cleaning the raw-materials
6. & 7. Kneading the clay over the child helps his mother
8. First step in production : making of 'don' a flat and circular structure of clay
9. Second step : beating the down with a mallet into the shape of a cap
10. Third step : Raising the body by joining clay with the 'Don'
11. Fourth step : Giving the desired shape to the vessel
12. & 13. The last two steps : 'Mukh Dia' forming neck of the vessel and 'Kan Dia'—making edges in the neck
14. Drying in shade before baking
15. Painting 'Kalah' with Gerumati
16. An expert artisan making 'Nagara' and 'Kurkuri'—two musical instruments
17. A few tools and implements
18. & 19. A few finished products
20. Another set of finished products
21. Two musical instruments
22. Display of finished products at home
23. Carrying the finished products to market





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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The origin of pottery can be traced back to Neolithic period. The pottery in India is considered to be of a very ancient origin. Its antiquity is established through various literary sources and archaeological evidences collected from places representing different phases of history. Specimens of pottery used in ancient India have been unearthed in the various archaeological excavations carried out in different parts of the country. Evidence of knowledge of pottery industry in the Harappan and post Harappan period is also there. Besides, evidence of uses of pottery in the 1st millennium B.C. are found in many places in India. 'Kumbhakara' or potters found a mention in 'Brahmavaidatya Purana' in the seventh century B.C. According to historians the pottery industry played an important role in the socio-economic life of the people during the period between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D.

In Assam pottery is an age-old industry having its origin many centuries ago. It plays an important role in the socio-economic life of the people. It is unfortunate however that no systematic survey on pottery industry in Assam has ever been carried out. The pottery in Assam is carried out in most antiquated method. Two distinct castes are found to be engaged in the craft of pottery as obtained in Assam. The Kumars and the Hiras are the two principal castes who derive livelihood from making earthen vessels. Besides there are also a few other castes engaged in this craft but they do not constitute any significant proportion.

Like other traditional crafts of India, pottery is also associated with a particular caste. They are commonly known as 'Kumbhar'. The name Kumbhar is derived from Sanskrit word and it is used in different parts of India with only slight variations. The potters in Assam, Bengal and Tripura are known as Kumars, as Kusavan in Tamil and Malayalam, Kuvara or Kumbara in Kanarese, Kusare in Tulu, Kummara or Kumrulu in Telegu, Kumbhar in Marathi and Gujarati and Kumhar in Hindi. The Kumars belong to Sudra caste and their social status varies from place to place. The Kumars are found in both among the Hindus and Muslims. In fact those who make pottery are known as Kumars.

The Kumar is a caste of the Nava Sakha group. They are potters by profession. The word Kumar is derived from 'Kumbha Kar' meaning maker of pots. The word kumar in Assam has a wide connotation as the word does not denote persons of any particular caste or sub-caste but brings into its fold all persons belonging to different castes namely Kumar Kalita, Kumar Keots, Kumar Kochos. In fact people belonging to different castes who make or whose ancestors are remembered to have made pot or articles of earthenware are known as Kumar in Assam. In social stratification the Kumars rank almost equally with ordinary Kalitas. They are distributed all over the state. The other important caste who derive livelihood from pottery is 'Hiras'. The Hiras are Scheduled Caste in Assam. They are also known as sub-caste of 'Chandal'. The Hiras are a class of potters who shape the vessel by hand with the help of a piece of wood without the assistance of a potter's wheel. All the potters of the Hira Community are females. The males never make pots. They lend a helping hand only in procuring raw materials and marketing the finished products.

Pottery is a traditional and hereditary occupation of the Hira Community. Potters of Hira Community have certain characteristics which are peculiar to themselves alone and differ from potters belonging to other castes of Assam. The main aspects of difference of Hira potters from other potters are as follows :

1. All the potters engaged in this craft are women. Males never make earthenwares.
2. The Hira potters never use wheels, instead they use a handy wooden log known as 'pitoni' in shaping the wares.
3. The clay used by the Hira's are sticky and gray in colour which is known as 'Hira Mati'.
4. The earthenware made by the Hiras are chiefly meant for use for domestic purposes alone and is scarcely used for religious purposes.

The Hiras are a Scheduled Caste found mostly in the Brahmaputra valley. Their principal

place of habitation is the districts of Goalpara, Darrang, Kamrup and Nagaon. This traditional craft is practised by the Hiras irrespective of the region and place where they reside or the economic status of the practising household. Hiras in general treat pottery as a definite source of income. Another interesting feature of the craft as practised by the Hiras is that all the potters are invariably the females. The males never mould pots. It is the females alone who make various kinds of earthenware which are used for religious and domestic purposes. Hira's pottery in Assam is used by all section of people. This traditional craft is an indispensable aspect of the socio-economic life of the Hira community. Sustenance of the Hiras to a large extent can be said to be dependent upon this industry.

An overwhelming majority of the Hiras dwell in the rural areas of Assam mostly confined to four districts. As a natural corollary, therefore, this household industry is a rural based one.

The Hiras use a peculiar kind of clay known as 'Hira Mati'. It is grey in colour and very stiff which is good for moulding various kinds of earthenwares without the help of a wheel. The entire district of Kamrup abounds in this particular variety of clay.

The method of making pottery as adopted by the Hiras can be considered to be an antiquated method of making pottery.

### **Potteries of the Hiras**

The present study deals with the potteries made by Hira community. The pottery is sole occupation of the Hiras. They usually make earthenware for domestic use. The potteries made by Hiras are known for its beautiful designs and colour. They manufacture pots of various shapes and sizes which are used for different purposes. The important earthen pots made by Hiras are 'Kolashi', 'Tekeli', 'Hari', 'Saru', 'Lota', 'Patsaru', etc. The Hiras have been earning their livelihood from this craft since many centuries ago. The pottery as practised by the Hiras is considered to be one of the major cottage industries of Assam.

It is difficult to analyse this industry as obtained in each and every part of India. The present study which deals with the hand made pottery (without

help of a wheel) is rarely found anywhere except Assam and a few places in the Tribal areas of North-east India. The hand made pottery is believed to be the most traditional and aboriginal method of making potteries and that most ancient craft associated with the mankind. In the beginning of human civilization all the aboriginal races of the world moulded earthen pot with the hand and without any help of wheel which till then was beyond the conception of a man. This traditional craft came to Assam and North-East India through South-East Asia via Thailand.

This traditional method of making potteries still found among the Daffala, Taju and Apatani in Arunachal Pradesh, all the Naga tribes except Tangkul Naga in Naga hills, Khasis of Meghalaya and Luis of Manipur. The above mentioned tribes have been practising this traditional craft for many centuries.

### **History of origin and Development of the craft**

The pottery is a very ancient craft in India. Relics of this ancient craft is found in almost every part of India. According to many scholars, earthenware making came into being by a natural evolution. The antiquity of pottery making goes back to a period when man began to accumulate surplus for storage and preservation. The story of the first pot begins with a 'keeper and the things to keep'. According to Hindu Mythology the need for the pot was first felt when Gods and demons gathered to churn ocean for its wealth. The fierce churning yielded many precious things, among which was the nectar to make the Gods immortal for all the time. Something was needed to hold the nectar, Viswakarma, the celestial artificer, pondered and took out from each of the assembled Gods a bit of 'Kala' or spirit with which their bodies are made and moulded it into a pot, believed to be the first of its kind in the world. From this 'Kala' came the Sanskrit word 'Kalasa' or water pot. As the single pot did not suffice to serve the needs of Gods, Lord Siva created an organisation, the caste of potters upon whom he bestowed the exclusive privilege of making pot.

Dobbs mentioned in his \*, Monograph on the pottery and glass industries of the North-Western provinces and Oudh that "Earthen vessels made on the wheel have been used in the Hindusthan without doubt ever since the Aryan invasion. The

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\*, H.R.C. Dobbs. C.S. - A Monograph on the pottery and glass Industries of the North Western provinces and Oudh. - Allahabad - 1895.

first known mention of them is in the Rig-Veda and by the tradition of these provinces their invention is attributed directly to the Gods. One of these legends tells how Kopa Bhagat Rishi, the fabled progenitor of the potter caste was ordered by Parameswar to make earthen vessels. The Rishi's primitive method involved the baking of the pots for a full year, but on one memorable day, the 'sukat chauth' or birthday of Ganesha after he had filled his kiln, a cat gave birth to some kittens in one of the pots. Here upon the saint prayed earnestly for the safety of the kittens who were preserved by Parameswar causing the vessels to be baked in the miraculously short time of the day. The residence of Kopa Bhagat is said to have been at Jagganath which is accordingly regarded by potters as their headquarters. Another account is that in the olden days the people used to work up the clay for pots with their spittle and Parameswar deeming this unclean revealed the secret of the wheel."

The origin of pottery can be traced back to the Neolithic period. Generally during that period the coarse and handmade wares painted pale grey, red, orange or pale red, brown, pale brown or reddish and black and cream were found.

The Neolithic pottery mainly consists of different types of bowl, jar, vessel etc. The next important phase is Harappan period which may be dated to second half of the 3rd Millennium B.C. Both hand made and wheel made pottery wares were found during this period. During the post Harappan period painted black and red, slipped malwa and jorwa wares were found. These wares were made from a well levigated clay baked in high temperature. During first Millennium B.C. painted grey wares were found in modern Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The scholars termed this as Aryan stock.

During second half of the first Millennium B.C. a special type of pottery which is known as 'Northern Black Pottery' was found. Probably this type was made on fast wheel. It is coal-black, steel-blue and brown-black.

During the second and 3rd B.C. typical type of pottery known as Black and Red wares was prevalent in the Maharashtra region. Contemporary to the black and red ware is the Megalithic black and red ware. This is found associated with the burials and is wheel made and well polished. The common are conical, hemispherical and oval shaped bowls etc.

India had extensive contacts with the western world during the beginning of the Christian era. The proof of such contacts are found in Indian pottery. Indo-Roman wares mainly include amphora, rouletted and arretine wares of these wares the rouletted pottery is a fine black slipped and varnished wares with decorated patterns on the inner bottom. The next important wares of this group is the arretine pottery which has been mainly reported from Arikamedu (near Pondicherry) and Indo-Roman trading centre on the east coast of India.

During the period between 200 B.C. and 650 A.D. (covering Sunga, Kushan and Gupta ages) decorated pottery played an important role in the socio-economic life of the people. Pottery is found to be decorated by painting, stamping, making incisions, moulding and applique designs. These decorated pottery which had a large bearing in the contemporary art and culture of the country lost its charm and colour just after the end of the Gupta period and post Gupta period.

From the middle of the 7th century to the 14th century A.D. is the period which is not yet well known so far as the ceramic industry is concerned. Due to emergence of metallic industry downfall of pottery during this period is observed. But during the period painted pottery was also found though its distribution was quite limited.

The last important phase of pottery industry is found in the late mediaeval period which is about 14th century A.D. This period is characterised by the introduction of glazed painted wares by Muslim invaders. The Muslim potters afterwards also produced unglazed and painted wares. They learnt the technique of producing un-glazed and painted wares from Indian potters who are expert in producing such types of wares mainly used for domestic purpose.

Various studies of the mediaeval pottery depicts that there has been no healthy growth in the potters art during the period. Over and above there was also no significant change in technique as well as form of the pottery.

During the contemporary period the pottery industry had to fight for its survival, with the Metallic industry, because introduction of metallic wares has definite influence upon the pottery industry. This has also led potters to restrict their production to common pots, pans

and other articles used for domestic as well as other purposes.\*

### History of origin of the craft in Assam

As regards pottery in Assam in the absence of any systematic study on this topic it is extremely difficult to pin point the date of its origin. However, it is gathered from the history and other evidence that use of pottery wares in Assam may be dated as far back as 5th or 6th century A.D. \*

Dr. P.C. Choudhury \* mentions that "the art of making pottery was known from very early times. The Nidhanpur grant mentions 'Kumbhakara-garta' (potter's pit) and the Kamauli grant refers to the Kumbhakaras, who were professional Pottery makers. Some of the best specimens of pottery, with artistic and decorative designs belonging to 5th and 6th century A.D. have been discovered from Dah Parvatia, some specimens have also been found in Tezpur and near Sadiya. The clay seals of Bhaskaravarman also point to the fact that the art of clay modelling was developed. Moreover Bana mentions, among the presents of Bhaskara, drinking vessels embossed by skilful artist, molasses in earthen pots and cups of ullaka diffusing a fragrance of sweet wine."

It is difficult to mention about the use of pottery during pre-historic epoch in Assam. However, broken pieces of potteries of pre-historic times collected during various excavations and diggings in various parts of the state certainly indicates that the use of pottery was known to people of Assam perhaps from prehistoric times.

The pottery finds in various places of Assam including those at Sarania Hills in 1960 and recent findings at Ambari in Guwahati certainly indicates the use of various kinds of earthen wares from very ancient times. Over and above, the existence of 'chubbas' (hamlets) or villages bearing the prefix kumar to their names such as Kumargaon, Kumar para is perhaps reminiscent of the pottery that once flourished in this region.

As mentioned earlier two distinct castes namely Hiras and Kumars inhabiting mostly in the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley are found to

be associated with this craft. These two castes still practise pottery making as their traditional occupation. They have inherited this art of making pottery from their forefathers.

Noted folklorist Sri Jugal Das described in his book 'Asamar Lokokala' \*<sup>1</sup> that the use of clay wares was prevalent in Assam from very ancient times. These potteries were used mainly by the people living in the plain areas. Potteries were found to be used in religious as well as domestic purposes. Though pottery is associated with Hiras and Kumars spread over many places in Assam certain villages or localities distinguish themselves for various kinds of pottery work. Dharamtul and Kakilamukh in Nagaon district are famous for potteries.

Late B.K. Barua (Historian) also mentioned in his book 'A cultural history of Assam (Early period)' that "In Assam at present, there are two classes of potters Kumars and Hiras. The Hiras are a degraded class (antyaja) having a distinct occupation and the Kumars will not dine with the Hiras. Hiras differ from the potters of other castes in that their women also work and that they shape their vessels entirely by hand in four stages, each of which, forming a separate ring is partially done before next is added when manufacture of a whole lot of vessels is complete they arrange the vessels in a heap with grass in between to which they set fire and thus bake the clay."\*<sup>2</sup>

Sri Nilmony Phukan \*<sup>1</sup> (folklorist) also mentioned in his 'Loka Kalpadristi' – that 'Hiras, Kumars, Blacksmiths and Goldsmith are the principal professional artisans of Assam Kumars and Hiras are responsible for making potteries. He also pointed out that there is a distinct difference in the technique, use of raw materials as also shape of various earthenwares made by these two groups. He mentioned that Hiras manufacture potteries for domestic as well as other day-to-day use whereas the Kumars manufacture potteries which are generally used for religious and other social ceremonies.

E.W. Gait \*<sup>2</sup> has mentioned in his article 'Manufacture of potteries in Assam' published in the journal of Indian Art and Industry (Vol. VII) that there are two distinct classes of persons

\* Census of India- Volume 1, Part VII-A (6). Pottery of Kumbharwada, Bombay, 1972

\*1 E.H. Pakyntein - "Selected Handicrafts of Assam" Census of India - Vol III, Part VII-A 1961.

\*2 P.C. Choudhury - "The History of Civilization of the people of Assam" Guwahati 1968.

\*1 Jugal Das - "Asamar Lokokala" Publication Board Assam, Guwahati - 1968.

\*2 B.K. Baruah - A cultural history of Assam (Early period) published by B.N. Dutta Baruah, Lawyer's book stall, Guwahati pages 128 and 129.

\*1 Nilmony Phukan - Loka Kalpadristi (Folk vision) An introduction to the study of Folk Arts and Crafts of Assam published by Publication Board, Assam in 1987 - page 19.

\*2 E.A. Gait - The 'Manufacture of Pottery in Assam' published in the Journal Indian Art and Industry. Vol. VII 1901

engaged in the manufacture of pottery in the Brahmaputra Valley.

Kumars and Hiras still practise this craft in Assam. They take this trade as traditional occupation, and eke out their living from it for many centuries. But they can not say for certain when and how this craft came to be associated with them. It is interesting to note that though Kumars and Hiras are traditional potters of Assam, yet the mode of manufacturing adopted by one basically differ from that adopted by other. The Kumars in Assam like other Kumar potters in India mould their pot with the help of a wheel. But the Hiras never use 'wheel' instead they mould their pot with the help of a wooden log. This is believed to be the most ancient and aboriginal method of making potteries. It is difficult to ascertain when and how this method of making potteries came to them. However, this method of making potteries are also found among some of the Mongoloid tribes inhabiting the hills of north-east India. It is probable that this trade might have been inherited by the Hiras from these tribal people living in the Hills. It may be assumed that in the long past marriage took place between tribal women and low caste male population in the plains. When women migrate they always carry with them the cultural trade. Pottery making was such a trade practised solely by these tribal women folk. Thus after marriage, the tribal women came to the plains with the trade and began to practise this craft without any material help from males. This is still a female oriented trade and the females of Hiras still cling to the most aboriginal method of making potteries.

S.K. Roy \*<sup>1</sup> has mentioned that this trade (handmade pottery) crept into north-east India and Assam from South Asian Island via littoral countries of South-East Asia, Vietnam and Korea. According to him this cultural trade originated somewhere in Polynesia and from there it had migrated to south-east Asia and thence to Assam.

There are different opinions about the origin of this traditional craft of the Hiras in Assam. A legend popular among the Hiras is described below.

Many centuries ago a childless Brahmin with his wife after visiting all the important religious places in the country reached Kamakhya temple

in the district of Kamrup of Assam. During their stay in the temple, they were blessed with two sons. So happy and pleased were they that they decided to settle in the temple for the rest of their life. Thus they settled in the temple and earned their livelihood from performing pujas. Time passed by, and their sons grew young. According to customs prevalent among the Brahmin's sons should be given 'Loguna' (sacred thread), when they become young as otherwise they are not regarded as Brahmin and are outcast from the Brahminical society. Unfortunately due to poverty the parents could not perform the sacred thread ceremony of their sons and were eventually outcast from the local Brahminical society. Thereafter they started living in a small hut at the foothill of Kamakhya temple near the river. As the poor Brahmin could not conceive of any alternative source of income he took recourse to begging for a living. However his wife on her own started making earthen wares as a means of livelihood. As the time passed by, their sons grew older and one of them became a fisherman and earned his living by selling fishes in the market.

The other son followed his mother and soon learnt the art of making earthen wares. Afterwards both the sons got married with the daughters of another outcast Brahmin couple. The son who earned living by fishing is known as 'Namasudra' and the son who earned his living by making potteries is known as 'Hira'. Thus people believe that the name Hira is derived from the name of the Brahmin's wife whose name was Hira.

Pottery industry is one of the important household industry that flourished in Assam from very ancient times. There are many villages in Assam where pottery is the prime source of income. But the recent history of pottery is one of survival in a fight against metallic industry. At present, this ancient industry has lost much of its past glory and is now confined only to making earthen wares such as jars, pitchers, etc. etc. Local pottery has mostly been replaced by superior clay or porcelain goods and metal utensils imported from outside. Apart from this the profits of the industry are also small and they can not solely depend on this craft for their livelihood. Though govt. of Assam have established many organisations or agencies to develop this traditional craft yet the state of affairs of the pottery industry is not very

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\*<sup>1</sup> S.K. Roy - A study of ceramics from Neolithic to Mediaeval period of Assam, An Ethno archaeological approach. Guwahati University (An unpublished thesis).

encouraging. However, despite all odds it is still to be seen that many Hira villages in Assam practise this craft as a source of income. They manufacture earthen wares which can be used both for domestic as well as religious purposes. The skill and art of making clay pottery is still found to be flourishing in these villages of Assam. Another important feature of this craft is that all the potters are female and they manufacture pottery after doing normal household duties.

### **Names of important centres within states and outside state**

The main centre of this traditional rural based craft (hand made pottery) is the rural areas of Brahmaputra valley in the districts of Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang and Goalpara. Among the four districts Kamrup is the highest and largest producing centre of various kinds of earthen wares in Assam. Hira community is found in large number in the district of Kamrup. The main and only source of income of the Hiras is pottery making. They have earned their living from it for many centuries. A special kind of clay is required for manufacturing hand made potteries. This clay is known as Hira matti. This special clay is abundantly found in the district of Kamrup. Even potters from other districts come to Kamrup district for this variety of clay.

Some of the important and famous Hira villages in the district of Kamrup, who practise this craft are Sessamukh, Chariya, Mughuchi, Bamundi, Azara Hira gaon etc. All these villages manufacture various kinds of earthenwares which have great demand in and outside the district. There are also, a number of other Hira villages where this craft is practised as a source of livelihood.

Besides Kamrup district Dharamtul in Nagaon, Ganesh Konwari and 'Maroi' in Darrang and Mornai in Goalpara district are also considered as important centres of Hira pottery. The village Dharamtul is famous all over Assam for its beautiful potteries. It is one of the oldest and largest Hira village in Assam. They manufacture various kinds of earthen wares which are greatly sought for. People from various parts of the state come to this village for purchasing potteries which are required for domestic as well as religious purposes. Mornai in Goalpara district is another

important and a very large pottery producing centre in Assam. The potteries of this village is acclaimed even outside Assam. In the past its potteries were also exported to East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). So far as our knowledge goes this traditional method of moulding clay potteries without using potters' wheel is prevalent at Ramangaram town in Bangalore district and in certain areas of Bijapur district of Karnataka state.

### **Particulars of community, caste and tribe associated with the craft**

As mentioned earlier, Hiras and the Kumars are the two distinct classes of people who practise pottery from very ancient times in Assam. Generally in Brahmaputra valley, any caste or sub-caste who make or whose ancestors are remembered to have made earthenwares are known as Kumars. The word 'Kumar' is derived from 'Kumbhakar' which means maker of pots.

The word 'Kumar' in the Brahmaputra valley usually denotes persons of several castes mainly belonging to Kalita, Keot and Koch who make or whose ancestors are remembered to have made articles of earthenwares. Thus in Assam, there are Kumar, Kalita, Kumar Keot, Kumar Koch, etc. and people so designated continue to retain old caste status. E.A. Gait<sup>\*1</sup> mentioned in his article "Manufacture of pottery in Assam" in the journal of Indian Art and Industry that 'In the later days of Ahom rule artisans were introduced from outside and efforts were made to induce the people to learn different handicrafts. Some of them did so, especially Kalita, Keot and Koch castes and the occupation thus adopted gradually became hereditary and functional endogamous sub-castes were slowly developed. Thus it can be easily said that Kumar caste in Assam is not a single caste people. It includes all those who practise this craft as their traditional occupation.

The Hiras belong to scheduled caste and are considered to be the original pottery makers of Assam. Hiras are found mostly in the plains of Brahmaputra valley. The 1961 census report<sup>\*2</sup> mentions "Hira is the name of a caste of potters distinguished from Kumars by the fact that their workers are women who shape the vessel by hand without the assistance of potter's wheel. 'Hiras and chandals are regarded as on the same

\*1 E.A. Gait - "The Manufacture of pottery in Assam", published by Journal of Indian Art and Industry - 1901.

\*2 E.H. Pakyntein - "Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes" Census of India, Assam, Volume III, Part V-A, 1961.



level generally throughout the Assam Valley but they will not eat together nor intermarry. Originally a Hira may have been simply a potter chandal but the caste is perfectly a distinct one now”.

At present both Hiras and the Kumars are found to be engaged in this craft. But due to the stiff competition with machine made articles of similar use most of the potters belonging to Kumar caste are gradually giving up this traditional craft.

Another reason is that the margin of profit is declining sharply and therefore pottery can no longer be retained as a solitary means of livelihood. They are gradually taking to other occupations both as primary and secondary means of livelihood. But interestingly enough the Hiras are still to be found adhered to this craft and eking out their living from it and thus wage a relentless war for the survival of this traditional craft as well as of themselves.

The pottery made by the Hiras are limited to a few types only when compared against the pottery made by the Kumars. Pottery made by the Hiras are mainly utilitarian in nature and the most of them are culinary types. As such the production of Hira potteries are proportionate to the functions for which these are used for. In the past the production was much higher. The introduction of the metallic utensils produces a direct impact upon the Hira potters. Because, traditional and other clients have given their option in favour of metallic vessels as these last for a longer period than the Hira earthenwares. But the Hira potteries survive as because they have some intensive functional values of their own. There are some indigenous food items which cannot be prepared excepting the use of some types of vessel made by Hiras.

In order to respond to changing situation to the Hira potters change the nature of their production. For their existence they manufacture such types of pots which are not only culinary but lucrative which generates demand in the market. Besides they also manufactured certain types of pots which have demand among the tribal people. They manufacture various kinds of earthen wares which are used by both plains and tribal people for domestic and religious purpose. Majority of the Hira females are adapt in the art of making pottery and are found to be engaged in this craft. Thus pottery has become a part and parcel of their socio-economic life.

The total population of the Hiras in Assam according to 1971 Census is 32,622 and they are mainly concentrated in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nagaon. It is pertinent to mention here that 1981 Census could not be conducted in Assam and as such we have performed to refer to 1971 census data alone.

The following table shows the district-wise distribution of Hira population in Assam as obtained during 1971 census.

Table I.1  
Distribution of population of Hira community among districts of Assam.

Name of the district	1971 census		
	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4
1. Goalpara	4,776	2,543	2,233
2. Kamrup	9,398	4,787	4,611
3. Darrang	3,159	1,603	1,556
4. Lakhimpur	639	359	280
5. Sibsagar	345	189	156
6. Nagaon	14,237	7,310	6,927
7. Cachar	9	9	—
8. North Cachar Hills	2	2	—
9. Karbi Anglong	57	26	31
Total (Assam)	32,622	16,828	15,794

#### Different handicraft products

The earthen wares manufactured by the Hira has great demand among the tribal as well as plains people of Assam. Earthen wares play a vital role in the performance of socio-religious ceremonies as well as day-to-day domestic works all over the state. Besides, rural people use earthen wares for storage of grains and other sundry articles. Majority of village people use earthen pitcher for keeping drinking water. Apart from this, a few poor families use earthenwares for cooking as well. Shops and restaurants even in the urban areas use earthenwares for serving sweets and curds.

Hiras manufacture earthenwares of various sizes and shapes according to their prospective uses.

The main items produced by the Hiras are as follows :

### Earthenwares used for domestic purposes

1. Kalachi (Pitcher)— It is a vessel used for keeping and carrying water.
2. Tekeli (Jar)— It is a small jar used for preparing cake (Tekeli-pitha). It is also used for storage purpose.
3. Hari or Matka— It is a big earthen vessel mainly used for storage purpose.
4. Lota—Ghat (small water vessel)— It is a miniature type of pitha of Kolachi. It is used as 'Mug' for taking water from larger vessel for washing and drinking purposes.
5. Saru (Cooking vessel)— It is a cooking vessel. There are mainly two types of saru (1) Patsaru and (2) Pansaru. Both are used for cooking purposes.
6. Dhakoni (Lid)— The dhakoni is used for covering all kinds of food stuffs.
7. Gamla— It is big earthen vessel used for washing cloth and also as feeding trough for cattle.
8. Dema— It is another type of big vessel used by the fisherman for keeping fishes in water.
9. Kata— It is a vessel used for keeping curds.
10. Mola— It is an earthen cup used for keeping curds and serving purposes.

11. Chariya— It is earthen wash vessel.

12. Chilim- A country made device for smoking tobacco.

### Earthenwares used for ceremonial purposes

As mentioned earlier, earthen vessel plays a very important role in the performance of various religious and social ceremonies. Earthen wares are used by various sections of the people in Assam in ceremonies associated with birth, marriage and death of a person. Thus, earthen wares always play a vital role in the socio-religious life of the people of Assam.

### Earthen wares used in social ceremonies or religious functions

1. Earthen lamp— Locally known as 'chaki' or 'pradip'. This is used for burning a wick in mustard oil.
2. Dhunadani— This is a special kind of earthen pot used for burning incense (dhuna) usually at the time of religious functions.
3. Dhupdani— This is used for burning incense sticks.
4. Ghat— It is a small earthen pot used in religious function.
5. Nagara— This is a small musical instrument used in time of 'Nam-kirtan' (worship of Almighty).
6. Kurkuri— This is another type of musical instrument but much smaller in size when compared to Nagara.

Besides the above articles a particular type of earthen vessel (saru) is used by a section of people for throwing dirt and wastes at the time of delivery. As it is a custom to use an earthen pot no other vessel made of any other material is used in the rural areas for such purposes. The pot is kept by the side of the woman at the hour of a child-birth and thrown away after five days from

the date of birth of a child. This saru or earthen vessel is known as 'Kumaru' in Kamrup district.

There are various kinds of earthen vessels painted with various colours that are used during the course of marriage among the Hindus. The earthen vessels are also used after death. 'Kalah' is one of the important earthen vessels which is used in the performance of various ceremonies after death.

Besides the above mentioned articles, Hiras also manufacture 'Sikar'—a kind of earthen cake which is eaten both by males and females but particularly the pregnant women have a preference for this article.

It is extremely difficult to arrive at even very rough estimates about the number of households that are actually engaged in this craft as a means of their livelihood. It is also equally difficult to find out or estimate the total production in a village let alone that for the state as a whole. But it is to be noted here that almost all the Hira households, particularly in the Kamrup district practise the craft as a household industry which augment their earning.

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to say about the origin of this pristine craft in Assam. In absence of written records and evidence, it is really impossible to pin point the period of its origin. Besides there has never been any systematic survey on this topic. However, various archaeological excavations in the past and in recent times as also the remains of the temples indicate the prevalence of pottery wares from prehistoric times.

It is impossible to make any estimation of cost of production and margin of profit gained by the village potters. Because potters do not keep any record or account of price they pay for raw materials and also the money they have earned by selling the various earthen wares. Thus it is difficult to find out the cost of production as well as the actual profit earned by the potters.

Potters usually produce utensils which are generally useful for the poorer section of the society in particular. However, though only occasionally other sections of society also go for earthenwares. It is encouraging to note that all the potteries manufactured by the potters are sold out.

The potters mostly sell the products in the local market. Besides, various earthen wares are also by peddlers travelling from village to village. Over and above, local traders also directly collect various articles of pottery from the artisans and in turn they sell the product to the customers keeping a limited profit.

Thus all the products produced by an artisan are normally sold out. It is estimated very roughly that the average income per day of a potter ranges from Rs. 8/- to Rs. 12/-. An expert potter can on an average produce about 120 to 150 different items of pottery in a month which can earn him a maximum of Rs. 300/- to Rs. 400/-.

### **Training facilities**

Pottery craft by nature is traditional and hereditary and as such the new entrants in the craft need not necessarily undergo any special training. Thus it is obvious that the younger generation automatically learn the skill of making potteries of various kinds from their elders. At present there are no regular and systematic training course or fixed centres for training the artisans in the state. However, with a view to modernise this handicraft the state Directorate of Industries has been occasionally conducting seminar-cum-training in different parts of the state. This programme includes modernisation of management technique of products in terms of design and standardisation of technology, Govt. has also encouraged the local artisans to learn the modern technique of production.

The prospect to hold extensive demonstration of modern techniques of production with improved tools and machineries through the agencies like Small Industries Service Institute and Small Industries Extension Training is under the active consideration of the Govt. of Assam in the Department of Industries.

There are several organisation and agencies working for the development and promotion of this traditional craft of the state. The Directorate of Industries, All India Handicrafts Board, Assam Govt. Marketing Corporation and Khadi Board Industry, Assam, Co-operative Deptt. are main among them. The new industrial policy announced by the State Govt. has laid maximum emphasis on encouragement, development and revitalisation of traditional handicraft of number of incentives are provided to the artisans for their economic

upliftment. For encouragement of this craft the State Govt. through the Industries department has organised, industrial campaign-cum-workshop and seminar in many places. The main aim of these workshops is to expose the craftsmen to modern method of production and to familiarise them with utility of improved tools and equipments, so that the artisans can improve their production. Assam Khadi and Village Industry Board Commission has also taken all possible steps to develop this traditional rural based craft. They have tried to implement various policies for the development and growth of this industry. Common work shed, training-cum-production centre, Claze pottery unit, supply of equipments, 'Bhatti' shed unit and demonstration squad are some of the important step taken by this board.

A very disheartening fact about this craft is that there is no co-operative society functioning in the villages under study. Though the govt. encourage to have artisans co-operative societies to look after the interest of the artisan but unfortunately no such society is found to be functioning in any of these villages. Lack of initiative on the part of the craftsmen as also their incapability to perceive the utility and benefits of having a co-operative society can be attributed as the root cause for non-existence of such establishments.

In recent years some schemes have also been taken up by the state Khadi and Village Industry Board, Assam with a view to revitalise this rural based craft. The board has provided financial aid as also facilities of technical training to the artisans. They also encourage the village potters to use potter's wheel, instead of making pottery by hand. Apart from this, the board has also encouraged potters to make modern and essential articles which can be used by both rural and urban people rather than the traditional items produced by them. If they do so their products will definitely have a better market. Unfortunately the Hira potters are not found inclined to use the wheel, instead they prefer to adhere to their traditional method of making various articles with their hands alone. According to them it is easier to make pottery with hand then with a wheel. Feeling shy or apprehensiveness about adopting any innovation in method of manufacture of earthenwares can be ascribed as the reasons behind refusal by the simple village artisans to accept any change over to wheels as a principal tool in production of pottery. Obviously therefore the various schemes and programmes adopted by the govt. to modernise the craft has not yielded the desired result.

## CHAPTER II

### CRAFTSMEN IN THEIR RURAL SETTING

For the purpose of the present study we have selected three potters' villages inhabited by the Hiras in three different districts. All these three villages are traditionally potters' habitats and occupy a position of pride in manufacture of pottery. The villages are Bahaha (Sessa Mukh) in the district of Kamrup, Khanapara I (Ganesh Konwari) in the district of Darrang and Dharamtul in Nagaon district.

All the Hira households of these three selected villages without any exception practise pottery making as a main source of income. Despite slumps and booms the potters of these villages have, through ages, clung to this craft to eke out their living. It is almost customary for the females of these villages to know the art of making pottery. Even school going girls help their mothers in making pottery. It is interesting to note that even those females who migrate to these villages after marriage soon learn the technique of making pottery and within a short time become expert potters. The Hira females have in-born talent for this craft. It is deemed as a culture and is always associated with their economic life. This craft has always been a part and parcel of a Hira household. The details about these selected villages in the three different districts are described below.

#### Particulars of the selected villages

##### Sessa Mukh

Sessa Mukh is famous all over Assam for its various kinds of earthenwares. It is one of the oldest and major pottery producing centres of the state. Though Sessa Mukh is a part of a revenue village named Bahana under Hajo police station in the district of Kamrup yet the local people consider it as one compact village. Sessa Mukh is a very old area and is inhabited by people belonging to various castes, the predominant among whom is Hira. The Hiras are traditional potters and live in a separate hamlet for many generations. For the purpose of this study the hamlet where the Hiras live in compact manner will be treated as a village.

Sessa Mukh lies at a distance of about 5 kms. from Hajo and 24 kms. from Guwahati, the only

city in Assam. It is bounded by Dhaparguri and Pacharia villages on the east, Papurkuna village on the south, Monakuchi on the west and Basana village on the north. The Guwahati-Hajo (PWD) road passes near the village. It is well connected with nearby rural areas and the towns by a motorable road.

Gaon panchayat office is located at Gaura village which is about 3 kms. from Sessa Mukh. The Sub-Deputy Collector's office and Block Development office of the area are located in the Hajo town. A Post Office with money transaction facility is situated in nearby village named Kulhati. Telegraph and Telephone facilities are available in the Hajo town. Medical facilities are also readily available in Kulhati and Hajo town. In regard to education it is well placed because all the facilities including college education are available in Kulhati. Apart from this primary and middle school facilities are also available inside the village itself. Banking facilities are available in Kulhati as well as in the Hajo town. Shops doing wholesale and retail trade in sundry articles as also tea-stalls, restaurants, bookshops etc. are found in a place known as Domdama which is located in the village Kulhati. Apart from this, grocery shops and tea-stalls are also found inside the village. A weekly hat is held on every Thursday in the village where vegetables, pulses, other essential commodities including earthenwares are sold. People from nearby villages and businessmen from the town area come to this market for purchasing various commodities.

There is no protected water reservoir inside the village. Wells and tube-wells are the main sources of water for drinking and cooking purposes. The river Sessa serves the purpose of bathing and washing.

Sessa Mukh has no records of its past. Nobody can tell when and how the people came to settle in this village. Besides there is no legend associated with the name. However, it is presumed that the village has derived its name from river Sessa which flows nearby.

The total area of revenue village Bahana of which Sessa Mukh is a part is 7.81 hectares and

consisted of 385 households with a total population of 2626 persons of which 1362 are males as per 1971 Census.

Sessa Mukh is inhabited by both the Hindus and the Muslims. But it is predominantly inhabited by the Hindus belonging to various castes. The

main castes are Saloi, Kalita, Koch, Hira, Kaibartta and Kumar. Assamese is the mother tongue for both the Hindus and Muslims. Following table prepared from the survey data shows the approximate number of households and population obtained in Sessa Mukh.

**Table II.1**  
Number of households and population by Caste/Community of the head of the household.

Name of the caste	Total No. of household	Total Population		
		Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5
Kalita	60	300	180	120
Saloi	60	300	165	135
Koch	50	240	130	110
Hira (SC)	65	331	182	149
Kaibartta (SC)	30	150	85	65
Kumar	20	105	60	45
Muslim	80	410	225	185
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>1836</b>	<b>1027</b>	<b>809</b>

Source : Survey data (1987)

As the present study is related to the pottery industry of the Hiras alone we shall concentrate our study on the hamlet where the Hiras live. Hiras of this village are all original settlers of the area. The table shows the number of households and population in the hamlet inhabited by Hiras alone as 65 and 331 respectively. The population comprises 182 males and 149 females. The average size of a household works out to be 5. Houses are built on the side of the katcha motorable road. Houses are constructed a few yards away from the road. The river Sessa is passing by the side of the road. Houses are more or less of similar pattern. Houses are built in an unplanned manner.

The village is surrounded by green paddy fields. There are many trees and bamboo grooves in the village. The climate of the area does not differ from that of the other parts of the district. The climate is more or less temperate. The rainfall is moderate during the summer and insignificant during the winter.

As regards communication it is well connected with other towns and rural areas of the district. The state highway passes near by the village and

as such the state owned and other public buses playing between Guwahati and Hajo, Nalbari, Barpeta pass by the village. The regular and frequent bus services between Guwahati and Hajo has a stoppage at Sessa Mukh. The nearest railway station is at Kamakhya about 20 kms. away from the village.

Pottery and agriculture are the two major occupations of the Hiras. All the households practise this craft as a source of their main income. A few households practise cultivation as secondary source of earning. They do other odd jobs too. But pottery is their chronically old occupation. All the adult females of this village are engaged in making pottery of various kinds which are sold by the males in various markets in the district.

Sessa Mukh has long tradition and heritage of making pottery. But it is interesting to note that nobody in the village can tell when and how this craft came to this village.

There are no written record about it. But probing enquires during the present survey revealed that pottery making has been the traditional occupation

of the Hiras of this village for many generations. The earthenwares manufactured by women of this region are famous for their craftsmanship and draw buyers from many distant places. The main products of this area are kalah, kata, saru, tekeli, ghat, shikar, dhupdani, dhunadani etc.

### **Ganesh Konwari village**

Ganesh Konwari is known all over the state for its earthenwares. It is one of the major earthenwares producing centres of the state. The main items of earthenwares manufactured by the craftsmen of the village are kalah, lota thali, dema, gamla, tekeli etc. which draw buyers' both from within and outside the district to which the village belongs.

Ganesh Konwari is a hamlet of the revenue village Khanapara No. 1 in the Mangaldai police station of the Darrang district. For the purpose of the present study this hamlet will be treated as a village inhabited by the Hiras manufacturing pottery.

The village Ganesh Konwari is situated about 18 kms. from Mangaldai, the district headquarter town. The Sub-Deputy Collector's office and Block Development office are also located at Sipajhar which is about 13 kms. from the village Gaon Panchayat office is located at Korwa village 8 kms. from the village. The post office of the area with money transaction facilities is situated inside the village. Dispensary under the health service scheme of the Govt. of Assam is found both in Dumunichak and Korwa villages—about 8 kms. from Ganesh Konwari.

The nearest railway station is at Rangia which is situated about 30 kms. from the village. In regard to availability of facilities for education it is to be stated that while facilities for primary education are available in Khanapara pt. I of which Ganesh Konwari is a part—boys and girls go to Sipajhar for secondary and college education. Besides, nearby village Bezara and Mangaldoi town also provide facilities for higher education to the children of this village.

Situated on a plain surface the village is surrounded by jungles. The areas around the village are paddy fields. Many trees and bamboo groves are found scattered in and around the village. The climate of the village is characterised by a highly humid temperature and sufficient rainfall.

The total area of the revenue village Khanapara Number 1 is 117 hectares. The village according to 1971 census consisted of 89 households with a total population of 627 persons of which 329 were males and 289 females. This village is divided into two parts or hamlets one of which is inhabited by Assamese Muslim community and the other by the Hindus. The portion where the Hindus live is known as 'Ganesh Konwari' and this is treated as a village for this report.

Ganesh Konwari is a single community village. All the inhabitants are Hindus and are Hiras—a Scheduled Caste. The main and prime occupation of the Hiras are pottery making. It is their traditional occupation. As in the case of Sessa Mukh it is equally difficult to say in any definite terms when and how this craft crept into this village too. However, information as could be gathered during field survey indicate that pottery is being practised by the female Hiras of this village since long past. Though a few households have cultivable land, yet the yield from land being most insignificant they have to depend on pottery making for subsistence.

The villagers are totally ignorant about the history of the village. No written record or book account about the origin of the village is to be found. None in the village could narrate when and how their uncestors came to live in this village. However, it is certain that this is a very old village and the Hira community is inhabiting this village for many generations.

According to some elderly persons the village is named after the God Ganesh. There is a Ganesh temple on hill side on the eastern sector of the village. There are five stone quarries in the hills where the temple is situated. Many people believe that the village has derived its name from the word; Ganesh in Ganesh temple and 'Konwari' a derivative from the word 'quarry'.

Houses of almost similar pattern are found scattered here and there on both sides of the village road. There are almost as many household as the number of houses. There is no bazar inside the periphery of the village, nor any shop dealing in grocery food grains and other miscellaneous articles. The nearest grocery shops are located at Dumunichak. The nearest weekly hat is also held at Dumunichak where inhabitants of Ganesh Konwari purchase vegetables and other articles and sell their earthen wares.

But for a very short stretch of kutchra road between this village and Dumunichak, the village is well connected with the other towns and villages of the district as well as the state. All the state-owned and private buses plying between Guwahati and Mangaldoi, Sipajhar, Tezpur, North Lakhimpur pass through Dumunichak and has a stoppage there. From Dumunichak one can go to Ganesh Konwari village by rickshaw, cycle or on foot.

### **Dharamtul village**

Dharamtul is one of the oldest and largest centre for production of earthenwares in Assam. People from even distant places come to this village for purchasing various kinds of earthenwares that exhibit dexterity of the artisans.

Dharamtul is predominantly inhabited by the Hiras. The traditional potters residing in the village for several centuries. The village is situated at a distance of 9 kms. from Sub-Divisional headquarter Morigaon in the district of Nagaon. It falls under jurisdiction of Jagiroad police station which is only 24 kms. from the village. Sub-Deputy Collector's office and Block Development office are situated at Morigaon. The post office with money transaction facility is available within the village itself. The nearest telegraph and telephone facilities are available at Jagiroad.

The village is well connected with the rest of the district and state. The National Highway passes nearby the village and as such all the private or state owned buses playing between lower and upper Assam have to pass through this village. A kutchra motorable road also passes through the village to Morigaon.

Primary, middle and secondary school facilities are available inside the village. The nearest college is at Morigaon. College at Jagiroad also caters to the need of the villages and medical facilities are available both in Jagiroad and Morigaon. But serious patients are always taken to the Nagaon Civil Hospital.

Situated on a plain surface the village is surrounded by jungles. The river Kapili is flowing through the village. Almost every year this river inundates its banks during rainy season which causes great distress to the villagers. However this river has a beneficial role to play as it provides fishing facilities to the villagers which augments their earning. Apart from this the clay

of this river is good for making pottery. Thus the river contributes towards the villagers' effort betterment of their economic condition.

The climate is more or less tropical. The rainfall is moderate during summer. The moonsoon breaks about middle of April and continues till the middle of September. Rainfall during winter is quite insignificant.

The total area of the village according to 1971 census is 191 hectares and having 1505 persons of which 794 are males and 711 females. The village consisted of 251 occupied residential households. But the present survey found that there are about 400 households with approximately 2400 persons of which 1260 are males and 1140 females. The high increase in the number of households with corresponding increase in population can be attributed to the very long intermediary period between 1971 census and the present survey conducted sometime in 1987.

The original inhabitants of this village are Hiras. However, there are a few households belonging to Bengalis of Namasudra caste and a few Biharis. As the present survey is related to earthenwares manufactured by the Hiras we shall consider only that hamlet which is inhabit by the Hiras alone.

Pottery making is the prime occupation of the Hiras of this village. The women of this village manufacture various earthenwares which are famous all over Assam. Besides pottery making a few households are also engaged in fishing as a subsidiary occupation.

As only a few households have cultivable land, pottery plays a very important role in moulding the socio-economic life of the village in general. Houses are simple and constructed on both side of the village main road.

Wells and tubewells are the sources of drinking water. The water is used for washing as well. The river Kapili is another source of water for washing cloths and utensils. Villagers usually take bath in the river Kapili.

There is a small market inside the village where all essential commodities are available. The villagers are also found to sell their pottery in the market to buyers coming from outside the village.

The villagers are totally ignorant about the



history of their settlement in the village. But information as could be gathered during field survey, indicate their settlement for quite a few generations. There are many skilled potters in this village and their products have great demand in and outside the village. All the females irrespective of their economic status know the art of making pottery, a skill inherited from their mother or ancestors. But strongly enough none could tell when and how this craft came into being in this village.

The earthenwares especially the Kalah (Pitcher) of this village is known all over the state. The main products of this village are Kalah, Ghat, Kata, Saru, Hari, Tekeli etc.

### **Settlement pattern of the three selected villages**

Settlement pattern of the artisans in the three selected villages is very simple and bears a close similarity. A cluster of three or four thatched structures around a common courtyard is the typical residential pattern of the households of the artisans. Houses are constructed in a common compact area usually consisting of about 50 to 60 households and thus forming a separate hamlet or para. Houses are constructed a few yards away from the village main road. Houses in all the three villages are built in a very unplanned manner. Majority of the houses are built in an insignificant plinth. The houses are usually constructed on mud foundation having walls made of reed and split bamboo. Plastered with mud and cowdung. The roofs are made of thatch and the pillars and beams are made of wood and bamboo. A few houses corrugated iron with roofs are also to be found in all the three villages. The number of dwelling structures inside a compound has a significant relation with the number of members and financial capability of the artisan family. The kitchen is generally attached with the main dwelling house and in

some cases it is separated from the dwelling house. Houses are generally dark and ill ventilated and low roofed.

Most of the houses have in the hind a garden called 'bari' where varieties of plants and trees like clumps of bamboo, betel-nut, betel leaf, plaintain tree and many other fruitbearing trees are grown. Besides, majority of the households also keep a kitchen garden either in front or back of the house. Every household has its own opening to the village path. Generally all the household compounds are well demarcated by bamboo fencing.

### **Social status of the artisans**

Pottery making is practised in these selected villages by the Hiras—a Scheduled caste community of Assam. In past Hiras were regarded as low caste people throughout Brahmaputra valley. But the situation has since undergone considerable change. Though the Hiras of these villages inhabit on a compact area in a separate hamlet separately from other communities of the villages, they are never looked down upon by people belonging to other communities of the villages. People belonging to various other castes and community unhasitatingly come to the Hira households for purchasing pottery which are required for myriad purposes.

### **Particulars of households of craftsman**

All the households which still practise the craft of making pottery and selected for survey profess Hinduism as religion and belong to Hira caste—a scheduled caste community in Assam. The language generally spoken in all these households without any exception in Assamese. Below is a table showing the distribution of these households by caste of head of the household and classification of population by sex.

**Table II.2**  
Village-wise number of households and total population selected for the study.

Name of Caste	Total No. of households.	Population		
		Person	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5
Hira	60	340	178	162

The pottery manufactured by the Hiras are handmade. They usually manufacture articles of utilitarian value. The most distinguishing feature of this industry is that all the potters are females. Not a single male potter is to be found in these households. All the adult females of the surveyed households know this art and some of them are very expert potters and their products have great demand in the market. Besides the adult females school going girls also help their mother in their leisure in making pottery. It is almost customary for the grown up girls to know this art. Males lend a helping hand in gathering raw materials and firewoods required for manufacturing earthen-

wares. They also sell the finished products in various markets.

### Demographic particular of practising/ non-practising craftsmen

An attempt is made here to study the demographic profile of the craftsmen belonging to those selected households which are engaged in making pottery.

Following table shows the distribution of population of the selected households by age, sex and marital status.

**Table II.3**  
Distribution of population classified by age, sex and marital status.

Age-group	Never married			Married		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0-14	151	80	71	—	—	—
15-19	33	20	13	2	—	2
20-24	24	20	4	5	—	—5
25-29	8	8	—	18	—4	14
30-34	1	1	—	22	10	12
35-44	—	—	—	33	20	13
45-54	—	—	—	14	12	2
55-69	—	—	—	—	—	—
70 +	—	—	—	2	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>

Divorced or Separated			Widowed			Total population		
Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
—	—	—	—	—	—	151	80	71
—	—	—	—	—	—	35	20	15
—	—	—	—	—	—	29	20	9
—	—	—	—	—	—	26	12	14
—	—	—	—	—	1	24	11	13
—	—	—	10	—	10	43	20	23
—	—	—	14	2	12	28	14	14
—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1
—	—	—	1	—	1	3	1	2
—	—	—	27	2	25	340	178	162

Table II.3 reveals that there are altogether 340 persons of which 178 are males and 162 females. The sex-ratio is calculated to be 910 females per 1000 males. Females marginally outnumber the males in the age-group 25—29, 30—34, 35—44, and 70 +.

It is observed that out of the total surveyed population of 340, a great majority (63.82%) are never married. There is not a single divorced or separated person. No married male or female belong to the age-group 0—14 years, which clearly indicates the absence of child marriage in

these villages. While the lowest age-group for a married male is 20—24 years that for a married female is 15-19 years. Majority of the males and females above the age of 25 years is married. It is to be noted that out of 27 widowed persons only 2 are males. it is worthwhile to mention here that 26.40% and 1.12% of the males are married and widowed respectively. The corresponding proportion for females are 30—25 and 15.43%

The table below shows the distribution of the surveyed population classified by sex, age, and education level.

**Table II.4**  
Distribution of population classified by age, sex and educational level.

Age-group	Total Population			Illiterate		Literate without educational level	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
All ages	340	178	162	74	112	35	27
0-4	26	14	12	14	12	—	—
5-9	54	28	26	6	10	19	16
10-14	71	38	33	8	13	4	4
15-19	35	20	9	8	7	1	1
20-24	29	20	15	7	10	2	1
25-34	50	23	27	9	23	4	2
35 +	75	35	40	22	37	5	3

Educational level

Primary or Junior basic		Middle		Matriculation or Higher secondary		Graduate and above	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
34	14	28	9	5	—	2	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17	11	9	5	—	—	—	—
1	—	8	4	2	—	—	—
3	1	3	—	3	—	2	—
5	2	5	—	—	—	—	—
5	—	3	—	—	—	—	—

Table II.4 reveals that out of the total 340 persons the majority (54.71%) are illiterates. However, among the males 58.43% are literates as against only 30.86% in case of females. Out of the total 154 literates an absolute majority of 67.53% are males. Among 104 literate males the highest percentage (33.65%) is without any educational level closely followed by those who have passed primary standard (32.69%). There are 5 matriculates and 2 graduates among the males. In case of literate female 54.00% are without any educational standard followed by 28.00% having passed primary or junior basic examination. Not a single female has gone beyond the level of middle standard of examination. This indicates

that females either get married after passing primary or middle standard examination or drop out of school to help their mother in production of earthenware.

We now endeavour to study the composition of the households. It is observed that the number of members in the households is not at all high. It represents the average size of an Assamese household in the rural areas.

Following table shows the composition of the households by number of members and age and sex of the head of the households.

**Table II.5**

Distribution of households classified by age and sex of head of the household and number of members.

Age of head of the household	Number of households by sex of head of the household	Number of households having members								
		Single	2	3	4	5	6-7	8-9	10-12 & above	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Less than 30 years.	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
30-39	M	16	—	—	2	6	7	—	1	
	F	5	—	3	1	—	1	—	—	
40-49	M	16	—	1	1	—	11	3	—	
	F	10	—	1	3	2	2	—	—	
50-59	M	6	—	—	2	—	2	1	1	
	F	5	—	—	1	1	2	—	1	
60 and above	M	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	
	F	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	
Total	M	39	—	—	1	6	6	20	4	2
	F	21	—	4	4	3	3	5	1	1

Table II.5 depicts that the age of heads of all the households is 30 years and above. Out of the 60 heads, 43.33% have heads belonging to the age-group 40-49 years, which is followed by 35.00% in the age-group 30-39 years and only 21.67% in the age-group 50+ years.

The average number of persons in the surveyed households is 5.6. The highest percentage (41.67%) of households belongs to size

class 6-7 persons. Single member households is found to be absent.

#### Nature of relation of members to head of households

The composition of the households with regard to nature of relationship of members to the head of the households is shown in the table below :

**Table II.6**

Distribution of households classified by nature of relation of members to head of the household and number of members.

Nature of relation of members to head of the household		Number of households	Number of members
2		2	3
1.	Self, Spouse, Unmarried sons and daughters	31	184
2.	Self, Spouse, Married son and Son's wife with or without Unmarried sons and daughters	1	6
3.	Self, Spouse, Married brother, Brother's wife, Married son, Son's wife, with or without unmarried sons or daughters.	1	8
4.	Self (male), Unmarried son/daughter	2	10
5.	Self (female), Unmarried son/daughter	13	46
6.	Self, Spouse, with or without Unmarried son/daughter and Widowed mother.	1	7
7.	Others		
	i) Self (female, married son and son's wife with or without unmarried sons and daughters	6	42
	ii) Self (female), widowed daughter with married daughter's daughter.	1	4
	iii) Self, spouse with unmarried son/daughter and brother/sister.	1	5
	iv) Self (female) with unmarried daughter, daughter's husband and daughter's son/daughter	1	7
	v) Self, Spouse, married brother, brother's wife with unmarried sons and daughters and widowed mother.	1	12
	vi) Self, spouse, unmarried sons and daughters with widowed sister.	1	9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>340</b>

Table shows that 31 or 51.67% of the households represent nuclear family type having head, his wife and unmarried sons and daughters which is followed by 13 or 21.67%, households having a female head and unmarried sons and daughters. Households having a female head with married son and son's wife with or without

unmarried sons and daughters represent the third largest group (10.00%). The remaining households with other varied types of composition is very few in number.

Table below shows the settlement history of the surveyed households who practise the craft.

**Table II.7**

Distribution of households classified by migration status and duration of stay in the village with reference to head of the household.

Migration status with reference to place of birth of head of the household		No. of households	Number of households where duration of stay of head of household in the village is			
			11-20 yrs.	21 + yrs.	Non-migrant since birth	
		1	2	3	4	5
A. Non-Migrant	(Born in the village)	50	—	—	—	50
B. Migrant	I) Born outside the village but in the same district.	R u r a l	9	1	8	—
	II) Born outside the district but within the state	R u r a l	1	—	1	—
Total		60	1	9	—	50

Table above reveals that 83.33% of the heads are non—migrants, who reportedly were born in the village itself. Thus it is evident that almost the entire lot of the households are original settlers in these villages. The table further shows that even the migrant households did not come from far off places and that 9 out of 10 such households reportedly have been inhabiting the village for more than two decades and all the migrant households came from rural areas of Assam.

#### **Economic condition of the surveyed households**

We now try to portray the economic condition of the households who take to pottery making as the prime source of livelihood. It has been observed during the survey that most of them are very poor and live almost from hand to mouth. In fact majority of the households hardly earn his square meals with the proceeds of sale by pottery. Though a few households have cultivable land also but they cannot depend on it as income from agriculture is not enough to meet

the requirements of the family. Apart from this, a few households particularly in Dharamtul village practise fishing as a subsidiary occupation. In general all the households eke out their living from pottery making alone and their overall economic condition is far from satisfactory.

#### **Workers and Non—workers of the surveyed households**

According to the general concepts adopted for census work force consists of all persons who are engaged in economically productive activity. Such particulars may be physical or mental in nature. Works involve not only actual work but also effective supervision and direction of work. According to 1981 census concept of a worker a person must be engaged in economically productive work for major part of the year.

The following table shows the distribution of workers and non—workers among the surveyed households which reported having pottery as prime source of earning.

**Table II.8**

Distribution of workers and non-workers classified by sex, caste/tribe/community and broad age-group

Name of the caste/ tribe/community	Total population			Number of workers and non-workers by age-group											
				All ages						0-14 years					
				Workers			Non-workers			Workers			Non-workers		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Hira (Schedule Caste)	340	178	162	188	87	101	152	91	61	15	4	11	136	76	60

15-34 years						35-59 years						60 + years					
Workers			Non-workers			Workers			Non-workers			Workers			Non-workers		
P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
98	48	50	16	15	1	71	34	37	—	—	—	4	1	3	—	—	—

The table above depicts that out of a total population of 340 in 60 sample households in three selected villages 188 or 55.29% are workers. It is no surprising a fact that among the workers the majority are females as manufacture of pottery is a female prerogative. Out of the total 162 females 101 or 62.35% are workers. Proportion of workers among the males is much less (48.88%). The female participation rate is more because majority of females after attaining 14 years of age start pottery making on a commercial basis.

For obvious reasons the highest proportion (52.12%) of workers is obtained in age-group 15-34, workers in age-group 35-59 account for 37.77% of all workers. Almost the entire (89.47%) non-workers belong to age-group 0-14, most of whom are school going children. Sex-wise break up shows that 83.52%, and 98.36% of male and female non-workers respectively belong to this age-group.

Workers and non-workers are further classified by educational level in the following table.

**Table II.9**  
Distribution of workers and non-workers classified by sex and educational level.

Educational level	Total Population			Number of					
	Person	Male	Fe- male	Workers			Non-workers		
				P	M	F	P	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Illiterate	186	74	112	136	50	86	50	24	26
2. Literate without educational level	62	35	27	20	12	8	42	23	19
3. Primary or Junior basic	48	34	14	18	14	4	30	20	10
4. Middle	37	28	9	14	11	3	23	17	6
5. Matriculation or Higher secondary	5	5	—	—	—	5	5	—	—
6. Graduate and above	2	2	—	—	—	—	2	2	—
<b>Total population</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>61</b>

It is seen that the largest proportion (32.89%) of non-workers is illiterate. The rest are mostly distributed among the literates without educational level, primary and middle standard of education. Among the workers none has attained educational level beyond middle school standard. Among the male workers (57.47%) are illiterate as against 85.15% in case of female. Only 32.89% of non-workers are illiterates. It corroborates our earlier statement that majority of the non-workers belong to age-group 0-14 and almost all of whom are school-going children. It is interesting to note that there are 5 males matriculates and 2

male graduates among the non-workers. Enquiry during field survey revealed that the 2 graduates are unemployed and seeking job.

**Non-workers**

Non-workers constitute 44.71% of the total surveyed population. Non-worker among the males (51.12%) is much higher than that among the females (37.65%). A table prepared to show the distribution of non-workers by age, sex and type of activities is reproduced below :

**Table II.10**  
Distribution of Non-workers by sex, age and type of activity.

Age- group	Total number of non-workers			Number of non-workers by type of activity and sex									
				Infant & children		Full time students		Household duty		Seeking employment		Any other (dependent)	
	Per- son	Male	Fe- male	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0-4	136	76	60	5	2	53	33	-	2	-	-	18	23
15-19	11	10	1	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20-24	5	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>



It is observed that full time students both among the males (72.53%) and females (55.74%) constitute the highest proportion of non—workers. Dependents in the age—group 0—14 constitute next higher proportion of non—workers. Only 2 males among the non—working population are found to be seeking employment. It is interesting to note that there are only 2 females who

returned themselves as engaged in household duties alone.

The following table shows the distribution of households classified by number of economically active workers and their occupational diversity.

**Table II.11**

Distribution of households classified by number of workers and by main occupational diversity (i.e. different members having different occupations).

Description of occupational diversity	Number of households	Number of workers
1	2	3
No occupational diversity	38	116
Pottery, Tailor, Shop-keeper	1	4
Pottery, Govt. service (peon)	5	15
Pottery, Auto Rickshaw puller	1	3
Pottery, Shop-keeper, Carpentry	1	3
Pottery, Shop-keeper	1	4
Pottery, Daily Labourer	2	5
Pottery, School chowkidar	1	2
Pottery, Cultivation, Rickshawpuller	1	4
Pottery, Cultivation, Chowkidar	1	6
Pottery, Cultivation, Fish-business	7	21
Pottery, Fish-business	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>188</b>

It is seen that a great majority (63.33%) of the households do not have any occupational diversity. All the workers (116) of these 38 households are found to be engaged in pottery making alone. The most common occupational diversity is noticed among 7 households, which besides their traditional occupation pottery, also practise fishing and cultivation to improve their financial condition. Apart from this male members of 5 households are found to be engaged in govt. services. Besides the above, there are a few other households having a wide variety of occupational diversity. But, the fact remains that pottery is still the prime source of income in case of all the surveyed households.

We now attempt to find out if there is any deviation from the traditional occupation of the villagers. Traditionally females of all the Hira

households practise pottery making as household industry. Among the males, cultivation and marketing of the pottery are the two main economic activities. But owing to various reasons a radical change in the out-look of the present generation of male is easily discernible. They are found to foster a tendency to shun the parental occupation and instead take to various other avocations commensurate to the level of education attained by them. But the most interesting and important feature of these households is that womenfolk still adhere to the age—old craft of making pottery.

A table prepared to show the distribution of workers classified by traditional and present occupations of workers by sex and broad age—group is reproduced below.

**Table II. 12**

Distribution of workers classified by traditional present occupations, sex and broad age-group.

Traditional occupation	Sex	Total No. of workers	Number of workers by age-group																	
			15-34 years where present occupation is																	
			If, different (Name of occupation)																	
			Same as	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
			in col. 1	Culti- vation	Trading in fish	Auto Rickshaw puller	Daily labourer	School chowki-dar	Daily labourer	Car- pentry	Tailor	Shop- keeper	Govt. service							
1																				
Pottery	Male	87	3	1	30	5	—	3	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	2
	Female	101	11	—	50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

35-59 years where present occupation is			35-59 years where present occupation is			
Same as in col. 1	If, different (Name of occupation)	where present occupation is	Same as in col. 1	If, different (Name of occupation)	where present occupation is	Same as in col. 1
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	1	1	3	—	1	—
36	—	—	—	1	3	—

It is seen that out of the 101 female workers only one is engaged as daily labourer— which is different from the traditional occupation. It is obvious therefore that irrespective of age, all the female workers reported pottery making as their sole occupation. Among the male workers, 27.59% are found to be engaged in various kinds of occupations such as cultivation, trading in fish,

rickshaw pulling, daily labourer, govt. services etc. A vast majority of them is involved in the traditional craft.

Following table shows the distribution of households classified by sex, age—group and subsidiary occupation in relation to the head of the households.

**Table II.13**

Households classified by sex, broad age-group and subsidiary occupation in relation to head of the household.

Age-group of head of the household	Sex	No. of households	No. of households having no subsidiary occupation	Number of households having subsidiary occupation			
				Cultivation	Labour fish	Trading in	Shop-keeper
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
0-14	M	—	—	—	—	—	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—
15-34	M	6	3	—	2	1	—
	F	—	—	—	—	—	—
35-59	M	32	8	17	4	2	1
	F	20	19	1	—	—	—
60 +	M	1	1	—	—	—	—
	F	1	1	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>		60	32	18	6	3	1

Table depicts that out of 60 households, 32 heads of households or 53.33% have no subsidiary occupation. Out of the remaining 28 households, 18 or 30.00% reported having subsidiary occupation of cultivation. Number of heads of households reporting other subsidiary occupations constitute insignificant proportion.

#### Non—practising households

During the present survey an attempt has also been made to study a few households in the selected villages which once practised the craft but not practising now with a view to ascertain whether at present the craft is flourishing or declining. As stated earlier, it is very difficult to find households in these selected villages which

do not practise this traditional craft. Because, it is a common practice of the females of these villages to know the art of pottery making. However, there are very few households which do not practise this craft. For the purpose of the study of non—practising households, a schedule was canvassed among 15 households belonging to craftsman equally distributed among these three selected villages. All the 15 non—practising households practised pottery making in the past but due to various reasons they have given up making pottery at present.

A table prepared to show the distribution of population of these 15 non—practising households classified by age, sex and marital status is reproduced below.

**Table II.14**  
Distribution of population classified by age, sex and marital status

Age-group	Never married			Married			Divorced or Separated			Widowed			Total population		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0-4	4	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	3	1
5-9	9	5	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	5	4
10-14	17	6	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17	6	11
15-19	10	7	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	7	3
20-24	4	4	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	4	1
25-29	—	—	—	5	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	1	4
30-34	—	—	—	7	1	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	1	6
35-44	1	1	—	13	10	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	11	3
45-54	—	—	—	3	2	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	4	2	2
55-69	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	1	1
70 +	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>36</b>

Table above shows that as in the case of practising households in the non-practising households too the number of males is slightly higher than the females. Out of a total population of 77, 41 or 53.25% are males. Never married account for the highest proportion (58.44%) of population and almost all of them (88.89%) are

below 20 years of age. Married persons constitute 38.96% and an overwhelming majority of them (93.33%) returned their age between 25 and 54.

Table No. II.15 below shows the distribution of population by sex and educational level.

**Table II.15**  
Distribution of population classified by age, sex and educational level

Age-group	Total population			Illiterate	Educational level									
					Primary or Junior basic		MiddleMatricula- tion or higher secondary		Graduate and above					
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
<b>All ages</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>—</b>	
0-4	4	3	1	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
5-9	9	5	4	—	—	5	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	
10-14	17	6	11	—	—	3	2	3	9	—	—	—	—	
15-19	10	7	3	—	—	—	—	2	1	5	2	—	—	
20-24	5	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—	—	—	
25-34	12	2	10	—	1	—	2	—	6	1	1	1	—	
35 +	20	14	6	1	1	1	4	5	1	6	—	1	—	
Age not stated	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	

It is seen that in sharp contrast to the rate of literacy (45.29%) obtained in case of inmates of 60 practising households, 90.91% of population in 15 non—practising households considered for survey are literates. 36.36%, 27.27% and 24.68% reported having attained middle school level education, primary or junior basic and matriculation and respectively. The corresponding figures for practising households are 10.89%,

14.12% and 1.47% respectively. Thus we find that percentage of literate persons at all levels of education is much higher in case of non—practising households.

Following table shows the nature of relationship and number of households and members in each set of family composition.

Table II.16

Distribution of households classified by nature of relation of members to head of the household and number of members.

Nature of relation of members to head of the households.	No. of households	No. of members
1	2	3
1. Self	1	1
2. Self, Spouse, unmarried sons and daughters	11	55
3. Self, Spouse, married son and son's wife with or without unmarried sons and daughters	2	14
4. Others (a) Self, Spouse with unmarried son and daughter with other relations	1	7
Total	15	77

It is observed that 73.33% of the households are nuclear type—i.e. mainly composed of head, spouse, unmarried sons and daughters. The average size of a non—practising households works out to be 5.13.

Following table shows the distribution of non—practising households classified by age and sex of the head and number of members in the households.

Table II.17

Distribution of households classified by age and sex of head of the household and number of members.

Age of head of the household	Number of households by sex of the head of the household	Number of households having members							
		Single	2	3	4	5	6-7	8-9	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Below 29	M	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30-39	M	3	-	-	-	1	1	1	-
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40-49	M	8	-	-	-	2	3	2	1
	F	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
50-59	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	F	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
60+	M	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	F	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total	M	13	-	-	1	3	4	3	2
	F	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-

Table depicts that there are 4 households in each of the size class 5 members and 6—7 members which accounts for 53.33% of the total households.

Table below shows the distribution of workers and non—workers by broad age—group and sex and caste in the non—practising households.

**Table II.18**

Distribution of workers and non-workers classified by sex, caste/tribe/community and broad age-group.

Name of the caste/tribe/community.	Total population			Name of the workers and non-workers by age-group														
				All ages									0-14 years					
				Workers			Non-workers			Workers			Non-workers					
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F			
0																		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
Hira (Scheduled Caste)	77	41	36	15	14	1	62	27	35	—	—	—	30	14	16			
	15-34 years						35-59 years						60 + years					
	Workers			Non-workers			Workers			Non-workers			Workers			Non-workers		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
	2	2	—	25	11	14	13	12	1	5	1	4	—	—	—	2	1	1

It is seen that only 19.48% of the people are workers. We may recall here that corresponding percentage in case of practising households is 55.29%. Among the males 34.15% are workers as against a meagre 2.78% among the females.

Table No. II.19 depicts the distribution of non-workers in the non-practising households by type of activity.

**Table II.19**  
Distribution of non-workers by sex, age and type of activity.

Age-group	No. of non-workers		Number of non-workers by sex, age and type of activity													
			Infant		Full time student		Household duty		Seeking employment		Any other		Retired			
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
0-14	30	14	16	3	1	11	14	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	
15-19	10	7	3	—	—	7	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
20-24	5	4	1	—	—	3	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	
25-29	4	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	
30-39	9	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	
40-49	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	
50-59	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	
60 +	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>—</b>	

It is observed that the bulk (61.29%) of the non-workers are full time student and 24.19% are engaged in household duties alone and reasonably enough all of whom are females. A lone male in the age-group 20-24 was found seeking employment. This indicate unemployment has not been a problem among the members of the

non-practising households surveyed by us.

Following table shows the distribution of workers of the non-practising households classified by traditional and present occupation and sex.

**Table II.20**

Distribution of workers classified by Traditional and present occupation, sex and broad age-group

Traditional occupation head of the households	Sex of head of the household.	Total No. of workers	Number of workers by age-group				
			0-14 years where present occupation is		15-34 years where present occupation is		
			Same as in col. 1	If, different (name of occupation)	Same as in col. 1	If, different (name of occupation)	
						Development officer	Gram Sevak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pottery	Male	13	—	—	—	1	1
	Female	2	—	—	—	—	—

35-59 years where present occupation is

60 + years where present occupation is

Same as in col. 1	If, different (name of occupation)						Same as in col. 1	If, different (name of occu-
	Police Constable	Teacher kepper	Peon &	Clerk Demono-trator	Shop pation	Sericulture		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
—	3	—	5	2	—	1	—	—
—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—

The table No. II.20 shows that all the 13 workers of the non—practising households whose heads are males are engaged in works other than the traditional occupation. Similarly the present occupation of 2 workers whose heads are

females are also found to be different from the traditional occupation.

The reasons for giving up practising this craft is shown in following tables.



**Table II.21**  
Households reported reasons for giving-up the craft classified by sex, religion and caste/tribe/  
community of head of the household

Sex of head of the household	No. of households	Number of households having given-up the craft since						
		Less than 5 years due to		5-9 years due to		10 + years and more due to		
		Poor economic condition	Better employment	Old age	Old age	Better employment	Poor economic condition	Better employment
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Male	13	1	1	—	1	1	2	7
Female	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

**Table II.22**  
Households reported reasons for giving-up the craft classified by sex and educational level of head of the household.

Educational level of head of the household.	Sex of head of the household.	No. of households	Number of households having given-up the craft since						
			Less than 5 years due to		5-9 years due to		10-19 years due to		
			Poor economic condition	Better employment	Old age	Better employment	Old age	Poor Economic condition	Better employment
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Illiterate	Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Primary of Junior basic	Male	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
	Female	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Middle	Male	5	1	—	—	—	—	1	3
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	Male	7	—	1	—	1	1	—	4
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

**Table II.23**

Households reported reasons for giving up the craft classified by sex and occupation of head of the household.

Occupation of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	No. of households	Number of households having given up the craft since							
			Less than 5 years due to		5-9 years due to		10-19 years due to			
			Poor economic condition	Better employment	Old age	Old age	Better employment	Poor economic condition	Better employment	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Sericulture demonstrator	Male	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dependent	Male	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
	Female	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Peon/Chowkidar	Male	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clerk	Male	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gram Sevak	Male	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Police Constable	Male	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shop-Keeper	Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

The three tables reproduced above are self explanatory and hardly calls for any elaboration. However, it can be pointed out that opportunity of better employment which in its turn brings better economic prosperity is reportedly the prime motivating factor behind 60% of 15 non—practising surveyed households abandoning their

traditional occupation of making pottery. It is interesting to note that 6 out of 9 heads of such households have returned to have passed matriculation or higher secondary education which enabled them to earn employment in jobs like gram-sevak, clerk, peon etc.

## CHAPTER III PROCESS OF LEARNING

Hira females are the traditional potters of the state. They have long tradition and heritage in making pottery of various sizes and shapes. Hira females have natural talents and craftsmanship. Economic condition of a Hira household is solely dependent on this traditional craft. Even suitability of the bride was in the past adjudged in terms of her skill in making pottery. A daughter invariably adopts this trade from her mother and in her turn hands over this trade to the next generation. This process is still continuing and as a result this traditional craft is still found to be prevalent among the Hiras.

The three villages selected for the present study are the traditional potters' village of Assam. These villages have been practising this craft since time immemorial. The main source of income of these villages are pottery making. Pottery making has always been a way of life especially of the women of these villages. In fact, women of these villages are born and grown up in the surroundings of this household industry and as such they automatically pick up the craft. It was revealed during the survey that small girls always sit beside their mother or elder sister while they are making pot and with an inborn talent become expert potters in a very short time.

Such is the all pervading influence of the craft in these villages that even females without the slightest knowledge of the craft who migrate to these villages consequent upon their marriage spontaneously pick up the craft and soon

become expert potters.

### Modes of acquisition of skill and duration of trainin

The mother is the main architect of this industry. Because it is through her that this industry passes from one generation to another. Thus despite heavy odds this craft has sustained through ages and retained its identity upto now.

In this chapter an attempt is made to study the process of learning by the amateur potters and also to draw the biographical sketches of some of the expert potters of the three selected villages.

It is noticed from the survey data that the women engaged in this craft irrespective of their relation with the head of the household had their lessons in making earthenwares from their mother. Thus it clearly indicates that this traditional occupation is inherited through mother.

It is obvious that in a potter's family a girl grows up in an environment where her mother, sister and other relatives are kneading the clay and making various kinds of pot. The girl gradually gets into the habit of making pottery and becomes expert as she attains womanhood.

Following table shows the distribution of the craftsmen classified by relationship with the head, the period of engagement in the craft and person who imparted training to them.

**Table III.1**

Distribution of craftsmen classified by relationship with the head and the period engaged in the craft.

Period engaged in the craft	Number of persons engaged in the craft	Number of persons engaged in the craft who are related to head as					
		Self (Head of the household)	Wife	Son's wife	Daughter	Brother's wife	Mother
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Less than 5 years	18	—	1	1	16	—	—
5-9 years	7	1	1	2	3	—	—
10-19 years	39	5	21	4	8	1	—
20 + years	36	14	19	1	—	—	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

All the 100 women engaged in the craft had their lesson in making pottery from their mother. The table above provides further information on the period of engagement in the craft. It is seen that the highest percentage (39.00%) of women are reportedly engaged in the craft for last 10-19 years and that spouse of head of household and daughters mostly constitute this group of women. 36 of the potters are engaged in this craft for 20 years and above and almost all of them are either head or spouse of head of a household. For obvious reasons, daughters reported engagement in the craft mostly for less than 5 years.

We have earlier stated that there are a total of 87 males and 101 female workers in the practising households surveyed. Out of 87 male workers 63 are engaged in the craft in varied manner though none actually manufacture pottery. They help their womenfolk in collecting raw materials and marketing of the finished product which obviously do not call for any training. All female workers except one who earns her livelihood as a daily labourer, are artisans.

**Table III.2**

Distribution of persons engaged in the craft classified by relationship with the head, the person who imparted training, period of training and terms and conditions associated.

Relationship with the head	Number of persons engaged in the craft	Number of persons engaged in the craft who received training from mother for the period			Remarks
		Less than 6 months	6 months to 2 years	2 + years	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Self (Head)	20	—	20	—	Training in making pottery is considered obligatory in the part of womenfolk in the practising households and as the training in all these cases is imparted by mother the question of paying any remuneration does not arise at all and not terms and condition is attached in the process of training.
Wife	42	—	42	—	
Son's wife	8	—	8	—	
Daughter	27	—	1	—	
Brother's wife	1	—	2	—	
Mother	2	—	2	—	
Total	100		100		

Training in making pottery is considered to be obligatory in the part of womenfolk in the practising Hira households. The survey data reveals that the trainer being mother in all the cases no remuneration is involved and no terms and conditions is associated with such training which is a spontaneous process. It is interesting to observe that in all cases the training lasted for a period of 6 months to 2 years. It is inferred therefore that this period of training is sufficient to make one an expert potter.

It is observed that 37 out of 60 (61.67%) surveyed households reportedly have been actively engaged in the craft for last 20 years and above and that the minimum period of involvement is 10 years. The survey further reveals that no restriction has ever been imposed on learning

the art of making pottery by any member of any family. In this regard it should be reiterated that no male receives training in pottery making, the males only help females to run the industry by procuring raw materials and marketing the finished products.

The survey also reveals that the skill in making pottery has been acquired by the craftsmen, irrespective of their being head of the family or related to the head in diverse manner, through active participation in the different stages of production by the family members. Mother as mentioned earlier teaches her daughter step by step the art of making pottery.

It is interesting to notice that all the 100 women potters consider the training received by them as



A very young girl shows keen interest in making pottery



A skilled potter at her work

adequate. They have no regret for not having better facility for training as none expressed any desire to go for any sort of training other than that received from their predecessors in an age-old manner. Irrespective of the period of engagement in the craft the potters unequivocally expressed their declination to introduction of any modern technique in the process of manufacturing pottery and are thus averse to learning the art through any sophisticated or modern method of training.

### **Biographical sketches of selected craftsmen**

Biographical sketches of a few selected craftsmen in the three villages under survey are presented below to throw some light on the skill, training and the commercial aspect of the craft. Potters belonging to the following categories are selected from each of the three villages for the purpose.

1. Category I - Master craftsman
2. Category II - Very old craftsmen
3. Category III - New entrants or amateur craftsman.

### **Village Dharamtul :**

*Srimati Laveswari Das (Master Potter) :-*Srimati Laveswari Das is an expert potter in the village. She is known all over the village for her fine products. She is capable of making about 100 to 120 pieces of various kinds of earthenwares in a week. Her products are fine and well shaped.

Srimati Das is about 25 years old. She is born and brought up in Dharamtul village. She was married at the age of 20. Her husband is a cultivator. She is mother of a female child.

Srimati Das has passed lower primary level examination. She could not continue her study due to poverty. She has learnt the techniques of making pottery from her mother who too was an expert potter. Her mother taught her how to prepare the clay and mould a pot when she was only a minor girl. Thus from her very childhood she has acquired the technique and knowledge of making various kinds of earthenwares. She has been associated with this craft since the age of 12 years. At present she spends most of her time in making pots because it is the major source of livelihood for the family.

According to her apart from the traditional method there is no need for any other modern

methods of training, because method of making pottery has not basically changed. Simple tools are still used for making various kinds of earthenwares. She opines that special training is required only if modern technique is introduced in this craft. She also said that she does not want to make pottery on the wheel, because in her opinion it will take more time in making pots in a wheel than that spent in making pots by their traditional method and thus introduction of the wheel, according to her, will not in any way prove efficacious.

At present she is not facing any noteworthy problem except in the procurement of raw materials. Because now-a-days they have to pay for the clay. Besides it is also difficult to procure best quality clay. She feels that future of pottery as a craft is bleak because of the challenge thrown by the metallic wares. Unless proper steps are taken for overall improvement of the craft the future of pottery as practised by them spells doom.

*Srimati Unti Hira (Master craftsman) :-*Srimati Unti Hira is about 38 years old and an expert potter of the village Dharamtul. She was born in the same village and married at the age of 20. She is a mother of two children. The only source of income of the family is pottery making.

She is a renowned potter of the village. She can manufacture 80 to 100 number of various kinds of earthen pots of beautiful design and shape in a week.

Srimati Hira is illiterate and earns living from pottery making since her marriage. She has acquired the technique of making pottery from her mother. Even at her childhood she used to assist her mother in this work. She started making pottery from the age of 13 years and became an expert potter at the age of 20 years. She said that she does not require any further training because the training she had from mother is enough for her to practise this craft. According to her except the one related to raw materials there is no other problem at present. She too feels that future of this traditional craft is gloomy due to the competition with the cheap metallic articles invading the markets. Unless the govt. steps forward to assist them by way of ensuring smooth supply of raw materials and a market for their product and also by arranging appropriate finance in the hours of crisis, the industry will suffer heavily.

*Srimati Prabhadoi Das (Old craftsman) :-* Srimati Prabhadoi Das is an widow and about 75 years old. She is a mother of 4 daughters and a son. She is one of the oldest potters of the village. She still manufactures a large variety of earthen pots. Thus she continues to help augment earning for a better maintenance of the family. She said that she can still produce quite a large number of earthen pots in a week.

After the death of her husband she in her sole effort is sustaining the family on her earnings from this traditional craft. She told that she has inherited the knowledge of the craft from her mother, as in those days it was treated as an essential qualification for making a good bride.

She is not in favour of modern technique or introduction of potters' wheel in this craft. According to her, traditional method is quite effective in producing sufficient number of pots. She further told that the training acquired from her mother is enough for running the industry and as such she does not think that any more training in any other method of production is necessary.

*Srimati Kunjalata Das (New entrant in the craft) :* Srimati Kunjalata Das is a new entrant to this craft. She was born in the village Dharamtul. She is about 15 years old and a student of Class VII. Her mother is an expert potter. Pottery making is the traditional occupation of their family and they solely depend on this for their living. Srimati Das learned the art of making pottery at the age of 12 from her mother. She is very keen, energetic and has acquired remarkably good skill in making various kinds of earthenwares. At her leisure she always helps her mother in producing various kinds of earthenwares. She became a good craftsman within a very short time. At present she produces a good number of earthenwares in a week. She feels she does not require any further training in making pottery because the training received from her mother is enough. She did not narrate any difficulty encountered by her. However, she wishes govt. should give all possible help to the poor potter of this village to run this traditional craft in a healthy manner. Besides govt. should also arrange sale of their products at a price that would commensurate the cost of raw materials and labour put in manufacture of the same.

#### **Sessa Mukh Village :**

*Srimati Sobha bala Das (Master craftsman) :-* Srimati Sobha Bala Das is an expert potter having

a good fame in the village for manufacture of various kinds of earthenwares. Her products are fine and beautifully shaped. She can produce about 60 pieces of pottery in 5 days.

Srimati Das is a widow and aged about 48 years. She was born in the village Athgaon under Hajo P.S. She earns her livelihood from pottery making.

She started making various kinds of earthenwares from 12 years of age. She had her first lesson in making pottery from her mother while she was 9 years old. She used to help her mother in this work in her leisure. She acquired great expertise in the craft at the age of 18 years. After her marriage she helps her mother-in-law in making pottery. As narrated by her this is the only source of income to the family.

According to Srimati Das there is no need of further improvement or modernisation of technique of manufacturing pottery. She shows a distinct preference for the traditional method of making pottery. According to her it is much easier to shape the pots in the age-old method with which they are accustomed for generations. She is not in favour of a potter's wheel, because in her opinion it is inconvenient for a female to handle it. She also informed that the training received from her mother is enough to run the industry.

She mentioned certain problems encountered in procurement of raw material and marketing of the finished products. Clay is no longer available free of cost and it is to be obtained at a place much distance from her village. Besides, fire wood required for the purpose of baking the pots is not easily available. Over and above her products face competition with the cheap metallic wares from outside. Unless there is any assured market for their product, the future, of this craft according to her is really gloomy. Govt. should come forward to their help with necessary finance and other infra structural facilities so that they can keep alive practice of their traditional occupation.

*Srimati Pateli Bala Das (an expert potter) :-* Srimati Pateli Das is another expert potter of the village. She is about 40 years of age. She was born in the village 'Ramdia' in the Hajo P.S. of Kamrup district and migrated to this village after her marriage. She is an illiterate and mother of three children.

She too had her lesson in making pottery from her mother and actually started making pottery from very early age, of 9 years and became an

expert potters after her marriage. Her husband helps her by procuring raw materials and marketing the finished products. Her products are smooth and beautifully shaped. Besides making various wares meant for domestic use, she also makes articles which are in great demand for one in performance of religious rites.

She too is of the opinion that the mother is the best trainer of the craft. She is averse to any modernisation in the process of production. She too narrated problems in procurements of raw material and assured market for finished products as introduction of cheap metallic articles has caused a sharp fall in the demand for the earthenwares. According to her govt. agencies responsible for manufacture and development of this craft should take immediate steps by extending financial assistance and other facilities so that this traditional craft can overcome the set back it suffers now and can have a prosperous growth.

*Srimati Praneswari Das (Old craftsman) :-* Srimati Praneswari Das is one of the oldest potters of the village. She is about 68 years of age. She too was born in the village Ramdia under Hajo P.S. and came to this village after her marriage. She is the mother of 5 children. Despite her advancing age she can produce about 40 pitchers in a week. She has inherited the art of making pottery from her mother and started making earthenwares at the age of 12 years and was of great help to her mother. She became an expert potter after her marriage. According to her no special training is required for this craft and that making of pots by beating with a stick is still an ideal process.

She did not mention any problem except a little difficulty in obtaining raw materials. She desires that govt. should give them financial help for smooth running of this traditional craft.

*Srimati Biju Moni Das (New entrant in the craft) :-* Srimati Bijumoni Das is a new entrant to this craft. She was born in this village and is now a student of class VII. She is about 14 years of age. She had acquired the knowledge of making earthenwares from her mother while she was just 9 years old. She is of great help to her mother in practise of the craft. At her very childhood she was much keen to learn the art of making pottery and used to help her mother in her leisure. She is at present wholly engaged in this craft. She did not mention any specific problem relating to any aspect of the manufacture and sale of earthenwares.

### **Ganesh Konwari Village :**

*Srimati Usha Bala Das (Master craftsman) :-* Srimati Usha Bala Das is an expert potter known all over the village for her fine, smooth and beautifully shaped products. She can produce about 30 big size pitchers and 40 number of other earthenwares in a week. Her products are mainly used for domestic purposes.

Srimati Das a widow is about 45 year of age and is mother of a child. At present it is the only source of earning for the household. She had started making pottery after her marriage. She too without any exception had her first lesson in the craft from her mother. However, subsequently she had further lessons from her mother-in-law and other elder members in her father-in-law's family and became expert potter soon after her marriage.

Smti Das shows a distinct liking of the age-old method of making pottery with very simple tools and implements. Her only problem relates to the procurement of raw materials. Because clay the only raw material is not available nearby and its cost is also rising day by day. Over and above there is no assured market for the finished products. She hopes that govt. will come forward to solve various problems related to this particular branch of pottery and will this ameliorate the hardship suffered by the potters in pursue of the craft.

*Srimati Kunti Bala Das (Master craftsman) :-* Srimati Kunti Bala Das is another expert potter of the village, known for her beautifully shaped earthenwares. Pottery is one and the only source of income for her family.

Srimati Kunti Bala Das is a widow and is about 60 years of age. She is illiterate and mother of 5 children. She had started making pottery from about the age of 9 years but became an expert potter only after her marriage. After the death of her husband, she is the only bread earner for her family. Thus she regarded by the villagers as one of the best potters of the village.

As in the case of others, Smti Das too believes that the training received from her mother is good enough to be a skilled potter and no further training is necessary to run the industry in the method traditionally adopted by the Hiras.

She did not narrate any problem except about procurement of raw materials. She desires govt. to



come forward with necessary financial help to the poor potters of the village.

*Srimati Gandhari Bala Das (Very old craftsman)* :-Srimati Gandhari Bala Das is about 70 years of age and one of the oldest potters in the village. She is a widow and solely depend on pottery for her living. Old age has not posed any problem to her. She is still very active and produces a good number of earthen utensils meant for domestic use.

She told that in the olden days it was almost compulsory for a female to know the art of making earthenwares. She said training acquired from mother is enough to pursue the craft in the traditional manner. Reportedly she has not faced any problem except marketing the finished products. She earnestly longs to remain engaged in this craft as long as her health permits her to do so.

*Srimati Dalimi Das (New entrant in the craft)* :- Srimati Dalimi Das is a new entrant to this craft.

She is about 14 years of age and a student of class V. She is born in the village. Her mother is also an expert potter. Pottery making is the traditional occupation of their family. At the age of 12 years she acquired the knowledge of pottery making from her mother. She is very keen to learn this art and thus within a short span of time has become almost an expert potter. She now assists her mother and thus helps increase the output which in turn fetches more earning for the family.

She too feels training she received from her mother is enough to run the industry. She feels that the sale price of pottery has not correspondingly increased with the increase in the price of all other commodities and unless a rise in sale price of earthenwares manufactured by them is effected, the age-old industry is bound to suffer a serious set-back. Moreover, there should be an assured market for the potters, so that they can easily dispose off the finished products.



## CHAPTER IV MANUFACTURING PROCESS

### Place of work

Pottery making is a household industry. This craft is solely practised by the females in their own households. No workshop or separate place

is required for the purpose of this industry. Artisans practise this craft in their own residential compound. Open space in front or back of the dwelling houses is conveniently used for carrying out the manufacturing process. No workshop

**Table IV.1**

Place of work of persons engaged in the craft classified by area occupied and number of persons working there in

Place of work	Number of persons engaged in the craft	Occupied area of the place of work			
		6-10 sq. mts. and number of persons working at the place of work noted in Col. 1			
		Single	2-5	6-10	14 +
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Part of the dwelling houses (open space in the courtyard)	163	1 (1)	10 (24)	—	—
2. Workshop					
(a) Owned by the household	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Owned by others (specify)	—	—	—	—	—
3. Training cum production centre	—	—	—	—	—
4. Any other (specify)	—	—	—	—	—
Total	163	1 (1)	10 (24)	—	—

11-16 Sq. mts. and number of persons working at the place of work noted in Col. 1

Remarks

Single	2-5	6-10	11 +	
7	8	9	10	11
6 (6)	38 (102)	5 (30)	—	Number of workers shown within bracket include male workers also who actually participate in preparation of raw materials collection of fire wood, cowdung etc. for baking but male never take part in actual manufacturing process.
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
6 (6)	38 (102)	5 (30)	—	

with a definite structure is required for the purpose of this industry.

It is seen that all the potters of the surveyed households are engaged in this craft in their own household. Neither a single potter is found to practise this craft outside her own house nor is there a potter in the surveyed households who is not a member of that household. Besides, there is no common workshop for the potters in the surveyed villages.

The clay and other subsidiary raw materials are kept in one corner usually on the back side of the dwelling house. Preparation of clay for manufacturing various kinds of earthenwares are also done in the open space particularly in one corner

of the dwelling house. Baking the earthenwares is also done in open space. No kiln is required for this purpose. The baking process followed by the Hira potters is very simple and it is always done in an open space usually a little distance from the dwelling house.

The finished products are usually kept in a shade in the open space or a porch or a varandah like portion of the house. In some households finished products are also kept in one corner of a room or below the bed.

Following table shows the place of work of persons engaged in the craft classified by area occupied and number of persons engaged.

**Table**

**Households classified by Broad Age-group, place of work and Duration of engagement in the**

Age-group	Duration of engagement in the Handicraft	Number of head of households engaged in the handicraft		Number of persons other than the head of household engaged in the handicraft	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6
0-14	Less than 5 years	—	—	3	11
	5-9 years	—	—	—	—
	10-19 years	—	—	—	—
	20 +	—	—	—	—
15-34	Less than 5 years	—	—	14	7
	5-9 years	—	—	8	6
	10-19 years	5	—	4	32
	20 +	—	—	—	4
35-59	Less than 5 years	—	—	—	—
	5-9 years	—	1	—	—
	10-19 years	9	5	1	2
	20 +	18	13	—	16
60 +	Less than 5 years	—	—	—	—
	5-9 years	—	—	—	—
10-19 years	—	—	—	—	—
	20 +	1	1	—	2
Age not stated	Less than 5 years	—	—	—	—
	5-9 years	—	—	—	—
	10-19 years	—	—	—	—
	20 +	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>80</b>

The table shows that 49 out of 60 or 81.67% of the practising households under survey reported having 11—16 sq. metres of working space in the open in front of their dwelling houses. It is further observed that not even a single household reported having a workshop or a training-cum-production centre. It is obvious thus that the production of earthenwares is carried on in an unsophisticated manner. It is also seen that besides 100 female workers engaged in actual production of the articles, 63 male reported participation in making ready the raw materials required for the products as also in collection of firewood for baking and lastly in marketing the

products.

On a further enquiry it was gathered that none of the households have any complain about the space available to them for practising the craft. However, a few households expressed preference for having more space for baking the articles than available to them now.

Table IV.2 shows the households classified by broad age-group of the workers, duration of engagement in this craft in relation to head of the household and other members.

## IV.2

### Handicraft in Relation to Head of the Household and other members

Place of work				Remarks
Open space in the residential compound				
No. of head of the household engaged		No. of persons other than head of household engaged		
M	F	M	F	
7	8	9	10	11
—	—	3	11	Excluding 7 head of the household i.e. 6 male and 1 female who are currently not engaged in the craft but workers engaged in the craft belonging to these households have been shown in cols. 5-10
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	14	7	
—	—	8	6	
5	—	4	32	
—	—	—	4	
—	—	—	—	
—	1	—	—	
9	5	1	2	
18	13	—	16	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
1	1	—	2	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
—	—	—	—	
33	20	30	80	

It is seen that only 8.59% of the craftsmen are below the age of 15 year. For obvious reasons men and women between the ages of 15 and 59 form the largest group of workers. Participation of aged persons (60 + years) is negligible. It is further observed that 53 out of 163 (32.52%) workers are heads of households themselves. It may be reiterated that the female workers as shown in the table are the real potters. As already mentioned the potters carry out their manufacturing works in the open space within the

compound of dwelling houses. No separate place or workshop is used by any of the households.

A table prepared from the survey data to show the distribution of persons engaged in the craft according to their relationship with the head of the households, nature of work performed and period of engagement in the craft is reproduced below :

**Table IV.3**

Distribution of potters classified by relationship with the head, period engaged in the craft and nature of work performed

Period engaged in the craft	Number of persons engaged in the craft	Self (head of the household) who performs		Wife who perform Pottery making
		Pottery making (Female)	Collection of raw materials baking the products and disposal (Male)	
		3	4	
1	2	3	4	5
Less than 5 years	35	-	-	1
5-9 years	15	1	-	1
10-19 years	58	5	14	21
20+ years	55	14	19	19
Total	163	20	33	42

Number of persons engaged in the craft who are related to head as

Son who perform	Brother who perform	Son's wife who perform	Daughter who perform	Brother's wife who perform	Mother who perform
6	7	8	9	10	11
Collection of raw materials, baking the products and disposal of finished product	Collection of raw materials, baking the products and disposal of finished product	Pottery making	Pottery making	Pottery making	Pottery making
17	-	1	16	-	-
7	1	2	3	-	-
4	1	4	8	1	-
-	-	1	-	-	2
28	2	8	27	1	2

It is observed that the highest percentage of female potters engaged in actual production of earthenwares are the wives in the households where the head is male and that 40 out of 42 or 95.24% of such females are engaged in the craft for more than 10 years. Daughters number 27 or 27.00% next. Heads of households who are female potters themselves account for 20.00% of workers. It is further seen that among the actual makers of pottery it is for obvious reasons that mostly the daughters reported their association with the craft for less than 5 years. It is further seen that males attend to collection of raw material (clay), baking the products and disposal of the finished product etc. which do not call for any skill on their part. The table depicts that 33 or 52.38% of the total males who reported association with the craft are heads of households and who are engaged in the ancillary works relating to the craft for over 10 years followed by sons who account for 44.44% of such workers.

The table also clearly establishes the fact that pottery making is a household industry where no hired labourer is ever engaged.

#### **Purity and pollution associated with the Craft**

There is no purity and pollution as such associated with the craft. They manufacture earthenwares all the year round. The females after completion of normal household duties practise this craft. It is axiomatic for a Hira woman to know the art of making pottery. In strict sense of term, there is no purity or pollution associated with the craft. Even no religious or social function precedes making the wares or at the completion of a cycle of production. It is interesting to note that women do not refrain from manufacturing pottery even during their menstruation period even though they are prohibited from doing normal household duties in the kitchen during such time. However, the only period when Hira potters abstain from making pottery is the pollution period after the death of any member of the family. The pollution period observed by them is normally about 30 days.

#### **Particulars of articles produced**

Hiras manufacture earthenwares of various sizes and shapes, according to their prospective uses. It is to be noted that no modern or sophisticated article with design are produced by them. The main items produced by the Hira potters are as follows :

### **1. Earthen wares used for domestic purposes**

(1) *Kalah* (Pitcher) : It is a vessel used by the plains and tribal people mainly in the rural areas for keeping water. It is also used for various other domestic purposes. The sizes and shapes of this vessel differ from district to district.

(2) *Tekeli* (Jar) : It is a small earthen jar, used for preparing Tekelipitha (a kind of cake prepared out of rice in the plains of Assam). Besides it is also used storage purposes.

(3) *Hari* or *Matka* : This is a much bigger vessel used mostly for storage purpose. Fishermen use this type of vessel for preparing a particular type of dry fish known as 'Sidal'. The dry fish stored in such a vessel having its mouth tightly closed can be preserved for a long time. Rural people also use this for keeping cloths and for storing rice and pulses.

(4) *Ghat—Lots* : A kind of water vessel. It is miniature type of pitcher or kalah for taking water from larger vessel for washing and drinking purposes.

(5) *Saru* : It is a cooking vessel. Two principal types of Saru are described below —(a) Patisaru and (b) Jap/Pan Saru.

(a) *Patisaru* : Patisaru is an earthen vessel used for cooking rice for preparing 'Handoh' (a kind of cake).

(b) *Jap/Pansaru* : Jap or Pansaru is a double chamber vessel used for steam-cooking of a special type of rice locally known as 'Bora' as also for making 'Pitha' or rice cake. The intermediate surface is perforated. Water is kept in the lower chamber and rice in the upper chamber which is covered by a lid in a manner to prevent escape of water vapour. The perforated surface is covered with a very thin piece of cloth to allow easy passage of steam from the lower chamber once the water is heated.

(6) *Dhakoni* : The dhakoni or lid is used for covering all kinds of food stuffs.

(7) *Gamla* : This is a large vessel used by the washerman for washing cloths and also by the cultivators as a feeding trough for cattle.

(8) *Dema* : It is another big vessel which resembles 'Saru'. It is generally used by the

fisherman for keeping fishes in water in living condition.

(9) *Kata* : It is a vessel used for preparing curds. The name 'kota' is popular in the lower Brahmaputra valley.

(10) *Mola* : It is an earthen cup, generally used for keeping curds and for serving purposes. Restaurants in the urban as well as rural areas use this cup for serving sweets and curds.

(11) *Chariya* : It is a wash vessel.

(12) *Chilim* : Chilim is a bowl used at the topmost part of a 'Hoka' (a country made device for tobacco smoking).

## **2. Earthen wares used for ceremonial purposes**

As mentioned earlier, earthen vessel plays a very important role in the performance of various religious and social ceremonies. Earthen wares are used by various sections of the people in Assam in ceremonies associated with birth, marriage and death of a person. Thus, earthen-wares always play a vital role in the socioreligious life of the people of Assam.

## **3. Earthenwares used in social ceremonies or religious functions**

(1) *Earthen lamp* : Locally known as 'chaki' or 'pradip'. This is used for burning a wick in mustard oil. It is used both in rural and urban areas.

(2) *Dhunadani* : This is a special kind of earthen pot used for burning incense (dhuna) usually at the time of religious functions.

(3) *Dhupdani* : This is used for burning incense sticks.

(4) *Ghot* : It is a small earthen pot used in religious function.

(5) *Nagara* : This is a small musical instrument used in time of 'nam-kirtan' (worship of Almighty).

(6) *Kurkuri* : This is another type of musical instrument but much smaller in size compared to Nagara.

Besides the above articles a particular type of earthen vessel (saru) is used by a section of

people for throwing dirt and wastes on the occasion of a child birth. As it is a custom to use an earthen pot no other vessel made of any other material is used in the rural areas for such purposes. The pot is kept by the side of a prospective mother and thrown away after five days from the date of birth of a child. This saru or earthen vessel is known as 'kumaru' in Kamrup district.

There are various kinds of earthen vessels painted with various colours that are used during the course of marriage among the Hindus. The following is a brief description of the articles used on such an occasion.

(a) One earthen vessel full of paddy is known as 'Purna patra'.

(b) One earthen lamp or 'chaki' placed on a stand, where the wick is burnt in mustard oil.

(c) One conical pot used at the time of playing 'kari' or 'kara' (a type of dice) by the bridegroom and the bride.

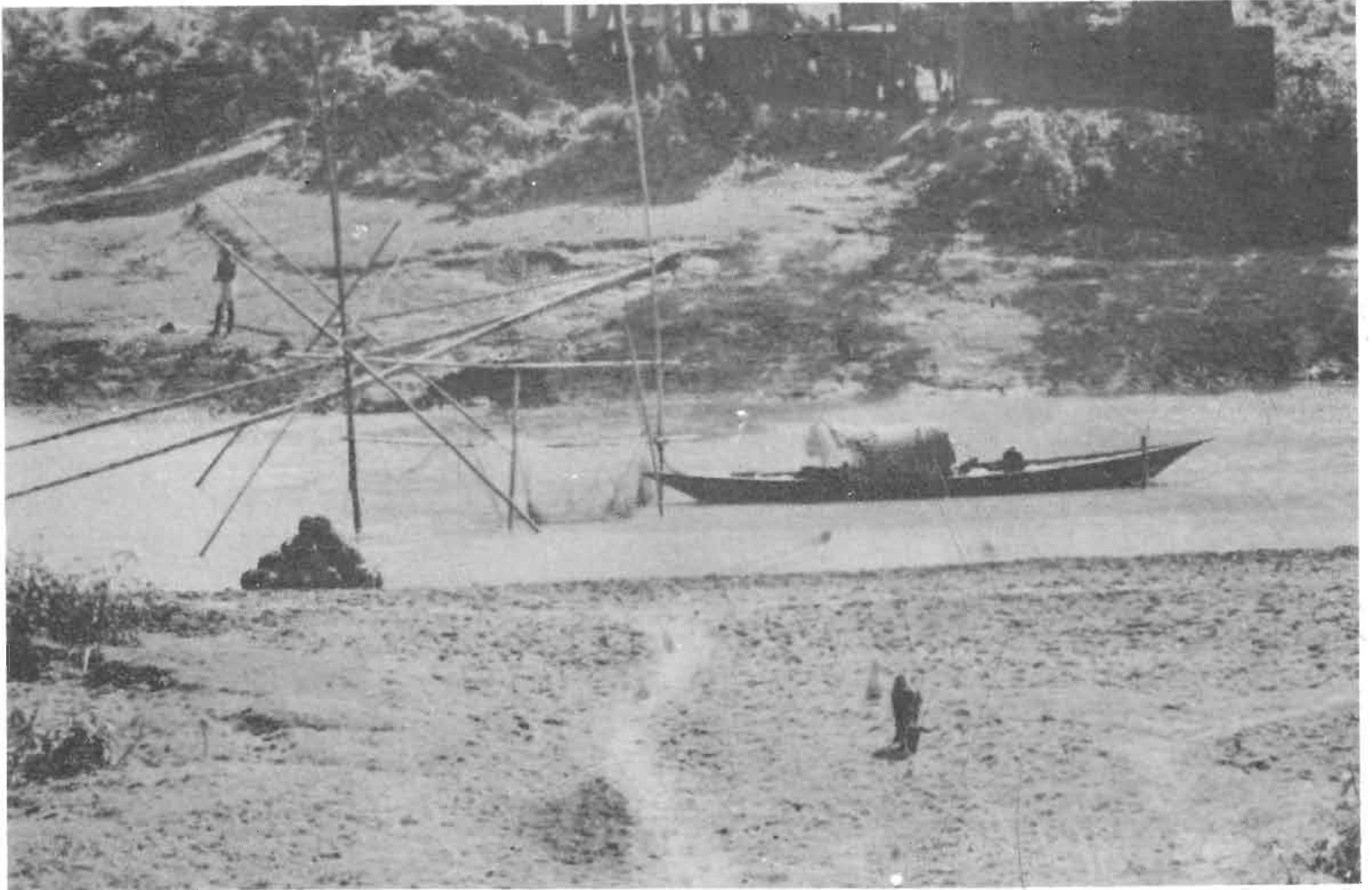
(d) One 'Kalah' and four 'Ghotas' used for carrying water from the tanks for the purpose of ceremonial bath of the bride and the bridegroom.

A very important use of an earthen vessel is associated with death. A 'Kalah' is required to be carried to the crematorium along with the deadbody. After the burning of the deadbody is over the 'Kalah' after being filled with water is kept at the site of burning the dead and is broken at the time of leaving the crematorium, obviously under a notion that the water will quench the thirst of the spirit of the dead. Those who bury the dead also use such a vessel. In this case the 'Kalah' is kept upside down by the side of the grave.

There is a superstition among the rural people of Assam that no kerosene lamp can be used or placed by the side of a person suffering from measles or chicken pox, instead, an earthen lamp burning mustard oil is used to lit the room.

Besides the above mentioned articles, Hiras also manufacture 'Shikar' - a kind of earthen cake which are eaten both by males and females but particularly the pregnant women. These cakes are manufactured in large quantities because throughout the rural areas specially of Kamrup district it is a greatly sought for article.





Hiramati being carried by boat

Hira pottery are mainly utilitarian in nature and majority of them are culinary types. It is to be noted that no modern or sophisticated articles with design are produced by them. Following

table serves as a quick reference to the article produced by Hira households and the use to which these are put.

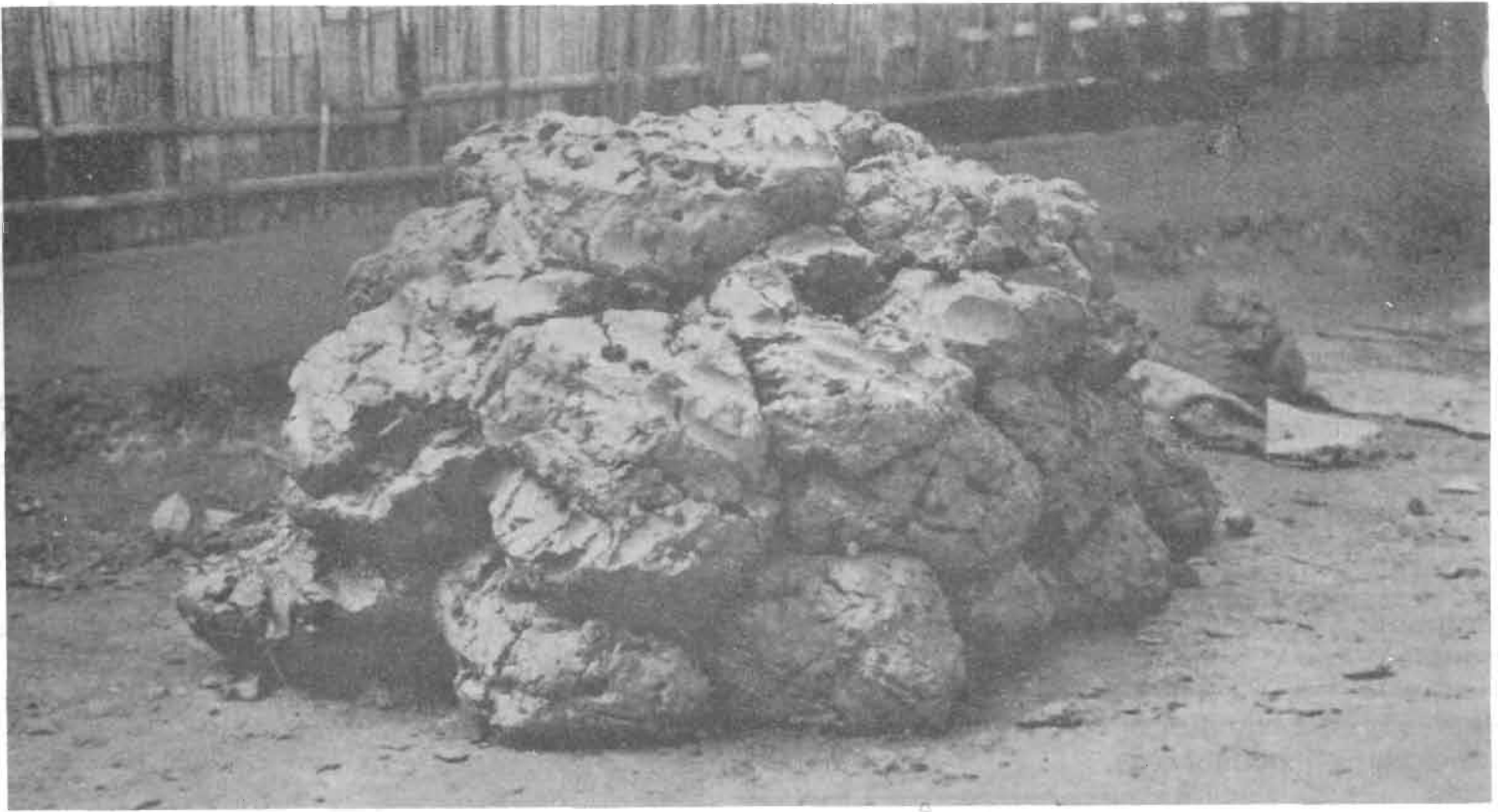
Table IV.4

Distribution of Households manufacturing various items and the use to which these are put

Name of Hand-craft items manufactured	Number of households manufacturing the items	Storing and carrying drinking water	Storing gruel food-stuff	Burning of incense	Storing of rice, paddy etc.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Kalah	60	60	-	-	-
Tekeli	60	-	60	-	-
Dhup Dani	34	-	-	34	-
Dhuna Dani	40	-	-	40	-
Hari	4	-	-	-	4
Kota	39	-	-	-	-
Mola	3	-	-	-	-
Saru	59	-	-	-	-
Chaki	11	-	-	-	-
Ghat	42	-	-	-	-
Savings Pot	4	-	-	-	-
Jap Saru	2	-	-	-	-
Mola Saru	2	-	-	-	-
Nagara	3	-	-	-	-
Kurkuri	3	-	-	-	-
Shikar	21	-	-	-	-
Chilim	16	-	-	-	-

Number reporting purpose for which the particular item is used in

Preparing curds	Frying rice, cake etc.	Religious functions	Musical instrument	Chewn by pregnant woman	Small savings	Preparing a special type of rice and rice-cake
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-
39	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	59	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	11	-	-	-	-
-	-	42	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	4	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	2
-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	3	-	-	-
-	-	-	3	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	21	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-



A heap of Hiramati



Cutting and cleaning the raw material

Table IV. 4 depicts that the most common items manufactured by almost all the households are Kolah, Tekeli, Saru, Dhupdani, Dhunadani, Ghot and Kota are the other items manufactured by most of the households. The very nature of use of these articles puts them in great demand and as a natural corollary more and more households are to get involved in their manufacture. Nagara and Kurkuri, two musical instruments mostly used in religious festivities are manufactured by only three households. This is because it requires great skill to make such kind of instruments and only a few artisans possess such skill. There is a discernible tendency to produce more and more earthen saving pot which is gaining popularity both in the rural and

urban areas. The Chilim - a device for smoking tobacco, another item very popular among the rural people, is also manufactured by large number of households. Apart from the above items, a small earthen cake locally known as 'Shikar' which is manducated mostly by the pregnant women all over the rural areas and thus have a ready market, is also produced by a sizeable number of households practising pottery.

Table below shows the distribution of households manufacturing various earthenwares by number of articles manufactured in a month.

**Table IV.5**

Distribution of Households manufacturing different varieties of earthenware and the number of items manufactured in a Month.

Names of handicraft items manufactured	Number of households manufacturing the items	Number of households reporting number of items manufactured in a month					Remarks
		Less than 10	10-25	26-50	51-100	101+	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Kalah	60	5	29	23	3	-	No recorded account of Number of items produced is to be found. The figures therefore represent the verbal statements of the potters.
Tekeli	60	4	32	21	3	-	
Dhupdani	34	1	24	9	-	-	
Dhuna Dani	40	-	30	10	-	-	
Hari	4	-	4	-	-	-	
Kota	39	1	16	22	-	-	
Mola	3	-	-	1	2	-	
Saru	59	3	26	30	-	-	
Chaki	11	-	-	1	-	10	
Ghat	42	1	17	24	-	-	
Savings pot	4	1	3	-	-	-	
Jap Saru	2	-	-	2	-	-	
Mola Saru	2	-	-	2	-	-	
Nagara	3	3	-	-	-	-	
Kurkuri	3	3	-	-	-	-	
Shikar	21	-	-	1	5	15	
Chilim	16	-	9	7	-	-	

Table IV. 5 depicts that Chaki (earthen lamp) and Shikar (earthen cakes) are the two item which are produced in very large quantities in a month. We must however hasten to add that these two items are small in size and thus not

much material and labour need be put forth in their production. In fact, these two are not earthen wares in the truest sense of the term. Major items like 'Kalah', 'Tekeli' cannot be easily produced and as such very few households can



Kneading the clay—even the child helps his mother



afford to make more than 50 of such article in a month. As already stated, manufacture of musical instruments like 'Kurkuri' and 'Nagara' demands great skill and labour and obviously therefore the quantity of such items produced in a month is recorded as less than 10.

### **Raw materials**

Clay is the main raw material required for this industry. However, all types of clay are not suitable for the preparation of various types of earthenwares. There are many varieties of clay with varying texture composition and colour. The best suited clay is selected by the potters taking into consideration all the above three factors. There are different types of clay such as sandy clay, black clay, fire clay, white clay, soft clay, hard clay etc. But potters usually select the clay which is plastic in nature. The clay used by the potters are known as Kumarmatti (potter's clay) in Assam.

The clay which is suitable for pottery making is found in many parts of Assam - especially in the alluvial tracts. The clay used by the potters of Brahmaputra valley is of a blackish colour and is locally known as Kumarmatti or 'Allaetia Matti'. This type of clay is usually found on the banks of streams, rivers and in some cases even in the paddy fields and this can be procured without much difficulty.

It is interesting to note that, the clay used by the Hiras for making various types of earthenwares is quite different from the clay used by the other

Kumars (Potters). Hira potters use a peculiar type of clay which is rarely found. It is grey in colour and very stiff. This type of clay is known as 'Hira matti'. Due to its stiffness this type of clay makes better earthenwares than the other varieties used by potters in making pots with the help of a wheel.

Hira matti is usually found in the bottom of pond, tank and river. Kamrup district is famous for this kind of clay.

### **Subsidiary raw materials**

Apart from the main raw material clay, a few other subsidiary raw materials as listed below are also required for manufacturing pottery.

(1) Sand (2) husk (3) straw (4) Ash (5) Firewood etc. These are locally available.

### **Raw materials required for colouring the finished product :**

The main raw material used by the potters to colour the finished product is Gerimati - a kind of red clay or red ochre. Besides this Koir or Kath (Accacia catechu), Bark of Mango tree, Basak tree and washing soda, etc. are also added with the Gerimati to make neatly beautiful colour.

Following table prepared from the survey data shows how the raw-materials required for the purpose of manufacturing various kinds of earthenwares are procured.

**Table IV.6**

Raw materials used in manufacture of different items of pottery classified by Area from where procured by Mode of Transport and Problem Faced

Name of raw-material used for making the handi-craft items	Number of households using the raw material	Malong (Kamrup district) and brought to the site by means of		Changsari (Kamrup district) and brought to the site by means of		Lokhaituni river (Kamrup district) and brought to the site by means of	
		Load on shoulder two basket	Pull cart and Bullock cart	Load on shoulder two basket	Pull cart and Bullock cart	Load on shoulder two basket	Pull cart and Bullock cart, boat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Clay	60	8	20	-	8	10	10
Sand	60	-	-	-	-	20	20

Number of households which have procured raw material from

Kunwari pather (Darrang district) and brought to the site by means of	Kapili river (Nagaon district) and brought to the site by means of	Dum river (Darrang district) and brought to the site by means of	Number of households reported having faced problem for procuring the raw material	Remarks				
Load on shoulder two basket	Pull cart and Bullock cart	Load on shoulder two basket	Pull cart and Bullock cart/Boat	Load on shoulder two basket	Pull cart and Bullock cart	Mone-tary	Men-power	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
-	20	20	20	-	-	28	10	Figures shown in Col.3 to 14 are apparently more than the actual households as same household procure raw-materials from different sources and bring
-	-	20	20	20	-	15	8	



First step in production : Making of 'Don'—a flat and circular structure of clay



Second step : Beating the 'Don' with a mallet into the shape of a cap



Table indicates that clay and sand are the two important raw materials required for the purpose of making pottery. The clay required for the purpose, as mentioned earlier, is of a special kind and is available in a few places. Malong, Changsari, Lakhaitara river, Kunwari pather, Kapili river and Duni rivers are the main sites from where the clay is procured by the potters. Potters of Sessamukh village usually procure clay from the nearby Lakhaitara river, Malong and Changsari villages. These places are best known for 'Hiramatti' which makes fine earthenwares. As regards the potters of Ganesh Konwari village - clay is procured from Duni river and Kunwari pather which are not far from the village. The potters of Dharamtul village usually procure the clay from Kapili river. These two rivers provide very good quality clay which makes good earthen pots. As for the sand it is not difficult to procure. The craftsmen usually procure it from the nearby rivers and very rarely buy from local traders.

The mode of transport for carrying the clay from the site of its occurrence to the households are almost same for all the potters. They usually prefer to carry by hand-pull cart and occasionally by bullock cart. Besides, they sometimes also carry basketful of raw material (clay), hanging from a flat bamboo with the help of strings, on shoulder which is locally known as 'Bhar'.

The clay thus brought home is heaped on a side of the house. But this is not ready for making pottery and is required to undergo various stages of processing like cleaning, mixing and kneading. The collection of the clay at site carrying it to the house and preparing the clay for making earthenwares are done by manfolk.

The preparation of the clay is done in the following manner :

#### *Cleaning :*

The lump of clay is first of all loosened with the help of a spade in order to separate foreign particles or rubbishes such as pieces of stone etc. There is a constant endeavour to separate foreign particle at all stages of processing the clay.

Water is then added to the pulverised clay to make it muddy. During the levigation process clay is thoroughly mixed with water to form a sludge. The sludge is then allowed to dry. It is usually kept under a cover for a period of 2 to 3

days. The clay is actually allowed to dry until sufficient water has been removed to enable the potters to handle the same.

#### *Mixing :*

The clay thus prepared is not quite ready for making pottery. The clay needs some tempering material for improving the quality. Fine sand is the tempering material added to the clay to make it stiff and plastic. Another reason of adding the sand is to prevent the articles from cracking when it is baked. Skilled artisans know the quantity of this tempering material to be added to the different qualities of clay. If excess sand is added the clay loses its adhesiveness. Therefore one should be very careful about this mixing. Needless to say that the proportion of sand required to be added varies with the quality of the clay. Usually about 2½ kilos of sand are added to one quintal of clay. Experienced potters, after testing the soil can easily estimate the amount of water and sand to be added. After mixing of clay with sand, the clay is kneaded with feet and a wooden bar. It is then allowed to remain as it is for a day or two.

Kneading is the process which makes the tempering material mix with clay thoroughly.

#### *Kneading :*

The artisans knead the clay with their feet or sometime with the hands. The kneading is done by both males and females. The process continues till the clay acquires the required degree of plasticity. Foreign particles in the clay is also thrown away if noticed during the kneading process. After the kneading is over, the lump of clay is cut into small pieces by a sharp split bamboo or a piece of iron or tin with sharp edges.

The clay thus prepared is shaped into ball of different sizes to be used for manufacturing different types of earthenwares.

#### **Different stages of manufacturing process**

Manufacturing process is very simple. It is exclusively done by the females. Most of the earthenwares manufactured by the Hiras are roughly made on a flat oval shaped stone which is believed to be the most ancient method of making pottery. The different stages of manufacturing process is described below :



Third step : Raising the body by joining clay with the 'Don'



Fourth step : Giving the desired shape to the vessel

At first, from already prepared clay a number of small round or conical shaped structures are made with the help of both the hands. These structures are formed by working with the right hand over the clenched left hand till it forms a cap or round like structure. These round pieces of clay are locally known as 'Don'.

From this Don or round pieces earthenwares of various sizes and shapes are made. At first the bottom portion of a vessel is formed by beating this rounded piece of clay with a wooden log on an oval shaped stone and when the desired shape is obtained it is allowed to dry in shade for a day or two.

Next stage is the raising of the bottom portion of the pot. This stage is locally known as 'Khad dia' - means raising the body. The bottom portion is slightly raised by joining clay with the help of the hand and then it is beaten on another piece of oval shaped stone. It is then allowed to dry for sometime. After that mouth portion of the vessel is made by joining clay with the vessel already made. This process is known as 'Mukh Dia'. After that the vessel is beaten to get a desired shape. The last stage is the making of neck portion - which is made in a similar manner as described above. This neck portion is locally known as 'Kan Dia'. The vessel thus made is allowed to dry in a shade for one or two days. Each stage of joining is done with the help of a piece of cloth occasionally moistened with water.

The final shape of the vessel is also given by the hands. The method adopted for this is to beat the exterior surface of the vessel with a flat wooden mallet held in the right hand against a smooth oval shaped stone held by the left hand against the inner surface. After that the pot is again allowed to dry in the shade for several days. The surface of the vessel is then polished with an earthen pestle or a piece of rag folded and moistened with water. Next stage is baking the vessels in fire.

When the vessels are dried properly, these are baked in an open space. The process of baking is very simple and is locally known as 'Bhatti dia'. It is done in the following manner. The vessels just dried are carefully stacked in the open with layers of straw in between them and firewood or cowdung as fuel underneath. The wood is then set on fire, when the earthenware are fully baked they are taken out of the fire time to time with the help of a stick. The collection of firewood or cowdung and burning of the vessels are

generally done by the men. Though apparently a simple job, given to inexperienced hands the process of baking may bring a total damage to all unbaked pottery.

After baking, the products are usually ready for use. In some cases the vessels are coloured before these are baked. The colouring agent is a liquid locally prepared from Geruamati - a kind of red clay. In some places 'khoer' or 'kath', bark of mango tree, basak leaves are added to this Geruamati. Thus the colour varies from place to place. However some potters do not use the colour at all. The coloured liquid is painted on the outer surface of the vessels with the help of a brush or a piece of cloth.

A very interesting feature of Hira potters is that a craftsman does not make a ware in its entirety at a time. Instead she makes a large number of a particular portion or part of a vessel at a time. A complete ware is made only after all the parts are separately made easy. Thus production of a ware involves different stages. According to the Hiras the above mentioned procedure adopted by them ensures manufacture of a large number of a particular variety of ware within a desired time.

Entire process of manufacturing is done by a single person. No second person is involved in any stage of the process. However, in few cases colouring of the various kinds of wares are done by small girl. A woman can produce different items without any help from other person. The males do the unskilled part of the process, they do not take part in actual manufacturing process. They usually help female in burning the raw product. Besides the collection of raw material and disposal of finished products are mainly done by the males.

It is interesting to note that uptill now Hira potters have not adopted any new technique in the process of manufacturing. They still follow the most traditional method in making various kinds of wares.

### **Tools and equipments**

Tools required for the purpose of manufacturing various kinds of earthenwares are very simple and easily available. They are all local made. This industry does not require any special type of tools and equipments. In fact, the wooden log and a few oval shaped stones are the only tools required for the purpose. However, follow-



The last two stages : Top : 'Mukh Dia'—forming neck of the vessel. Bottom : 'Kan Dia'—making edges in the neck



ing are the main tools and equipments used by the Hiras for manufacturing various earthenwares.

(1) Hoe : This is made of flat iron blade filled with a wooden handle. This is required for digging clay, from the place where it is available.

(2) Baskets : These are made of bamboo and cane, used for carrying clay and also carrying the finished product to the markets.

(3) Wooden bar or Pestle : This is used for beating and mixing the clay. Local name of this varies from place to place. In some place it is called 'Thom' and in some other 'Gajanbari'.

(4) Wooden log or Mallet : Small wooden log with a handle. It is the main tool for shaping earthenwares. It is locally known as 'Pitoni'. It is

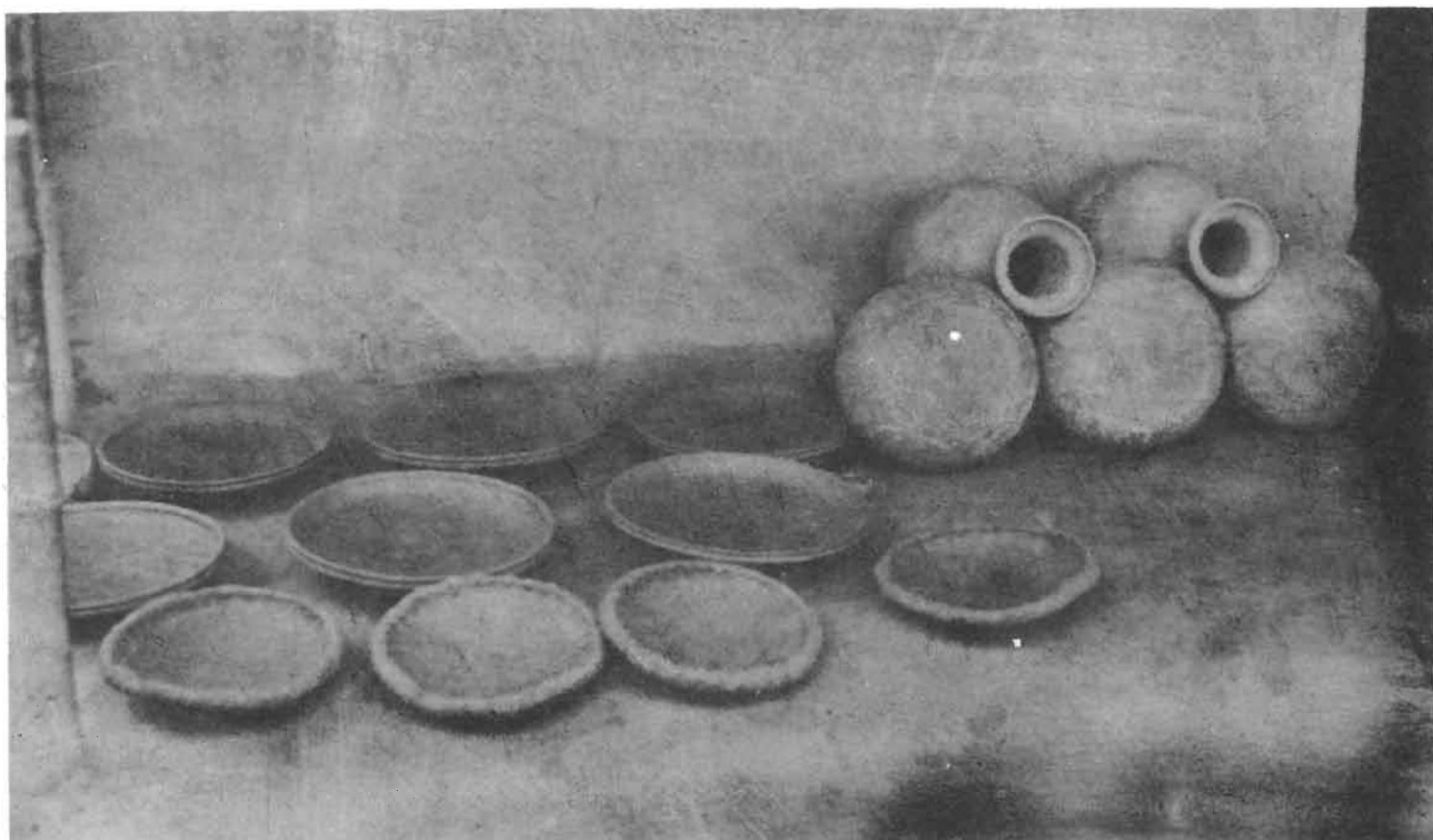
used for beating or hammering the earthenware for giving the desired shape.

(5) Round or flat stone : This is locally known as 'Hatsila'. It is of different sizes and shapes, used for supporting the sheet of clay from inside by the left hand while beating is done by the right hand.

(6) Small pieces of cloth : Small pieces of cloth required at the time of joining the parts of the earthenwares. In the Kamrup district it is known as 'Churkani'.

(7) Small earthen pot : It is a small pot made of clay and used for keeping water.

(8) Cutter : A blade made from iron locally known as 'Kortana' used for cutting clay during preparation of clay.



Drying in shade before baking



Painting 'Koloh' (pitcher) with Gerumati sometimes mixed with 'Khair' and juice of bark of mango-tree and leaves of Basaka. Nothing but a piece of cloth is used as a tool.



An expert artisan making 'Nagara' and 'Kurkuri' - two musical instruments

Hira potters still use the traditional outdated local made tools in the manufacturing various items. Uptill now they have not introduced any new tools and method in the process of manufacturing. It is really interesting to note that they have not yet introduced the 'potters wheel' in the

craft.

Following table shows the commonly tools and equipments used for manufacturing various kinds of earthenwares.

**Table IV.7**  
**Handicraft items manufactured and tools and equipments used**

Name of the handicraft items manufactured	No. of households manufacturing handicrafts items shown in Col. 1	Remarks
1	2	3
Kalah	60	Tools required for manufacturing various items shown in Col. 1 are same. The tools used for manufacturing various items are round rock, wooden stick or pestle, piece of cloth and water pot.
Tekeli	60	
Dhupdani	34	
Dhuna Dani	40	
Hari	4	
Kota	39	
Mola	3	
Saru	59	
Chaki	11	
Ghat	42	
Savings pot	4	
Nagara	3	
Kurkuri	3	
Shikar	21	
Chilim	16	
Jap Saru	2	
Mola Saru	2	

Table IV.7 depicts that the item of tools and equipments are the same for making different varieties of earthen pots and that no special kind of tool is required for manufacturing any item.

#### **Design used in the craft**

The earthenwares manufactured by the Hiras potters are very simple in their various sizes and shapes. Most of the articles manufactured by the Hiras possess a rough surface. No floral design or motif is imprinted on the Hira pottery. Shape of various vessels produced in the different centres are more or less alike. It has been observed during the survey that except painting with indigenously prepared colouring agent no other method is adopted for decorating the products. The method of colouring is also the same - Hiras without any exception use Geruamati, a kind of red clay for colouring the articles. Only the extract of leaves

and roots of a few plants used as extra ingredients vary from place to place.

The present survey reveals that Hira potters still continue to make earthenwares of traditional shapes and sizes and that there has been no deviation from the age-old method of production. No new designs are also found to have been introduced by the potters in the recent years.

The designs as adopted in the long past is still found to be in vogue without any noticeable deviation in the present time. Hira potters cannot recollect any myth or legend associated with the designing or shaping of various types of earthenwares or the colouring of the same. Also there is no recorded history about origin of this craft and as such it is impossible to accredit any individual or group of individuals as the brain behind the various designs now being adopted.



A few tools and implements : Clock-wise from behind—Stones of different size, small earthen vessel for storing water and a piece of cloth constantly used in every stage of products, mallets, 'Kortara'—a culler made of tin for cutting clay in initial stage and 'Gajanbari' or pestle used in kneading the clay. .



## CHAPTER V

### MARKETING

Absence of an organised market is the main constraint faced by the Hira potters. There is no assured market or outlet centre where the potters can display or dispose off their products. It is already mentioned that the Hira potters are very poor and have very little capital of their own. Pottery making is the principal source of income for them and thus a potters' family entirely depends on this traditional craft. Hence absence of a proper market resulting in an unsteady flow of income stands as a stumbling block for them. Unless proper marketing facilities are provided to them this traditional craft is destined to lose its glory.

In the past buying and selling of pottery was usually done on a barter system. Interestingly enough even now this system is not altogether absent. In the past pottery articles were sold to the peasants by travelling pedlars who were the menfolk belonging to the potters' families in exchange of paddy. But at present majority of potters sell their goods in various local markets. However, pedlars selling earthenwares by travelling from one village to another is still a common sight. It is to be noted here that a unique feature in trading in pottery is that no middleman is involved at any stage.

It has been observed during the survey that weekly hat and local markets are the main marketing centres for selling their products. Besides 'Melas' (fairs) held during puja and other

socio-religious functions are also important centres of disposing their finished products. Apart from this, potters undertake production on advance orders from people or shop-keepers. Religious ceremonies and marriages are normally the occasions when potters are asked to make specific types of wares.

With rapid industrialisation, the pattern of life is changing both in rural as well as urban areas. People living in rural and urban areas to-day prefer to use stainless or other cheap metal utensils to earthen vessels. Even in the rural areas earthen vessels formerly used for different purposes are gradually yielding place to metal utensils which are more durable and thus in the long run is estimated to be much cheaper. In the urban areas there is no worthwhile market for earthenwares. Only item in demand is the 'flowering pot' - but unfortunately Hira potters do not make such pots. It is thus observed that except on occasions of religious and social functions and ceremonies the demand for pottery in urban areas is most insignificant.

An attempt is made here to study the marketing facilities and margin of profits related to sale of various finished products.

For this purpose a table V.1 is placed below to show the number of households manufacturing various items classified by quantity produced and purpose for which produced.

Table V.1

Number of households manufacturing pottery of various descriptions classified by quantity produced and purpose for which produced.

Names of the handicraft items manufactured	No. of households manufacturing the items	Number of households reported having produced			Remarks
		Below 100 (per annum)	101-500 (per annum)	501+ (per annum)	
		Entirely for the use of other communities and sold against	Entirely for the use of other communities and sold against	Entirely for the use of other communities and sold against	
		Cash	Cash	Cash	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Kalah	60	-	3	57	Though none
Tekeli	60	-	2	58	reported pro-
Dhup Dani	34	-	1	33	ducing any
Dhuna Dani	40	-	-	40	article entirely
Hari	4	-	-	4	for the use of the
Kota	39	-	1	38	craftsmen's
Mola	3	-	-	3	community, the
Jap Saru	2	-	-	2	Hira potters
Saru	59	-	2	57	keep aside one
Chaki	11	-	-	11	or two articles
Ghat	42	-	1	41	for their own
Savings Pot	4	-	1	3	use as and when
Nagara	3	3	-	-	- a necessity for
Kurkuri	3	3	-	-	-the same arises
Shikar	21	-	-	21	
Chilim	16	-	-	16	

It is observed that almost the entire lot of households engaged in production of different items of pottery reportedly produce more than 500 pieces of each article a year and that the whole lot of out-put is sold against payment in cash to people belonging to communities other than Hira. It is seen that only two items namely 'Nagara' and 'Kurkuri' are produced in small quantity. In fact these two items are usually produced against advance order only.

#### Places of sale of the articles

We now try to find out the places of sale of the items produced by the surveyed households. A table prepared from the survey data to show the number of households engaged in production of various items and places where the articles are sold is reproduced below :



A few finished products for common use  
Front row : L to R Mola and Saru  
Middle row : A 'Tekeli' in between two 'Kalah'  
Hind row : A 'Kotah'



A few other finished products : Jap/Pan Saru in front and 'Kalah'

Table V.2  
Number of households manufacturing handicrafts items classified by place of sale of articles.

Name of handicraft items	No. of households manufacturing the items	Number of households reported having sold the article at				
		Inside the village	Inside the village and held		Other village and held at	
			daily	weekly	Sipa-zar weekly	Nellie weekly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kalah	60	20	20	11	20	20
Tekeli	60	20	20	11	20	20
Dhup Dani	34	8	13	5	13	5
Dhuna Dani	40	16	17	5	6	5
Hari	4	4	-	4	-	2
Kata	39	18	15	8	6	16
Mola	3	3	-	-	-	3
Jap Saru	2	-	-	-	2	-
Mola Saru	2	-	-	-	2	-
Saru	59	15	20	11	20	20
Chaki	11	12	-	4	-	4
Ghat	42	16	14	8	12	10
Savings Pot	4	4	-	2	-	-
Nagara	3	3	-	-	-	-
Kurkuri	3	3	-	-	-	-
Shikar	21	15	4	11	2	5
Chilim	16	5	8	3	3	5

Mela (Durga Puja)	Mela (Ashokastami)		Remarks
Inside the village and held	Town and held at		
Yearly	Sual-kuchi	Guwahati	
	Yearly	Yearly	
8	9	10	11
11	8	2	No. of households shown in col. No. 3 reported having sold the article at their own households
11	8	2	
5	3	2	
5	3	2	
4	-	-	
8	-	-	
-	-	-	
-	-	-	
-	-	-	
11	-	-	
4	2	2	
8	3	-	
2	2	2	
-	-	-	
-	-	-	
11	-	-	
3	2	-	

The question of export of the pottery products beyond the boundary of Assam does not arise at all because the products are made entirely to meet the demand and taste of the local people. The quality of products also does not merit export to urban centres inhabited by people with a distinct liking for utensils and other vessels made of more sophisticated ingredients like china clay, stainless steel etc.

It is observed that majority of the households manufacturing different types of pottery sell their products at the market and fairs held inside their own village. Moreover, quite a large number of them reported to have sold their products at their residence-cum-workshop itself. Weekly fairs held at neighbouring villages are second most

important centre of sale of pottery. Further, quite a few of the artisan families reported selling their products at 'Mela' (fair) held annually inside their village on the occasion of Durga Puja the greatest of all religious festivals observed by the Hindus in this part of the country which draws a large number of visitors from neighbouring places. Very few families reported venturing out of their own village for the purpose of disposal of their merchandise. Our enquiry revealed that mela held once a year at Guwahati and Sualkuchi the two urban centres on the occasion of holy Ashokastami provide marketing centres for a few potters.

Following table shows the quantity of finished products sold and the manner of disposal.

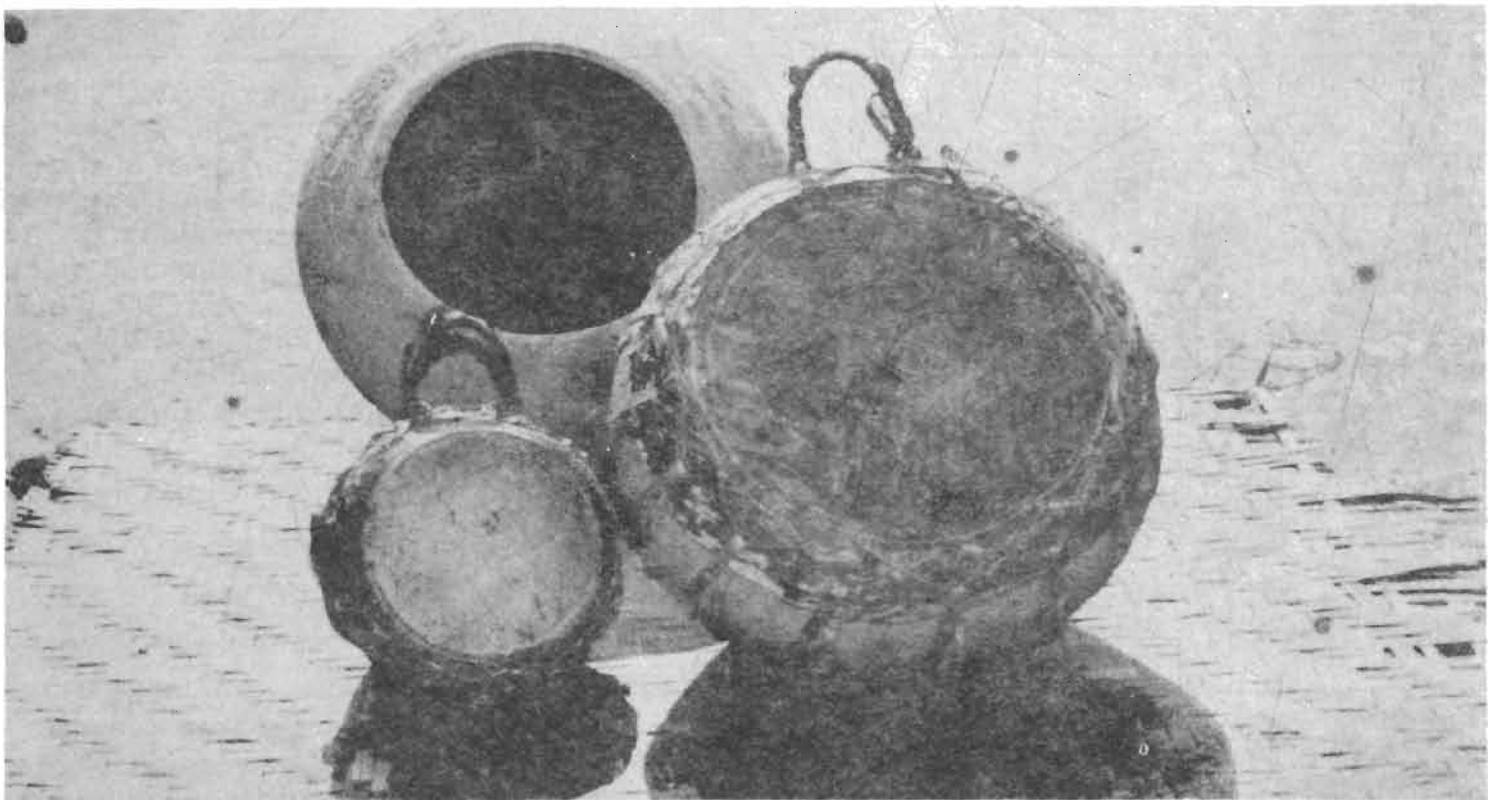
Table V.3

Households classified by quantity of finished products sold and channel through which it is disposed off.

Name of finished products	No. of households manufacturing the items	Quantity sold by households in broad ranges		Number of households disposed off the finished products		Remarks
		Broad ranges	No. of households	Directly to the consumer		
				Partially	Fully	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kalah	60	Below 100	-	-	-	None reported involvement of middlemen in disposal of any item of pottery
		101-500	3	1	2	
		501+	57	20	37	
Tekeli	60	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	2	-	2	
		501+	58	17	41	
Dhup Dani	34	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	1	-	1	
		501+	33	3	30	
Dhuna Dani	40	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	40	14	26	
Hari	4	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	4	1	3	
Kota	39	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	1	-	1	
		501+	38	7	31	
Mola	3	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	3	-	3	
Saru	59	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	2	-	2	
		501+	57	11	46	
Jap Saru	2	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	2	-	2	
Mola Saru	2	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	2	-	2	
Chaki	11	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	11	2	9	
Ghat	42	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	1	-	1	
		501+	41	15	26	
Savings Pot	4	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	1	-	1	
		501+	3	1	2	
Nagara	3	Below 100	3	-	3	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	-	-	-	



Another set of finished products : Clockwise from behind : Dhunadhani, Sikar, Small Savings (Coin) Pot, Flower vase, Chaki, Chilim, Dhupdani. In the centre is a 'Panbota' used in offering betel leaf and nut to a visitor



Musical Instruments : Bigger two are Nagara—one is yet to be covered with a goat skin. The smaller one is a 'Kurkuri'.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kurkuri	3	Below 100	3	-	3	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	-	-	-	
Shikar	21	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	21	2	19	
Chilim	16	Below 100	-	-	-	
		101-500	-	-	-	
		501+	16	3	13	

The table above is self-explanatory and does not call for any elaboration. However, it can be reiterated here that only the menfolk of the artisans families take part in trading. Moreover, it was gathered during survey that barring a few cases of partial disposal of finished products the artisans enjoy the privilege of selling off their

products in whole whatever is manufactured by them.

Attempt is now made to find out the terms and conditions and margin of profits as related to sale of finished products.

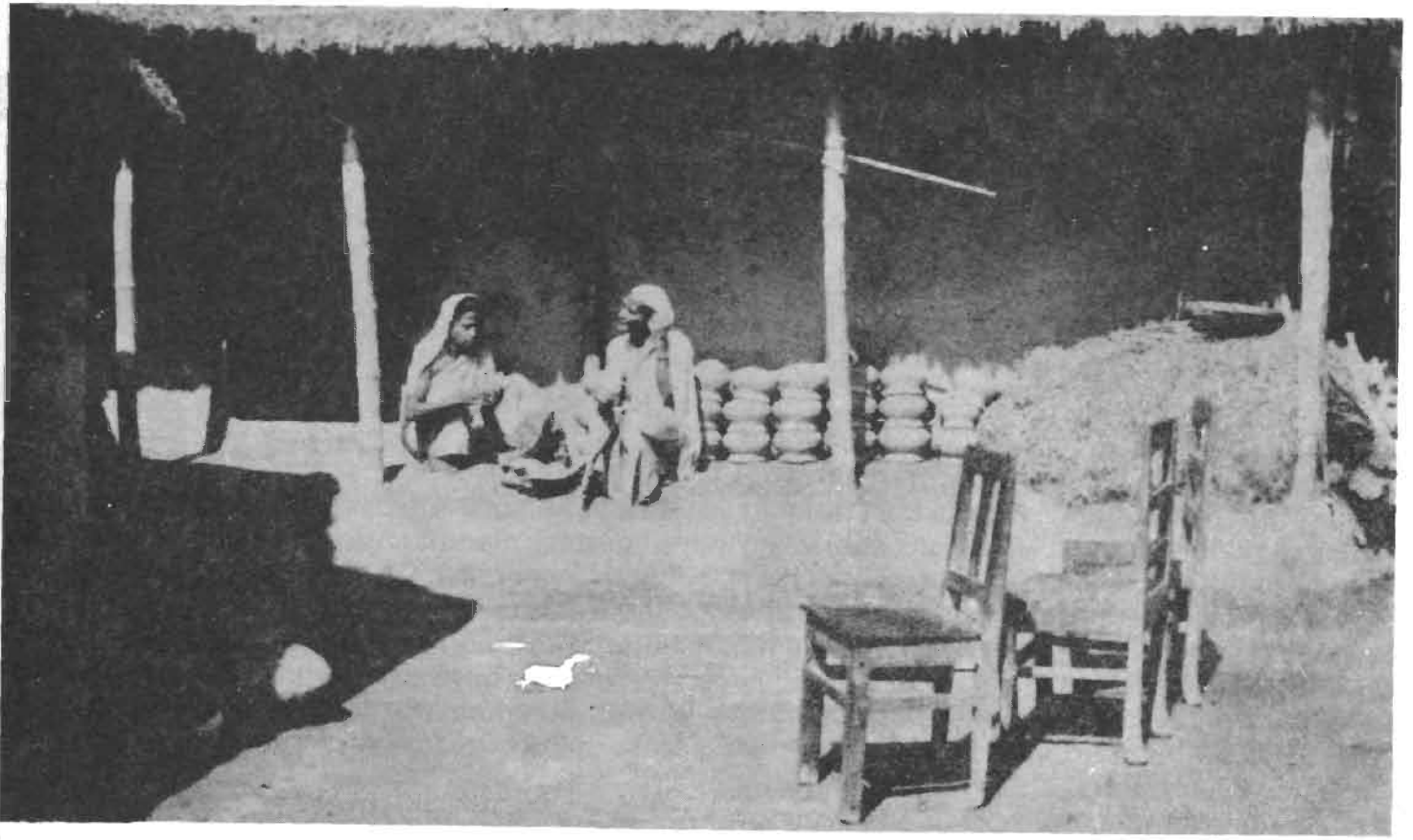
Table V.4  
Terms and conditions and margin of profit related to sale of finished products.

Name of the handicraft items	No. of households manufacturing the items indicated in col. 1	No. of households selling the items directly to the consumer at the margin of profit		Remarks
		30 to 80%	80% and above	
1	2	3	4	5
Kalah	60	10	50	Most of the potters reportedly do not have to incur any significant expenditure for procurement of clay, fire-wood, hay etc. and as such margin of profit is reportedly quite high. It is however to be borne in mind that in absence of any recorded accounts of cost of production and sale price of different articles, the margin of profit as stated here is anybody's guess
Tekeli	60	13	47	
Dhup Dani	34	8	26	
Dhuna Dani	40	9	31	
Hari	4	-	4	
Kata	39	7	32	
Mala	3	-	3	
Saru	59	13	46	
Chaki	11	1	10	
Ghat	42	11	31	
Savings Pot	4	-	4	
Jap Saru	2	-	2	
Mola Saru	2	-	2	
Nagara	3	-	3	
Kurkuri	3	-	3	
Shikar	21	5	16	
Chilim	16	4	12	

The table depicts the margin of profit at which various items of pottery are sold. As stated earlier all products are sold directly to the consumers. Majority of items such as Kalah, Tekeli, Dhupdani, Dhunadhani, Kota, Hari, Saru, Ghat etc. fetch a margin of profit above 80%. Besides a small percentage of household reported selling of earthenwares at margin of profit varying between

30% to 80%. It is gathered that a great majority of craftsmen do not have to bear any cost of fire wood, sand, husk etc. required for manufacturing pottery. However, it needs to be mentioned here that since no hired labour is engaged, the cost of labour factor has been precluded from calculation of profits.





Display of finished products at home—awaiting the prospective buyers



Carrying the finished products to market

## Cost of production

It is well-nigh impossible to make any correct estimation of cost of production and margin of profit gained by the Hira potters. Potters being vastly illiterate do not maintain any account of whatever price they pay for raw-materials or the money they earn by selling the finished products thus leaving one to wild guess works only in calculation of profit or loss.

Expenses incurred in transportation of clay from its place of availability to an artisan's house constitutes the prime factor in the cost of production of pottery as other ingredients cost nothing or a negligible amount. Though the term 'purchase' is not involved in procurement of clay and as such nothing is paid as a price for the raw material yet almost all the potters reported some expenditure for carrying the material from its place of availability. It could be gathered that in Sessamukh a potter has to pay about Rs. 80/- for a bullock-cart load and Rs. 30/- for a hand-cart load of clay to be carried from a distance of about 8 kms. whereas in Ganesh Konwari and Dharamtul areas the transportation charge ranges between Rs. 10/- to Rs. 15/- for a hand cart load and Rs. 3/- to Rs. 5/- for a pair of basket-load carried on shoulder covering a small distance.

It is interesting to note here that in Ganesh Konwari area the potters' village as a whole reportedly pays a nominal tax to the State Govt. for obtaining clay from an allotted plot of land. Generally all the earthenwares are sold at a very cheap price. Besides barter system is still found to prevail in some areas particularly in case of buying and selling of pottery. The pottery is still found to be exchanged for paddy.

We faced stumbling blocks in framing an account of price of a single piece of any article of pottery as the sellers do not maintain even any rough account of the sale of the bulk of merchandise sold either at home or outside let alone keeping a tag of price of any individual item. However, during field survey of all the three selected villages an attempt was made to elicit information about sale price of different articles of pottery. The average price per piece as quoted by the artisans is reproduced below.

1. Kalah — Rs. 2.00 to Rs. 4.00
2. Tekeli — Rs. 1.00 to 2.00
3. Dhupdani — Re. 1.00
4. Hari — Rs. 3.00 to Rs. 5.00

5. Kata — Re. 1.00 to Rs. 2.00
6. Saru — Re. 1.00 to Rs. 2.00
7. Chaki — Rs. 4.00 to Rs. 5.00 per hundred
8. Ghat — Re. 1.00 to Rs. 2.00
9. Savings pot — Re. 1.00 to Rs. 2.00
10. Nagara — Rs. 40.00 to Rs. 60.00
11. Kurkuri — Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 25.00
12. Shikar — Rs. 3.00 to Rs. 5.00 per hundred
13. Jap Saru — Rs. 2.00
14. Dhunadani — Re. 1.00
15. Chilim — Re 0.50 to Re. 1.00
16. Mola Saru — Rs. 2.00 to Rs. 3.00

For whatever it is worth we give below our estimation of the gross quantity of different items of pottery manufactured in a year in each of the three selected areas and the money value of the same. It is to be noted here that in estimating the figures of quantity produced and the money it fetches we have taken into consideration all the Hira households of the selected areas and not just the surveyed households.

Sessamukh with 56 households produce a total of 76,000 pieces valued at Rs. 87,000/-. Ganesh Konwari having 50 Hira households make 68,000 pieces estimated to be worth Rs. 77,000/- Dharamtul having a much larger number of 345 households is estimated to manufacture a total of 460,000 pieces a year having a money value of Rs. 534,000/-.

It may be added here that as opined by some of the artisans, an expert potter can on an average produce a total of 150 to 200 different items in a month which can earn him a maximum of Rs. 350/- to 400/-.

## Problems, faced by artisans

Attempt was made to find out if there are any problems encountered by the practising households in disposing off the finished products. The survey reveals that there is at present no specific problem faced by the households except the assured market for the sale of the product. Though local market and weekly 'hat' in the nearby villages solve the problem of marketing to some extent yet it is not enough for the survival of this traditional craft. The main problem faced by the Hira potters at present is the stiff competition with metal made domestic utensils. The metalwares are more durable and reasonably cheap. The earthenwares definitely cannot compete with the metal utensils. It is obvious that people always prefer to use metal utensils rather than

the undurable earthenwares. As a result the earthenwares is steadily losing the ground owing to a distinctly discernible shift in consumers choice in favour of metallic utensils. The use of earthenwares is gradually being restricted to a few occasions of social and religious ceremony. Only the poor section of rural people are found to use earthen utensils for domestic purpose. The problem is indeed very acute and merits immediate remedial measures. Another important problem faced by the artisans is that they do not enjoy the advantage of having any proper display of their products which could draw the attention of prospective buyers. Over and above the cost of each item is very low and

the amount of money they receive from selling the goods is never sufficient to meet the ever increasing cost of living. Besides due to more or less static demand of the products the artisans produce only limited number of articles. Artisans also reported not having appropriate manpower to raise their production to a desired level. In absence of increase demand for earthenwares the artisans do not feel zealous to produce more and the potential manpower behind the craft never fully explored.

Table No. V.5 is prepared from the surveyed data to show the problem faced by the household in disposing off the finished products.

Table V.5  
Details of households reported having faced problems to dispose off finished products

Name of handi-craft items	No. of households manufacturing the items	Number of households reported having faced problems to dispose off finished products due to reasons			Remarks
		Change in consumer preference	Competition with factory made goods	Other factor : Lack of manpower to dispose off as well as marketing facility	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Kalah	60	28	28	36	Reason shown in col. No. 3 and 4 are in addition to 4 reasons shown in col. 5
Tekeli	60	8	7	35	
Dhup Dani	34	–	–	20	
Dhuna Dani	40	13	–	25	
Hari	4	–	–	4	
Kata	39	14	10	18	
Mola	3	–	–	3	
Saru	59	17	28	37	
Chaki	11	–	–	5	
Ghat	42	16	27	20	
Savings Pot	4	1	2	4	
Jap Saru	2	–	–	2	
Mola Saru	2	–	–	2	
Nagara	3	–	–	–	
Kurkuri	3	–	–	–	
Shikar	21	–	–	10	
Chilim	16	–	–	10	

Table depicts that the change in consumer preference, competition with factory made goods, lack of manpower to dispose off the finished product and marketing facilities are the main problem faced by the Hira artisans at present.

However, it is encouraging to note that despite all odds the Hiras still adhere to the age—old craft as a primary source of income. This is still the only source of livelihood for a great majority of Hira households in Assam. All the members of a Hira household in the rural areas are still found

engaged in this craft in one way or other. Enquiry reveals that they find it increasingly difficult to maintain a family by earning from this craft alone. At the same time they cannot change their vocation all on a sudden. Then again they do not like to shift to other vocation as they feel a tremendous urge to maintain the continuity of their traditional occupation. It is felt that for better prospects of the craft the Hira potters should introduce modern technology in their production and produce items which are essentially in demand both in rural and urban areas.

## CHAPTER VI CRAFT AND EMPLOYMENT

Pottery making is one of the oldest craft practised in Assam. Hiras are believed to be original potters of this region. The villages inhabited by the Hiras practise this craft as their traditional occupation from time immemorial. They have practised this craft as a source of livelihood for many generations. Participation by all member of a Hira family irrespective of sex and age is a remarkable feature. However, as stated earlier, though females are real potters, the males too play an important role in arrangement of raw materials, preparation of clay, baking of finished products and ultimately in marketing the wares.

In a Hira household boys and girls grow up in an environment where parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives are kneading the clay and making various earthenwares. Thus boys and girls spontaneously get associated with the craft from the very childhood. Mother teaches her daughters about the preparation of the clay and also the technique of shaping various kinds of earthenwares. In this way knowledge of different technique in different stages of production is transmitted from one generation to other inspite of many ups and downs in the economic viability of

the craft.

The three Hira villages selected for the purposes of the present study occupy a place of distinction for their products. All the households irrespective of social standing are found practising this craft for many generation. But nobody from these villages can say positively when and how this craft came into being. However, after repeated enquiry and discussion, with elderly persons it can be inferred that pottery is practised in these villages from time beyond the reach of their memory. It is difficult to assess the exact number of households in the selected villages that are engaged in this craft. However, as almost universely a Hira household practise this craft as a source of income, it can be said that a total of about 450 households comprising the three villages are engaged in this craft. These households have been practising the craft for many generations.

Attempt has been made to find out the history and origin of the craft of the selected villages. Information gathered from the households of these villages is presented in table Number. VI. 1.

Table VI.1

Distribution of households reported about starting of the craft in the village classified by broad age-group of the head of the household.

Broad age-group of head of the household	No. of households engaged in the craft	Number of households reported about the introduction of the craft in the village		Remarks
		Before 1900	Period not known	
1	2	3	4	5
0-14	-	-	-	
15-34	6	1	5	
35-59	52	9	43	
60+	2	-	2	
Age not stated	-	-	-	

The above table corroborates what has been said earlier. An overwhelming majority (83.33%) of surveyed households pleaded total ignorance about the history of introduction of the craft in their village and the rest said from a vague

memory that it was introduced even before the turn of the present century.

All the practising households of the surveyed villages have been practising the craft for more than last 25 years.

Table No. VI. 2 shows the number of households and persons engaged in the craft during different period as reported by respondents in

the selected households of three surveyed villages.

**Table VI.2**

Number of households reporting about the number of households and persons engaged in the craft in the village during different period classified by broad age-group of the head of the households.

Broad age-group of head of household.	No. of households engaged in the craft	Number of households reported about the number of households engaged in the craft in the village during the period.								
		Before 1940			1940-50			1951-60		
		Less than 5	5-9	10 +	Less than 5	5-9	10 +	Less than 5	5-9	10 +
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
0-14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15-34	6	—	—	6	—	—	6	—	—	6
35-34	52	—	—	52	—	—	52	—	—	52
60 +	2	—	—	2	—	—	2	—	—	2

1961-70			1971-80			At present		
Less than 5	5-6	10 +	Less than 5	5-9	10 +	Less than 5	5-9	10 +
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	6	—	—	6	—	—	6
—	—	52	—	—	52	—	—	52
—	—	2	—	—	2	—	—	2

Number of households reported about the persons engaged in craft in the village during the period.

Before 1940			1940-1950			1951-1960		
Less than 10	10-19	20 +	Less than 10	10-19	20 +	Less than 10	10-19	20 +
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	—	6	—	—	6	—	—	6
—	—	52	—	—	52	—	—	52
—	—	2	—	—	2	—	—	2

1961-1970			1971-1980			At present		
Less than 10	10-19	20 +	Less than 10	10-19	20 +	Less than 10	10-19	20 +
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	6	—	—	6	—	—	6
—	—	52	—	—	52	—	—	52
—	—	2	—	—	2	—	—	2

The table number VI. 2 shows that all the surveyed households irrespective of the age of the head of the household have reported that more than 10 households had been practising this craft since before 1940. These households also reported that more than 20 persons in these villages had been practising the craft since before 1940. This certainly indicate that this is a very old craft and is flourishing in these village from very early time.

Pottery occupies a very important place in the handicraft history of Assam. It is one of the oldest surviving industry of the state. The art of making pottery was known to people of Assam from very ancient times. Its antiquity can also be proved by studying the method adopted and tools used for the purpose.

It is difficult to give a definite note on existence of pottery in Assam in the past. Because no systematic survey on this topic has so far been undertaken and as such it is felt impossible to give a chronological account of growth and development of pottery in Assam. However, many findings of small sized pottery of prehistoric times from various excavation proves the existence of pottery in Assam from prehistoric time. Besides, remains of old temples and number of epigraphs have also proved its antiquity. Thus whatever source available in the findings from various excavations has established the fact that it is one of the oldest craft of Assam which offers us glimpses of the society and culture of the people in the past.

As in other parts of India pottery making in Assam also is associated with particular castes or community. As mentioned earlier Hiras and the Kumars are the two principal classes of people found to be engaged in this traditional craft. Hiras are still believed to be the original potters of Assam.

Pottery is found to be associated with religious and social functions from very ancient times in Assam. In all the religious functions, traditional ceremonies and other practices connected with supersitious beliefs earthen vessels play a very important role from birth to death.

During the Ahom rule this handicraft got due patronage. Ahom kings laid special emphasis on the development of this traditional craft. During this period also Hiras and the Kumars were responsible for making earthenwares. But unfortunately with the passage of time the craft has

been steadily falling from its position of glory.

Thus before the advent of technical development the potters in Assam were economically, if not wholly self sufficient, at least much better than their present condition. It may be ascribed to that a vast number of people especially among the agricultural classes irrespective of castes and community used pottery for domestic as well as storing purposes in the olden days. In the past barter system was prevalent and therefore pottery could easily be exchanged with paddy. But during the British period and post independence period this traditional craft lost much of its glory. During the British period this industry did not receive due encouragement, cheap and durable metal articles started appearing in the market throwing a great challenge to the pottery. The condition of the artisan in this period became very bad. They had to fight for their survival as demand for earthenwares was on a drastic decline.

The poor artisans now-a-days have to face a lot of competition for their survival. Because both rural and urban people are giving up use of pottery. At present people prefer cheap articles manufactured from plastic, alluminium, steel etc. rather than the fragile earthenwares. Except on occasions of religious functions, rituals and other social function pottery is hardly used by the people. Only a small percentage of rural populace still use earthenwares for domestic as well as storing purpose. Though there is still a demand for objects of common utility, the finer products of a potter's art meets with little encouragement.

It is extremely difficult to say anything for certain about the number of households and the persons engaged in the craft over the decades. However as mentioned earlier, majority of households belonging to Hira caste practise this craft since long past. It may be of interest to note here the population of Hiras in Assam as recorded in censuses of 1901 onwards.

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	8,701	4,082	4,619
1911	16,348	8,060	8,288
1921	14,666	7,200	7,466
1931	16,628	8,522	8,106
1941	N A	N A	N A
1951	N A	N A	N A
1961	25,835	13,131	12,704
1971	32,622	16,828	15,794

In the past, earthenwares was the most common its used by all sectionof the people. It was used as domestic utensils by most of the people particularly belonging to the poor section and living in the rural areas. Besides domestic use it was also used during religious and other ceremonies.

Before the World War II, pottery was considered a flourishing household industry in all the Hira households of the three selected villages.

After independence, during 1950s this flourishing traditional craft of the Hiras started showing signs of fall. Though all the Hira households of these villages still continued to adhere to this craft as household industry yet during this decade except traditional ceremonies wedding or feasts the use of earthenwares among the people was vastly reduced. This was because majority of town dwellers as well as rural populace opted use of metal vessels for various purposes. Thus demand for the potery gradually diminished. But inspite of heavy odds, Hira potters never gave up their traditional occupation.

During 1960s and 1970s this industry suffered further setback. The machine made products made further inroad urban and even remote villages and fascinated by the glaze and durabi-

lity of metal utensils, people started discarding the age-old clay vessels. But, it was heartening to note that even in such a situation not a single household of the selected villages even thought of giving up practising this craft though they could hardly manage two square meals from their earnings from practice of the craft.

In the present decade, though majority of the Hira households still practise this craft as a major source of income, yet it is no longer a flourishing craft as before. The condition of poor artisans are deteriorating day by day. Improvement in communication and marketing facilities aided urban traders to invade the rural markets with metalwares. Hardships and underemployment are now common features amongst all the Hira households. Unless govt. or other organisations and agencies come forward with proper developmental schemes the future of this age-old craft is considered to be bleak. In not too distant future this traditional craft will vanish from the state if no corrective measures are taken without any further delay. However, a redeeming feature is that recently govt. has taken steps to help the Hira potters under its self employment schemes by way of providing bank loans.

Attempt is also made here to find out whether number of households engaged in this craft has increased or decreased the last four decades.

**Table VI.3**

Reasons reported by households for variation in the number of households and persons engaged in the craft during last four decades classified by broad age-group of the head of the household.

Broad age-group of the head of the household.	No. of households engaged in the craft.	Number of households reported reasons for			
		No substantial increase in the number of households and persons engaged in the craft during last four decades.			
		Educated persons are not interested to be in the craft.	Change in consumer preference.	Less profit in return of labour.	
	1	2	3	4	5
0-14	—	—	—	—	—
15-34	6	6	6	6	6
35-34	52	52	52	52	52
60 +	2	2	2	2	2



The table above depicts that there has not been any substantial increase in the number of households and artisans during the four decades. The main reasons attributed for this are less profit from the products, lack of marketing facilities and change in consumer preference.

Over and above educated persons, whatever be the level of education attained, in the present decade are not willing to be engaged in this craft. Though they ascribe this mainly to less profit in return of labour yet a subtle feeling of looking down upon this occupation descending upon them from their great grand parents is discernible.

It is interesting to note here that despite off repeated adverse circumstances, none of the respondents reported any, decrease in the number of households with any corresponding fall in the number of artisans over the decades. The situation thus obtained is therefore one of stagnation.

### **Employment**

This traditional craft always played a significant role in the village economy in general and the rural areas in habited by Hiras in particular. In terms of employment it has also played a very important role. Because this traditional craft has provided employment to both males and females in the rural areas. This is a traditional household industry of the Hiras and as such all the members particularly adult males and females are found to be associated with it. As this craft is a female's domain, the majority of Hira females are found to be engaged in this craft. Thus to a certain extent it has solved the problem of unemployment among males and females of the rural areas. During the survey no unemployment among the Hira females was reported. Even the school going girls reportedly help their mother in various ways in running in this industry. However, two male graduates in the age—group of 15—34 years were found to be unemployed for 3 to 5 years and who reportedly attempted to find a job barring the craft, but were unsuccessful till the date of survey.

But it is most distressing to note that this job oriented craft has been gradually deteriorating. For want of proper marketing facilities and lack of demand of its product this industry had to suffer in the recent years. This traditional craft has to

fight for its survival because all the important items manufactured by the Hiras are replaced by the cheap metal made wares. The demand for earthenwares is decreasing day by day. Though majority of the Hira households practise this craft as a source of income yet they have perforce started looking for some other subsidiary occupation for their living.

This craft has a scope for rejuvenation and development. This industry has enough potentialities provided it is nurtured in a proper way. This industry can be used as employment generating tools in the rural areas. For this adequate financial help with proper planning should be forthcoming from state agencies. All the households reported that for the rejuvenation and development of the craft, adequate financial help like Bank loan or Govt. loan should be provided and proper marketing facilities for the finished product should be granted.

This age-old industry is still found to be in its rudimentary stage. No proper or scientific method has so far been adopted to develop this industry. Hira potters still practise this craft in a most traditional manner with most out-dated tools and equipments. The method used by them is believed to be the most ancient. Unless modern techniques of manufacturing is introduced the improvement of this industry cannot be achieved. The main objective of development of this craft has to be organise this craft on commercial footing and expand the market thereby creating more demand for the products which in turn will generate more employment opportunities for the potters. For achieving this a scientific approach is necessary. This industry needs proper technology and training and guidance to the potters. Besides, potters should be provided with raw materials and better marketing facilities. Moreover potters should be brought under common co-operative fold, so that on a concerted effort the Hiras can bring prospect and prosperity to this age-old industry.

The co-operative institution should focus its attention on modernisation of technique of production and improvement in design of the vessels so as to make them look more attractive. The development of this rural based craft will definitely help in generating employment in the rural sector and also it will improve the economy of rural Assam in general.

**Attitude and opinion of the practising household**

from heads of the selected practising households about their consideration of the craft as a source of gainful employment.

Below is a table prepared from opinions culled

**Table VI.4**

Households reported about the craft as a source for gainful employment classified by religion, Caste/Tribe/Community of the head of the households and reasons reported for considering the craft as a profitable occupation.

Caste of the head of the household.	Number of households engaged in the craft.	Number of households considering the craft now as	
		Not a source for gainful employment.	Source for gainful employment and factors responsible to make the craft profitable.
1	2	3	4
Hira	60	42	18 (Provided the finished products have a wider and ready market).

It is observed that majority of the households do not consider this craft as a source of gainful employment, the rest still consider it otherwise. However, this section too have their reservation. They think that a wider and ready market for the finished products is an essential pre-condition for treating the craft as a source of gainful employment. This craft according to them have enough potentialities if proper facilities are provided. Though apparently not much initial capital is required for this industry yet in the perspective of the abjectly poor economic condition of the artisans it cannot be denied that the situation calls for advancement of financial help to the potters so as to enable them to put the industry on a desired level of production and

thereby increase the output which in its turn will obviously result in increase in the margin of profit.

In view of the respondents, a systematic and organised market for this industry is essential for future growth of this craft. Because organised market will act as a catalytic agent for renewed activity of the households associated with the craft.

During the survey an attempt was also made to assess the economic status of the households who are practising this craft. A table prepared for this purpose is presented below.

**Table VI.5**

Economic status of the surveyed households.

Literacy states of the head of households.	No. of household engaged in the craft.	Number of households reported about their economic position.	
		3	4
1	2	3	4
Illiterate	45	45	45
Literate	15	15	15
Total	60	60	60

It is seen that not a single household reported any improvement in their economic status contributed by practice of this craft. And all of them unequivocally told that lack of adequate finance and absence of proper market are the greatest impediments on way of their attaining a better economic status by earning from practice of the craft alone. It was not difficult during our survey of the selected villages to detect a note of permission among the artisans prompted by their present poor financial condition and an uncertain

future of the industry.

During the survey an attempt was made to find out whether the present generation is interested or not to practise this craft as a source of livelihood. Apart from this, enquiry was also made to know the opinion of the households whether or not they want their children to practise this craft.

A table prepared from the data as obtained on this count is presented below.

**Table VI.6**

Households wanting/not wanting to have their sons/daughters engaged in the craft with reasons there of classified by educational level of the head of the household.

Educational level of the head of the household.	No. of households engaged in the craft.	Number of households wanting to have their sons/daughters engaged in the same craft due to	Number of households not wanting to have their sons/daughters engaged in the same craft due to
		To keep alive the industry and as a source of livelihood.	No more profitable as before
1	2	3	4
1. Illiterate	45	31	14
2. Literate without educational level.	7	5	2
3. Primary or Junior basic.	5	5	—
4. Middle	3	3	—

It is curious to note that paradoxically enough an absolute majority of heads of the household irrespective of their being illiterate or literate with certain minimum educational level expressed their opinion in favour of their children to be engaged in this craft to keep up the family tradition as well as to eke out a living from it as against a small percentage (26.67%) of households who do not want their children to be engaged in this craft because of their consideration of this industry not being lucrative. It is obvious that decline in demand for earthen vessels and consequential fall in production and the resultant fall in margin of profit dissuade these households from wishing their children to follow their foot-steps.

However, it is interesting to note that whatever be the opinion of their parents about continuity of the craft through participation by their children it was noticed that younger generation particularly young girls in a majority of households have taken keen interest in this craft. Majority of young girls in their leisure either independently practise this craft or help their mother in practising this craft. Mother on the other hand is very keen to teach her daughter the skill of making various kinds of earthenwares. Thus, younger generations are found to lend a helping hand in winning bread for their family. A table prepared in this respect is reproduced below.

**Table VI.7**

Households reported about younger generation of their community taking/not taking interest in the craft with reasons therefore.

Number of surveyed households engaged in the craft.	Number of households reported about the younger generation		Number of households reported about the younger generation taking interest in the craft due to	Number of households reported about the younger generation not taking interest in the craft due to	Remarks
	Taking interest in the craft.	Not taking interest in the craft.	To keep alive the industry and as a source of livelihood.	No more profitable as before.	
	1	2	3	4	
60	37	23	37	23	

The table above depicts that younger generation of the majority (61.67%) of the households reportedly have taken keen interest in the craft to serve the dual purpose of keeping alive the traditional occupation of their forefathers as also to maintain whatever income is received from making pottery. The younger generations of the remaining 38.33% of the surveyed households reported having not taken any interest in the craft, because in their opinion it is no longer economically viable.

Mention must be made here of our feeling the general pulse of the elderly women in the surveyed practising households. All the elderly women unhesitatingly expressed the opinion that they were motivated to pick up pottery as the main source of livelihood primarily to keep alive the traditional craft in which they find solace and they consider this craft to be an inseparable part of their life and living and thus a great sentimental value is also attached to it.

During the survey, opinion of the households about satisfaction and dissatisfaction with this craft has also been collected. The survey reveals that out of 60 practising households, 44 households (73.33%) want their offspring to cling to the craft as a means of livelihood and have

expressed their satisfaction in being involved in the industry and take pride in upholding the ancestral occupation. The other disgruntled 16 or 26.67% households stated that the craft is no more profitable and lucrative as before.

All the surveyed 60 households of three selected villages have reported that they have been practising this craft for more than three generations. It is no wonder as the oversimplified techniques of production adopted by them is spontaneously received by the successive generations. Thus this craft has continued to exist inspite of fluctuating fortune of the artisans.

During the survey enquiry was also made to elicit information from among the practising households whether or not they have any intention to give up practising this traditional craft. It was satisfying to note that there is no such intention among any of the households who are at present practising the craft. On the contrary they are in favour of developing this craft. Because it is their traditional occupation and by practising this craft they think they are keeping alive its past glory. However, they ardently wish the problem faced by this industry at present should be removed immediately. They hope govt. or other agencies shall come forward

with necessary financial help and other infra-structural facilities so that they can expand the industry and run it smoothly and which will serve as an inspiration to the younger generation also to pursue the ancestral occupation with renewed vigour. Thus it was really heartening to note that there is no intention among the households of discarding this age old craft despite many odds reportedly suffered by them now.

During the field survey an attempt was also made to assess the social status of the artisans in particular. Happily enough the enquiry revealed that there is no such social behaviour by which the artisans are looked down upon the people belonging to the comparatively higher rung of social stratification. On the contrary people of different castes encourage the artisans to keep alive this traditional craft. They also encourage younger generation to take up this craft as a source of livelihood because according to them this is a very important craft of Assam depicting

its culture and social life. Pots as stated earlier always play a significant role in social, religious and cultural activities of the people of Assam in general during their entire life cycle from birth to death.

#### **Attitude and opinion of the non-practising household**

Similarly, attitude and opinion of the non-practising households has also been gathered during the survey. Among the 15 non-practising households in the three selected villages, 10 households reported dissatisfaction over the craft because profit derived from the craft in return of labour and time consumed is much less. Only 5 households wish their offspring to learn this craft as traditional art but not as a source of income. However, all the 15 households desire rejuvenation and development of the craft so as to keep alive the traditional industry.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Pottery is the epitome of human civilization. It appears to be the most universal craft practised throughout the world. Man discovered the art of making pottery in neolithic age or may be even before that. Pottery of various kinds signify various culture and tradition that had flourished in different periods.

Pottery making was found to be practised throughout India from very ancient time. Archaeological excavation and old literatures have thrown sufficient light on the existence of pottery in India since very olden days and even to-day this craft is practised throughout the length and breadth of India.

In Assam too, this craft is believed to be practised from time immemorial. It is believed to be the oldest surviving household industry of Assam. Ancient literatures as well as recent excavations reveal that the use of earthen vessels in Assam may be dated as far back as 5th and 6th century. Pottery industry of Assam occupies a very important position in the handi-craft scenario of Assam.

This old and traditional craft in Assam is practised by two distinct classes of people namely the Hiras and the Kumars. They are the two indigenous potter communities of Assam. Both are very ancient inhabitant of the state. They are found to be distributed in the plain districts of Assam. But method of manufacturing pottery as adopted by these two classes of artisans are quite different from one another.

This old and traditional craft is practised by the Hiras of Assam as only source of income for many generations. Unfortunately this craft is not as profitable in the present as before. In the past it was a flourishing household industry. But in the present decade this industry has lost much of its past glory. Many reasons can be attributed to its decline. According to the opinion of the craftsmen, this traditional industry has been declining primarily due to the lack of demand of its products. In the past, articles manufactured by the Hiras were used as domestic utensils by all sections of the people particularly in the rural areas. Besides, earthen vessels were also used for other purposes. Thus the demand for earthen vessels was much more in the past.

Consequently, the economic condition of the artisans was also quite satisfactory. This industry has faced a considerable set back in its charm and importance in usage of its products in the present decade. Craftsman actively associated with this craft say that they are facing stiff competition with the cheap metal industry. People in both rural and urban areas now show a distinct preference for cheap articles manufactured from plastic, aluminium and steel. Only a small percentage particularly in the rural areas still use earthen vessels. Thus the demand for earthen vessels is gradually decreasing. As a result the production has also decreased considerably and automatically the economic condition of artisans is adversely affected. The artisans can no longer depend upon this craft as the only source of income. They have to look for some other secondary occupation to meet the financial crisis. However, inspite of many ups and downs suffered by the craftsmen over the decades they still opine in favour of developing the craft. Because they think by practising this craft they are keeping alive their traditional occupation and they legitimately take pride in it. However, craftsmen wish that the problem faced by them should be removed immediately. They also desire that Govt. and other organisations should come forward with financial help and other facilities so that they can continue to run this craft.

Though this industry is declining, yet artisans expressed their opinion in favour of their children to be engaged in this craft so that they can keep alive their traditional occupation as well as a source of livelihood. The children particularly girls in the artisans' families have taken keen interest in the craft. It is heartening to see that even to-day majority of young girls in their leisure either independently practise the craft or help their mother in practising the craft.

Hiras adopt a very ancient method of making pottery known as coil building process (hand made technique). It is believed to be the most primitive method of making pottery. But the Kumars, like other potters in India, manufacture pottery with the help of a wheel. Another significant difference is that Hira potters are all females, males never make pot, their participation remains limited only to the collection of

clay, fuel, baking the finished products and disposal of the products. But among the Kumars pottery making is primarily a masculine job. Apart from that, pottery made by Kumar receive sacred attribution and are ritualistic in purpose, while pottery made by the Hiras are usually utilitarian in purpose.

Pottery manufactured by the Hiras are limited to a few types only when compared to a large variety of pottery made by the Kumars. Hira pottery are mainly utilitarian in nature and majority of them are culinary type. So the volume of production by a Hira potter is always proportional to the volume of use to which these are put. The scale of production in the past was much higher than in the present. Because in the past, use of pottery for domestic as well as other purposes was much higher than in the present. The introduction of metal utensils has direct impact upon the pottery made by the Hiras. The traditional and other clients have now given their option in favour of the metal vessels as because these are more durable and thus comparatively cheaper in the long run. Thus in the present decade the cheap metal utensils are gradually replacing the indigenous pottery. Though introduction of metal utensils has to a great extent eroded the demand for earthen vessels resulting a direct impact upon the Hira pottery, yet it could not totally eliminate the production of pottery because earthenwares are still considered an essential requisite in observance of various socio-religious ceremonies. Because rituals and classical codes have not yet undergone any major variation and changes and so pottery required for these purposes are still used by the people living in rural as well as urban areas.

Whatever their origin may be, traditional ceremonies, superstitions and observances in which earthen vessels play a part are inwoven with the life of a modern Hindu from his birth to death. Any Hindu deity being worshipped under the form of an earthen jar is still a common sight.

In order to respond and adjust to changing situation Hira potters too have tried to change the nature of their production for their economic existence. They have tried to manufacture such type of vessels which are not limited to culinary use alone and thus can attract a larger buyers' market. But so far they have achieved very little success in their novel ventures. Because even in the rural areas people now-a-days prefer to use cheap metallic utensils rather than undurable

earthenwares. Only under compelling circumstances like a wedding, ceremonial feasts and other social or religious functions people are found to use earthenwares. The demand for pottery is therefore on a steady decline. It is also not possible for the Hira potters to compete with the cheap machine made utensils either in terms of price or quality. Thus commercialisation is the main problem at present encountered by the Hira potters. The output of a Hira potter is strictly governed by the anticipated limited demand for the product. He therefore seldom dares to produce more than his experience of the marketability of his products prompts him to do. Economic viability of the craft is thus lost. Absence of widely ready commercial market is the greatest impediment to growth of this age old industry having distinctive nature. If this conditions do not change for the better there is hardly any doubt that this traditional craft would in course of time be completely extinct.

However, it is heartening to note that despite all these handicaps the industry is still bravely fighting for its existence.

An economic revival is possible only through active government support. It is high time for government and other agencies or organisations to come forward with proper plan and scientific schemes for the development of this industry. Especially in view of the fact that when unemployment has assumed alarming proportion and has spread its tentacles even to rural areas and is thus about to frustrate all developmental programmes this naive industry of Assam which has great potentiality in providing self employment not only to women but to men also deserves most active patronage and deft handling by those in the helm of affairs so as to create a situation where more and more people can be taken within its fold. It is encouraging to note that in recent years the State Khadi and Village Industries Board and the Department of Industry are formulating schemes for scientific development of this rural based craft. In recent years govt. organisations besides giving training also have been providing loan to the poor artisans. Apart from this, the State Govt. has also adopted new industrial policy which has given maximum emphasis for encouragement, development and revitalisation of this handicraft. This move is definitely encouraging and it is hoped that these plans and projects will promote the growth of this industry. For encouragement of this craft government has organised industrial campaign-

cum-workshop for pottery and other crafts. The main aim of the workshop is to expose the modern method of production, utility of improved tools and equipment so that the artisan can improve their production.

But much remains to be done : The vastly illiterate Hira potters cannot conceive of any scientific development of their craft. Therefore, it devolves on the govt. agencies to devise ways and means for a transformation of this craft from its most primitive and slow moving nature in a befitting manner so that this ancient industry too can seek its position of pride in an environment of unprecedented technical advancement. One must not forget the ocean of difference between pottery as practised by the Hiras- which in the truest sense of the term is a handicraft and other pseudo handicrafts where use of machine is very common. Any developmental plan must therefore include scientific schemes for introduction of machines into this craft. The time schedule adopted by the travelling instructors engaged by the State Khadi and Village Industries Board for acquainting Hiras about use of wheels is not felt sufficient to make them adept in its use. Moreover, any govt. agency entrusted with the responsibility of overall development of this craft must first of all acquaint itself with all the problems associated with the industry. Due thoughts also need be given to a probable shift of labour from the womenfolk to the menfolk simultaneously with the introduction of modern tools and implements. Ways and means need be derived for a healthy compromise of the traditional techniques of production, which is deep rooted into the working habits of the Hiras and thus have a sentimental value with modern techniques. Given due incentive and training the Hira pottery shall definitely be able to earn its place in the pottery map of the country and can easily compete with articles produced in other states of India.

Besides the government, other social organisations or bodies should also come forward to help the poor artisans and they should impress the artisans to produce new items like garden pots, different idols, glaze pottery etc. which can find a better market. Unfortunately till now, it is observed that Hira potters are doggedly following the age-old practise of manufacturing the set of articles which they learnt from their forefathers and no attempt whatsoever has been made to manufacture new items which are essential for present day world.

Co-operative department can also play a very important role in the development of this ancient industry. Because in the modern day economics of development it is considered to be a vital organisation through which any industry can steadfastly grow. But most disheartening aspect of this craft is a total absence of co-operative society. In our surveyed villages not a single co-operative society was found to be functioning. Enquires revealed that in the past there were a few co-operative societies here and there but inexperience in management of such organisations lack of adequate finance etc. contributed to these becoming totally non-functional in a very short time. Serious thought need therefore be given in reviving the organisation of co-operative society to bring the entire lot of Hira potters into its fold. The overall task of the society should be to arrange finance for enlargement of production with introduction of modern techniques, enlighten the artisans to produce articles having due demand in the modern day world, ensure proper display of the various articles produced by the Hira potters and thus introduce the Hira pottery not only to the rural but also to the urban population which in its turn will ensure a good market for the products. Moreover, the society should urge the government to ensure that the areas where the special clay termed as 'Hiramatti' is available is not transferred to non-artisans cultivators.

In summing up – pottery making is practised by the Hiras of Assam as a household industry since a period for which no date can be fixed. Despite much adverse circumstances the industry still occupies a unique place in the socio-economic life of the Hiras, majority of whom still consider it to be their main source of livelihood. Pottery is inwoven in the tapestry of life of the Hiras. This traditional craft directly engage thousands of people. But with the introduction of metal made and plastic utensils, the pottery made by the Hiras is fast losing its market. The glitter of metal utensils has dealt a serious blow to this ancient craft and has caused grievous harm to the artisans. The development of this craft has thus assumed a great urgency. Therefore all possible steps should be taken immediately to pull up this traditional industry from its present sad plight.

There is no denying the fact that this age-old industry is languishing due to lack of necessary patronage on the part of both people and the government Therefore both government as well as private and voluntary organisations should come



forward with proper plans so that this industry can be developed to a desired level. Economic survival of this rural based handicraft is possible only through the concerted effort of various developmental agencies. Unless corrective measures are taken immediately for resurrection of this chronologically old craft the future of the

entire population of Hiras in Assam which must have considerably gone up from its 1971 census figure of about thirtythree thousand, majority of whom are below poverty level and whose life and living still rotates around pottery – their sole economic activity – is considered bleak.



**APPENDIX I**  
**TABLES BASED ON HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULES**  
**(PRACTISING HOUSEHOLDS)**

**Table No. 1**  
**Distribution of Households classified by Religion, Caste/Tribe/Community, Sex and Educational Level of the Head of the Household**

Name of religion	Name of caste	Number of household by sex of head of the household	Number of households by educational level of head of household				
			Educational level				
			Illiterate	Literate without educational level	Primary or Junior basic	Middle	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Hindu	Hira	M	39	24	7	5	3
	Scheduled caste	F	21	21	—	—	—

**Table No. 2**  
**Distribution of Households classified by Migration Status with Reference to Place of Birth of Head of the Household and Reasons for Migration.**

Migration status with reference to place of birth of head of the household		Number of household	Number of household which have migrated due to		Remarks
			Marriage		
1		2	3	4	
A. Non-migrant (Born in the village)		50	—		
B. Migrant	I Born outside the village but in the same district	Rural	9	9	Figures shown in colmn. 3 are related to female head of household
		Urban	—	—	
	II. Born outside the district but within the state	Rural	1	1	
		Urban	—	—	
District-Kamrup Total		60	10		

Table No. 3  
Distribution of Workers classified by sex, Broad Age-Group, Main Activity and Subsidiary Occupation.

Age-group	Sex	Total number of workers	Number of workers having subsidiary occupation	Number whose main occupation is			
				Pottery and also having Subsidiary occupation			Daily labourer
				Shop Cultivation	keeper	Fish business	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
0-14	Male	4	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	11	—	—	—	—	—
15-34	Male	48	25	5	—	1	7
	Female	50	—	—	—	—	—
35-59	Male	34	29	18	1	2	4
	Female	37	2	1	—	—	—
60 +	Male	1	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	3	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>		<b>188</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

Number whose main occupation is									
Govt. service and also having	School chokidar and also having	Daily labourer and also having	Shop keeper and also having	Tailor and also having	Cultivation and also having	Fish business and also having	Rick puller and also having		
Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation	Subsidiary occupation
Pottery	Cultivation	Pottery	Pottery	Pottery	Pottery	Pottery	Cultivation	Cultivation	Cultivation
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	1
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1	1	2	2	1	1	6	1	1	1

**Table No. 4**  
Distribution of Households and Persons Engaged in the Craft as related to Place of work.

Place of work of the head of household	Total number of households (with sex of the head of the household)		Number of household where head of household	Numbers of persons other than the head of household engaged in the craft	Remarks
	Male	Female			
1	2	3	4	5	6
Part of the dwelling house (open space in the courtyard)	40	20	54	109	1. Place of work shown in colmn. 1 represent the working place of household irrespective of head's working Place.  2. Male pottery workers are not skilled workers. They only assist female skilled workers in acquiring raw-materials, baking of handicraft items and disposed of the products

**Table No. 5**  
Households owning Place of Work Classified by Area Occupied and Number of Persons Working therein

Place of work owned by the household	Number of households owning place of work noted in colmn No. 1	Number of households having occupied area								Remarks
		6-10 sq. meters and number of persons engaged therein				11-16 sq. meters and numbr of persons engaged therein				
		Single	2-5	6-10	11 +	Single	2-5	6-10	11 +	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Part of the dwelling house (open space in the courtyard)	60	1 (1)	10 (24)	—	—	6 (6)	38 (102)	5 (30)	—	Figures shown in the parenthesis are number of workers

Table No. 6

Average Monthly Consumption of Raw Materials by Seasonal variations for Manufacturing Different Items of Handicraft classified by Educational Level of the Head of the Household.

Educational level of the head of the household	Names of handicraft items manufactured	Number of handicraft items manufactured	Number of households manufacturing handicraft items	Average monthly consumption of each raw materials		Remarks
				Raw materials (in kg)		
				Clay	Sand	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illiterate	Kalah	1025	45	1969	281	Seasonal variation is neutralised as during months the production is less while during the marriage and festival times production becomes higher.
	Tekeli	765	45	656	93	
	Dhupdani	522	29	223	32	
	Dhunadani	510	34	222	32	
	Hari	38	2	82	12	
	Kata	760	33	999	142	
	Mola	150	2	72	9	
	Saru	1080	45	933	134	
	Chaki	960	7	83	12	
	Ghat	840	30	369	53	
	Savings pot	40	2	33	4	
	Nagara	4	2	90	10	
	Kurkuri	4	2	5	1	
	Shikar	1255	11	65	—	
Chilm	175	8	30	3		
Literate without educational level	Kalah	315	7	306	43	
	Tekeli	119	7	102	15	
	Dhupdani	20	1	8	1	
	Dhunadani	15	1	8	1	
	Hari	19	1	41	6	
	Kata	95	4	121	17	
	Saru	170	7	145	21	
	Chaki	140	1	12	1	
	Ghat	170	6	74	10	
	Savingspot	20	1	16	2	
	Shikar	570	5	30	—	
	Chilim	135	6	23	2	
Primary or Junior basic	Kalah	125	5	218	32	
	Tekeli	85	5	73	10	
	Dhupdani	38	2	16	2	
	Dhunadani	62	4	26	3	
	Kata	23	1	30	4	
	Mola	75	1	36	5	
	Saru	100	4	83	11	
	Chaki	270	2	23	3	
	Ghat	110	4	49	7	
	Savingspot	15	1	16	2	
	Sikar	345	3	18	—	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Primary or Junior Basic	Chilim	20	1	4	1/2	
	Jap Saru	80	2	122	18	
	Molasaru	70	2	70	10	
Middle	Kalah	75	3	131	19	
	Tekeli	54	3	44	6	
	Dhupdani	35	2	16	2	
	Dhunadani	15	1	7	1	
	Hari	18	1	41	6	
	Kata	23	1	30	4	
	Saru	75	3	62	8	
	Chaki	140	1	12	2	
	Ghat	55	2	24	3	
	Nagara	1	1	24	3	
	Kurkuri	1	1	3	1/2	
	Shikar	230	2	12	—	
	Chilim	25	1	4	1/2	

Table No. 7

Designs used in the Manufacture of Handicraft Items classified by the Person who prepared the Design. His Relationship with the Head of the Household, Period when Introduced and Educational Level of the Head of the Household.

Educational level of the head of the household	Name of design (floral, scenery, animal motif, hunting scene etc.)	Number of households making use of the design	Numbr of households reporting design as traditional and is in since			Remarks
			Less than 10 years and prpared by	10-19 years and prepared by	20 years and prepared by	
			Unknown	Unknown		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illiterate	Plain	45	—	17	28	As the designs are traditional none could
Literate without educational level	Plain	7	—	2	5	
Primary or Junior basic	Plain	5	—	1	4	
Middle	Plain	3	—	1	2	
Total		60	—	21	39	



Table No. 8  
Reasons for Introducing New Design Classified by Period and Educational Level of the Head of the Household.

Educational level of the head of the household		Number of household engaged in the craft	Name of design used by the household	Number of households continuing with the traditional design	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	
Illiterate		45	Plain	45	No household reported introducing new design
Literate without educational level		7	Plain	7	
Primary or Junior basic		5	Plain	5	
Middle		3	Plain	3	
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	—	<b>60</b>	

**Table No. 9**  
**Particulars of Finished Products Sold locally/Exported Classified by Educational Level of the Head of the Household.**

Educational level of the household	Name of handicraft items	Number of households manufacturing the items	Quantity sold in broad ranges		Number of households reported having sold finished products	
			Broad ranges	Number of households	Locally	
					Partly	Fully
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illiterate	Kalah	45	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	43	16	27
			201 +	2	1	1
	Tekeli	45	Less than 100	1	—	1
			100-200	41	11	30
			201 +	3	—	3
	Dhupdani	29	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	29	3	26
			201 +	—	—	—
	Dhunadani	34	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	34	10	24
			201 +	—	—	—
	Hari	2	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	2	1	1
			201 +	—	—	—
	Kata	33	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	33	6	27
			201 +	—	—	—
	Mola	2	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	—	—	—
			201 +	2	—	—
Saru	45	Less than 100	1	—	—	
		100-200	44	9	35	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Chaki	7	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	1	—	1	
		201 +	6	1	5	
Ghat	30	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	29	11	18	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Savings Pot	2	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	2	1	1	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Nagara	2	Less than 100	2	—	2	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	—	—	—	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Literate without educational	Kurkuri	2	Less than 100	2	—	2
			100-200	—	—	
			201 +	—	—	
	Shikar	11	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	1	—	1
			201 +	10	1	9
	Chilim	8	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	8	2	6
			201 +	—	—	
	Kalah	7	Less than 100	3	1	2
			100-200	3	1	2
			201 +	1	—	1
	Tekeli	7	Less than 100	2	—	2
			100-200	5	2	3
			201 +	—	—	
	Dhupdani	1	Less than 100	1	—	1
			100-200	5	2	3
			201 +	—	—	
	Dhunadani	1	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	1	1	—
201 +			—	—		
Hari	1	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	1	—	1	
		201 +	—	—		
Kata	4	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	4	1	3	
		201 +	—	—		
Saru	7	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	6	2	4	
		201 +	—	—		
Chaki	1	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	1	—	1	
Ghat	6	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	6	1	5	
		201 +	—	—		
Savings Pot	1	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	—	—		
Shikar	5	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	5	1	4	
Chilim	6	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	6	1	5	
		201 +	—	—		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Primary or Junior basic	Kalah	5	Less than 100	1	—	1
			100-200	4	1	3
			201 +	—	—	—
	Tekeli	5	less than 100	1	—	1
			100-200	4	2	2
			201 +	—	—	—
	Dhupdani	2	Less than 100	—	—	—
			— 201 +	2	—	2
	Dhunadani	4	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	4	2	2
			201 +	—	—	—
	Kata	1	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	1	—	1
			201 +	—	—	—
	Mola	1	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	1	—	1
			201 +	—	—	—
	Saru	4	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	4	—	4
			201 +	—	—	—
Japsaru	2	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	2	—	2	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Molasaru	2	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	2	—	2	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Chaki	2	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	2	1	1	
Ghat	4	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	4	2	2	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Savings pot	1	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	1	—	1	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Shikar	3	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	3	—	3	
Chilim	1	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	1	—	1	
		201 +	—	—	—	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Middle	Kalah	3	Less than 100	1	1	—
			100-200	2	1	1
			201 +	—	—	—
	Tekeli	3	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	3	2	1
			201 +	—	—	—
	Dhupdani	2	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	2	—	2
			201 +	—	—	—
	Dhunadani	1	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	1	1	—
			201 +	—	—	—
	Hari	1	Less than 100	—	—	—
			100-200	1	—	1
			201 +	—	—	—
Kata	1	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Saru	3	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	2	—	2	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Chaki	1	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	1	—	1	
Ghat	2	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	2	1	1	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Nagara	1	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Kurkuri	1	Less than 100	1	—	1	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	—	—	—	
Shikar	2	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	—	—	—	
		201 +	2	—	2	
Chilim	1	Less than 100	—	—	—	
		100-200	1	—	1	
		201 +	—	—	—	

**Table No. 10**  
Households Classified by Period Engaged in the Craft with reference to Craft Started in the Village

Period the household engaged in the craft.	Number of households engaged in the craft.	Number of households reported about starting of craft in the village since	
		86 + years	period not known
1	2	3	4
20 + years	60	10	50

**Table No. 11**  
Households Reported Circumstances which Motivated them to Take Up the Occupation (craft) with Period engaged in the Craft, Classified by Religion, Caste/Tribe/Community of the Head of the Household.

Region, Caste/Tribe/Community of the head of the household		Number of households engaged in the craft.	Number of households taken up the craft since 20 + years under motivation to take it as a traditional industry as well as source of livelihood
Religion	Caste/Tribe/Community		
1	2	3	4
Hinduism	Hira/Scheduled Caste	60	60

**Table No. 12**  
Household Reported having Expressed Dissatisfaction with their Occupation (craft), Future Plan and Period of Implementation Classified by Educational Level of the Head of the Household

Educational level of the head of the household	Numbers of household engaged in the craft.	Number of households not intending to leave the occupation	Remarks
1	2	3	4
Illiterate	45	45	Though none of the households reported intention to leave the occupation, yet some of them expressed dissatisfaction due to financial and marketing
Literate without educational level	7	7	
Primary or Junior Basic	5	5	
Middle	3	3	
	60	6	

**APPENDIX II**  
**TABLES BASED ON HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULES**  
**(NON-PRACTISING HOUSEHOLDS)**

Table No. 1  
Distribution of Households classified by Religion, Caste/Tribe/Community, Sex and Educational Level of the Head of the Household

Name of religion	Name of Caste/Tribe/Community	Number of households by sex of head of the household		Number of households by educational level of			
		Male	Female	Illiterate	Primary or Junior basic	Middle	Matriculation or Higher Secondary
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Hinduism	Hira (Scheduled caste)	13	2	1	2	5	7

Table No 2  
Distribution of Workers and Non-workers Classified by Sex and Educational Level

Educational level	Total Population			Number of workers			Number of non-workers		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Illiterate	7	4	5	-	-	-	7	4	3
Primary or Junior basic	21	9	12	2	1	1	19	8	11
Middle	28	10	18	4	4	-	24	6	18
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	19	16	3	7	7	-	12	9	3
Graduate and above	2	2	-	2	2	-	-	-	-
Total	77	41	36	15	14	1	62	27	35



Table No. 3  
Distribution of Workers Classified by Traditional and Present Occupation, Sex and Broad Age-Group and the Reason for Leaving the Traditional Occupation.

Traditional occupation of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Total number of workers	Number of workers by age-group						
			15-34 years where present occupation is			35-59 years where present occupation is			
			Same as in Col. 1	different and the reason for leaving the traditional occupation is		Same as in Col. 1	different and the reason for leaving the traditional occupation is		
				Old age	Poor economic condition		Old age	Poor economic condition	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Pottery	M	13	14	—	1	1	—	1	11
	F	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
<b>Total</b>		15	15	—	1	1	—	1	12

Table No. 4  
Household Reported Reasons for Giving up the Craft Classified by Broad Age-Group of the Head of the Household

Broad age-group of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households having given up the craft since						
			Less than 5 years due to			5-9 years due to		10-19 years due to	
			Old age	Poor economic condition	Better employment	Old age	Better employment	Poor economic condition	Better employment
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10-34	Male	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35-59	Male	11	—	1	—	—	1	2	7
	Female	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
60 +	Male	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
	Female	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	Male	13	—	—	1	1	1	2	7
	Female	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—

Table No. 5

Distribution of Households Having Members with Necessary Skill to Practise the craft and Reported Reasons for not Practising the Craft, Classified by Religion, Caste/Tribe/Community of the Head of the Household.

Religion, Caste/Tribe/Community of the head of the household		Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Numbers of households having members with necessary skill to practise the craft but not practising the same due to			
Religion	Caste/Tribe/Community			Lack of time and man-power	Old age	Poor economic condition	Not profitable in return of labour and time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Hinduism	Hira/Scheduled caste	Male	13	6	—	2	5
		Female	2	1	1	—	—

Table No. 6

Distribution of Households having Members(s) with Necessary Skill to Practise the Craft and Report Reasons for not Practising the Craft Classified by Educational Level of the Head of the Household

Educational level of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households having member(s) with necessary skill to practise the craft but not practising due to			
			Lack of time and men power	Old age	Poor economic condition	not profitable in return of labour and time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illiterate	Male	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	1	1	—	—	—
Primary or Junior Basic	Male	1	—	—	—	1
	Female	1	—	1	—	—
Middle	Male	5	2	—	2	1
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	Male	7	4	—	—	3
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
	Male	13	6	—	2	5
	Female	2	1	1	—	—

Table No. 7

Distribution of Households Having Member(s) with Necessary Skill to Practise the Craft and Reported Reasons for not Practising the Craft, Classified by Occupation of the Head of the Household.

Occupation of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households having member(s) with necessary skill to practise the craft but not practising due to			
			Lack of time and man-power	Old age	Poor economic condition	Not profitable in return of labour and time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Police Constable	Male	3	2	—	—	1
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
Office clerk	Male	2	2	—	—	—
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
Peon/ Chowkidar	Male	5	1	—	2	2
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
Gram Sevak	Male	1	1	—	—	—
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
Sericulture demonstrator	Male	1	—	—	—	1
	Female	—	—	—	—	—
Shopkeeper	Male	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	1	—	1	—	—
Dependent	Male	1	—	—	—	1
	Female	1	1	—	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>

**Table No. 8**  
**Households Having Member(s) with Necessary Skill and who are not Practising the Craft**  
**now but are considering to take up the craft as an Occupation by Sex, Religion and Caste/**  
**Tribe/Community of the Head of the Household.**

Region, Caste/Tribe/Community of the head of the household		Sex of the head of the household	Number of household	Number of households having member(s) with necessary skill not practising the craft now but are	
Religion	Caste/Tribe/Community			Considering to take up the craft as an occupation	not considering to take up the craft as an occupation
1	2	3	4	5	6
Hinduism	Hira (Scheduled Caste)	Male	13	5	8
		Female	2	—	2

**Table No. 9**  
**Households Having Members with Necessary Skill and who are not Practising the Craft**  
**now but are considering to take up the Craft as an Occupation, Classified by Sex and Educational Level**  
**of the Head of the Household**

Educational level of the head of the household	Sex of head of the household	Number of households	Number of households having members with necessary skill not practising the craft now but are	
			considering to take up the craft as an occupation	not considering to take up the craft as an occupation
1	2	3	4	5
Illiterate	Male	—	—	—
	Female	1	—	1
Primary or Junior Basic	Male	1	1	—
	Female	1	—	1
Middle	Male	5	3	2
	Female	—	—	—
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	Male	7	1	6
	Female	—	—	—
Total	Male	13	5	8
	Female	2	—	2

Table No. 10

Households Having Members with Necessary Skill and who are not Practising the Craft now but are considering to take up the craft as an Occupation, Classified by Sex and Occupation of the Head of the Household.

Occupation of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households having members with necessary skill not practising the craft now but are	
			considering to take up the craft as an occupation	not considering to take up the craft as an occupation
1	2	3	4	5
Police Constable	Male	3	1	2
	Female	—	—	—
Office Clerk	Male	2	—	2
	Female	—	—	—
Peon/Chowkidar	Male	5	4	1
	Female	—	—	—
Gram Sevak	Male	1	—	1
	Female	—	—	—
Sericulture Demonstrator	Male	1	—	1
	Female	—	—	—
Shopkeeper	Male	—	—	—
	Female	1	—	1
Dependent	Male	1	—	1
	Female	1	—	1
Total	Male	13	5	8
	Female	2	—	2

Table 11

Number of Households Disinterested in having their Sons/Daughters Sticking to Their Traditional Occupation but like to have them Engaged in Occupation of Their Liking, Classified by Sex and Present Occupation of the Head of the Household.

Occupation of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households reported their sons/daughters should not stick to the traditional occupation but should follow the occupation of their liking due to (reason)	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5
Police Service	Male	3	2	Out of 10 households shown in col. 4, 5 households reported that they desire their daughters to learn the craft only as traditional art and not as a source of livelihood
	Female	—	—	
Office Clerk	Male	2	2	
	Female	—	—	
Peon/Chowkidar	Male	5	2	
	Female	—	—	
Sericulture Demonstrator	Male	1	1	
	Female	—	—	
Shopkeeper	Male	—	—	
	Female	1	—	
Gram Sevak	Male	1	1	
	Female	—	—	
Dependent	Male	1	1	
	Female	1	1	
Total	Male	13	9	
	Female	2	1	

Table No. 12

Number of Households Disinterested in having their Sons/Daughters sticking to Their Traditional Occupation but Like to have Them Engaged in Occupation of Their Liking, Classified by Sex and Educational Level of the Head of the Household.

Educational level of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households reported that their sons/daughters should not stick to the traditional occupation but should follow the occupation of their liking due to	Remarks
			(reason) less income from the craft in return of labour and time consumed and problems of raw materials and marketing	
1	2	3	4	5
Illiterate	Male Female	— 1	— 1	Out of 10 households shown in col. 4, 5 head of household reported that they desire their
Primary or Junior Basic	Male Female	1 1	— —	
Middle	Male Female	5 —	3 —	daughters to learn the craft only as an traditional art and not as a source of of livelihood.
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	Male Female	7 —	6 —	
Total	Male Female	13 2	9 1	

Table No. 13

Number of Households Disinterested in having their Sons/Daughters sticking to their Traditional Occupation but Like to have Them Engaged in Occupation of Their Liking Classified by Sex and Broad Age-Group of the Head of the Household.

Broad age-group of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number of households reported that their sons/daughters should not stick to the traditional occupation but should follow the occupation of their liking due to	Remarks
			(reason) less income from the craft in return of labour and time consumed and problem of raw-materials and marketing	
1	2	3	4	5
15-34	Male	1	1	Out of 10 households shown in col.4, 5 head of households reported desire of their daughters(s) to learn the craft only as a traditional art and not as a source of livelihood.
	Female	—	—	
35-59	Male	11	7	
	Female	1	—	
60 +	Male	1	1	
	Female	1	1	
Total	Male	13	9	
	Female	2	1	



Table No. 14

Households Reported Reasons for Prosperity/Adversity of the Craft in Recent Past and given Suggestions to Develop the Craft, Classified by Religion, Caste/Tribe/Community of Head of the Household.

Religion Caste/ Tribe/Community of the head of the household		Sex of the head	Number of household of the household	Number reporting reasons for prosperity/adversity of the craft.					Number of house- holds suggested measures to develop the craft.			Remarks
Religion	Caste	Reason for adversity					Adequate financial help	Marketing facility	Easier supply of raw-materials			
1	2	3	4	5 Want of raw-materials	6 Lack of financial help	7 Marketing problem	8 Change of consumer behaviour	9 Competition from wheel products	10	11	12	13
Hinduism	Hira (Scheduled) caste	Male	13	11	7	11	6	6	12	12	10	Same household reported different reasons and measures in col. 5 to 9 and colmn. 10 to 12
		Female	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	

Table No. 15

Household Reported Reasons for Prosperity/Adversity of the Craft in Recent Past and given suggestions to develop the Craft, Classified by Present Occupation of the Head of the Household.

Occupation of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Numbers reporting reasons for prosperity/adversity of the craft								Number of households suggested measure to develop the craft.	Remarks
			Reason for adversity									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
			Want of raw-materials	Lack of traditional help	Marketing Problem	Change of consumer behaviour	Competition from factory (wheel) product	Adequate financial help	Marketing facility	Easier supply of raw-materials		
Police constable	Male	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	Same household reported different reasons and measures as shown in col. 4 to 8 Colmn. 9 to 11	
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Office clerk	Male	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1		
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Peon/chowkidar	Male	5	4	2	4	3	3	4	4	3		
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Gram Sevak	Male	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	1	1		
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Sericulture demonstrator	Male	1	1	—	1	—	1	1	1	1		
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Shopkeeper	Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
	Female	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	1		
Dependent	Male	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	1	1		
	Female	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1		
Total	Male	13	11	7	11	6	6	12	12	10		
	Female	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2		

Table No. 16

Household Reported Reasons for Prosperity/Adversity of the Craft in Recent Past and given Suggestions to develop the Craft, Classified by Educational Level of the Head of the Household

Educational level of the head of the household	Sex of the head of the household	Number of households	Number reporting reasons for Prosperity/ adversity of the craft					Number of households suggested measures to develop the craft			Remarks	
			Reason for adversity									
			Want of raw-materials	Lack of financial help	Marketing problem	Change of consumer behaviour	Competition from factory (wheel) Product	Adequate financial help	Marketing facility	Easier supply of raw-materials		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Illiterate	Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Same household reported different reasons and measures in col. 4 to 8 and column. 9 to 11
	Female	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	1	
Primary or Junior Basic	Male	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	
	Female	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	1	
Middle	Male	5	4	3	4	2	2	5	5	5		
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	Male	7	6	3	6	4	3	6	6	4		
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Total	Male	13	11	7	11	6	6	12	12	10		
	Female	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2		

Table No. 17

Household Reported Reasons for Prosperity/Adversity of the Craft in Recent Past and given Suggestions to develop the Sex and Broad Age-Group of the Head of the Household.

Broad age-group of the head of the household	Sex of head of the household	Number of households	Number of households suggested measures to develop the craft.					Number reporting reasons for prosperity/adversity of the craft			Remarks
			Reasons for adversity					Adequate financial help	Marketing facility	Easier supply of raw-materials	
			Want of raw-materials	lack of financial help	Marketing problem	Change of consumer behaviour	Completion from factory (wheel) Products				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
15-34	Male	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	Same household reported different reasons and measures as shown in colmn. 4 to 8 and colmn. 9 to 11
	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
35-59	Male	11	9	5	9	5	5	10	10	8	
	Female	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	1	
60 +	Male	1	1	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	
	Female	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	
Total	Male	13	11	7	11	6	6	12	12	10	
	Female	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	

