

Abstract

Earthenware making is a traditional occupation of the craftsmen since the time of human civilization. It is a type of pottery ware. In Assam, there are two principal potter communities- 'Kumar' and 'Hira' community who derive their livelihood from making earthen pots. The process of making earthenware from a particular type of glutinous clay reflects their traditional knowledge and beliefs. Hira people are the inhabitants and local artisans of Assam. They are mainly found in the lower Brahmaputra valley of Assam. In social stratification, Hiras occupy a very lower position which is below the position of Kumar. Hiras come under Scheduled Castes category. The pottery-making tradition among the Hiras is a women folk. Hira women from different age groups practice earthenware making without using wheel since centuries ago as their cultural occupation. It is their fore fatherly occupation through the female line, which is still prevalent among the Hira community with unique technique and skill. Hira male helps women artisans in collecting the raw materials of earthenware making and marketing the products. Hira earthenware is famous for its handmade techniques. They are practicing this technique of earthenware making from the time of Immemorial. Hira artisans mainly live in a separate scheduled caste village which is known as 'Hirapara' or 'Hirachupa'.

But at present times due to some technological advancement and wider social changes, their old culture and habits of occupation die fast and new ideas and dynamism take birth. Because of the death of the old culture and tradition, a new technology emerged which is newly interpreted and practiced. It is very important to study that in this present changing scenario how far the Hira community has still practiced the earthenware culture. Study of a small community in a regional setting carries out by sociologists and social anthropologists to empirically and systematically investigate issues and problems of communities in profundity. So this study 'Impact of Modernity on then Earthenware Culture and the Socio-Economic Status of Hira Community helped us to find out the impact of modernity on the Earthenware culture of Hira community, their socio-economic life at present. For data, collection researchers have used both

structured and unstructured interview scheduled and observation methods. Also, some case studies are done to support fact findings. For the present study Southern part of the Kamrup district was preferred. South Kamrup is famous for its beautiful and unique Hira Earthenware products. There are a total of 26 Hira villages in South Kamrup. And in most of those villages still Hira artisans' practices Earthenware making for livelihood. In Assam, the majority of the Hira Earthen products were produced in South Kamrup.

The socio-economic Status of the Hira community is very miserable at present time. They are facing numerous problems nowadays regarding the carry out of their earthenware culture. Lack of proper education, low monthly income, lower social status, costly raw materials for making earthenware, alternative durable cheap ceramic products in the market, decreased demand for earthenware, unorganized marketing facilities, etc. are some challenges Hira people are facing at present times. Though earthenware making is an employment-oriented culture now a days artisans don't get the proper profit from it. The Hira families whose primary occupation is earthenware making their socio-economic status is worse than the Hira families who engaged in other employment. so now most of the Hira families left earthenware making and engaged in other occupations for earning. All these changes Hira people are facing in the present scenario are due to modernity. It is the main cause that now the traditional occupation of Hira people of those surveyed villages of South Kamrup is also influenced by these changes. As a consequence of modernity, Hira traditional villages are facing the situation of occupational mobility. Now earthenware-making occupation failed to improve the socio-economic condition of the Hira community. In the market also Hira products could not able to compete with other alternative ceramic products made by scientific machines and technology. So, most of the time Hira artisans only get a little amount of money as compared to their hard work and time. So, at present time Hira Earthenware craft is starting to lose its cultural pride. This study also included the causes of their backwardness, their present condition of the earthenware industry and how the Hira community people are trying to negotiate with the changed and new form of Earthenware culture. This helped us to suggest some measures to remove those problems from their lives and for the development of their Earthenware Culture and

their socio-economic condition. Socio-Economic development is most important to build up an impact on their overall status in society. Then only it could be possible for them to uplift their condition and their ancestral cultural occupation. Thus, the findings of this research work will be also useful to the policymakers to formulate and implement some new policies and programmes for the improvement and upliftment of the condition of the Hira community. And to reshape the rural economy of the villages it is very important to take initiatives to revive the Hira Earthenware-making culture.