

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

India has a great history of rich art and craft. There are many traditional art and crafts practiced in India from ancient times by some particular artisan communities. In different regions, there are different art and crafts in India, which represent a society's rich heritage and culture. Every art and craft have its historical significance. Rural handicraft is the largest decentralized and unorganized sector of India. Earthenware is an ancient traditional craft of human civilization. It is an inseparable and essential part of human culture. From a very early period, people are making jewellery, doll, cookware, vessels, etc. by using different types of clay. Earthenware has a special place in the material culture. It is like a mirror of a society that reflects one society or community's culture. Grieder (1975) highlighted that "First and foremost, archaeologists define as the ceramics can reflect the culture of an Individual such that the main forces of cultural change that affect a society are reflected in their ceramic products". Earthenware is a type of pottery ware. Pottery is a craft of making ceramic materials into pots by using some types of special mud. According to Herbert Read, Earthen pot making is a simple but a complex art. Earthenware is the purposeful creation of a craft man. There are different types of pottery wares- earthenware, stoneware, porcelain, etc. Chard (1964) stated that "Ceramic Technology has been considered to be the Beginning of Science". Pottery has become an inseparable part of the culture of our society. This beautiful and unique craft also represents the legacy of the artisan's tradition and culture. Every piece of earthenware tells some different stories.

In Indian caste-based society, it is a tradition that people follow their forefathers' occupations. M.N. Srinivas (1962) said that in a caste-based society, people ascribe a traditional occupation and a particular position in society. Earthenware is one of the oldest traditional occupations, originating before the Stone Age. It is almost as old as human civilization. The earthenware making art by using some type of special clay

reflects one kind of traditional knowledge. Artisans are habitual this traditional knowledge from generation to generation. Sir E. A. Gait (1925) highlighted the main characteristics of caste, i.e., the belief in a common origin held by all the members and the possession of the traditional occupation. It may be defined as an endogamous group or collection of such group bearing a common name, having the same traditional occupation, claiming descent from the same source, and commonly regarded as forming a single humongous community."

In different places in India, potters manufacture earthenware in different shapes, sizes, and colours. Though potters are known as different names in different places of India, but generally the potters of India are known as Kumar/Kumor/Kumbhakar/Kumhar. Since the very beginning, many Scholars have focused on the different aspects of Indian pottery, i.e., techniques of pottery making, the socio-economic life of potters, their culture, etc. Generally, in the social stratification, potter communities occupy a lower place. But in the different states of India, their social position is different. In Assam, there is one potter community that engages in the manufacture of earthenware—the Hiras. Numerically the Hiras are in the 5th position among the all scheduled castes communities in Assam. Compared to various studies related to pottery; only a few studies have been made on the Hira potters who make earthen pots without using the wheel. They are the inhabitants of Assam. Traditionally they are a potter community. Earthenware is their traditional occupation. Hira community doesn't use the potter's wheel for making earthenware. Handmade earthen pots are an authentic example of traditional art and craft. The potteries of Hiras are famous for their beautiful design and colours.

It is impossible to complete the study of one community without knowing their daily life and their habitual activities. The love for art and craft is seen among the simple people of villages. Hira is considered the earliest pot maker of Assam. At present also Hiras manufacture earthen products for their livelihood. Generally, the socio-economic condition of a particular community depends on its occupation. So, to understand one

community, it is important to study that particular community's occupation also. Because the occupation of a people or a community displays their way of living.

But the advancement of science and technology and western lifestyle strongly touches the Earthenware culture of the Hira community. About 70 years ago, after the independence in India, modern technological developments were taking place in society. Modern machinery and industry started to dominate the Agrarian and traditional handicrafts at that period. There are many traditional potters in India. But at present, they are struggling for a better livelihood. There are two types of tradition or culture- oral and written. Oral tradition or culture is transmitted from generation to generation. Chouhan (1980) stated that “In the present, the Indian society is undergoing a general metamorphosis in all its essentials. The rudders on which the traditional order once rested have been shaken by the modern forces of change”. In some Hira villages, the impact of industrialization and modernization brings complex changes to the tradition of the Hira community in the present era. Because Modernity is the most widespread trend in our society which leads to various changes in the traditional occupation, culture, livelihood, etc. It also changes the lifestyle, way of thinking of the people. Kuppuswamy (1972) gave his opinion on social change that “one of the important changes Indian society is experiencing now is the change in the social structure due to social mobility”. Hira people are also facing many changes in their socio-economic life, education, techniques of making pottery, traditional knowledge, way of living, etc. This present study "Impact of Modernity on the Earthenware Culture and the Socio-economic Status of Hira Community: A Study in South Kamrup of Assam" is an attempt to understand the socio-economic status of the Hira community, the Impact of Modernity on their Earthenware culture, the causes of their backwardness. This study will also help to suggest some recommendations for enhancing the condition of the Hira Community.

1.1.1 Statement of the Problem

Different scholars in the country have conducted studies on the socio-cultural life of different societies and communities from time to time. However, most of the scholar has slightly attempted the study on the socio-economic life of the Hira community. The

researchers and historians have contributed significant facts as to how the Hira community has made its way and lives on the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. The Hira community is mostly inhabited in lower Brahmaputra valley of Assam like Goalpara, Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang, and BARPETA district. In the state, the total population of the Hira community is 55,300 (2011 census). These people are living in rural and backward areas. It is the fact that man is a social animal and they live in a society where they are subjected to go by and follow the prevailing rules of the society and tradition. As time passed by, with the mixture of various castes and communities, a man is bound to change his social habits, traits, and course of action with the changing social needs. The interaction with other people of different cultures and the influences of such mixtures create a deep impact. Further due to ideological changes and technological advancement wider social changes have taken place. The old culture and habits of occupation die fast and new ideas and dynamism take birth. So, the cultural death of the old and the emergence of the new technology are interpreted and practiced. Here the question arises that to how far the Hira community is still following their indigenous earthenware culture in this changing scenario.

One of the striking features of modern society is that the tremendous changes are taking place in recent years threatening the essence of the socio-economic status of individuals. Some changes are drastic while others are more gradual that occur daily. There is no aspect of the life of the Hira community that has not been touched by those changes. For instance, the traditional craft-making occupation of the Hira community is shaping their living status. In the changing scenario, their present status portrays a different picture. So, it will be interesting to know that how far the co-existence of tradition and modernity has its impact on the socio-economic life of the Hira community in general and the south Kamrup in particular.

Thus, the present study is a modest attempt to throw light on the Impact of Modernity on the Earthenware culture, their socio-economic status in South Kamrup and how they are trying to negotiate with the changing form of their indigenous culture.

1.1.2 Theoretical Framework: Modernity and its Constituents

Modernity broadly refers to the adaptation of new values and lifestyles in a modern way. It is considered as the new stage of society and culture. Society is dynamic, so modernity is an inseparable part of our society. Modernity almost touches every aspect of human society.

The term 'Modernity' comes from the Latin word 'Modernus' which means 'just now'. Generally, modernity indicates the relationship with western societies. It is a transition from rural to urban, religious to secular, gemeinschaft to gesellschaft, agriculture to industry, and so on. Due to Modernity, various changes occur in the field of technology, socio-economic-political institutions, population, etc. It also influences the food habits, dressing style, communication, preferences, thinking, ideas, culture, and tradition of society, etc. It transits the traditional society to modern society. This process of transition from traditional to modern society is called 'Modernization'. The present study does not make a distinction between modernity and modernization though we understand the dynamics of the relationship between modernity on the one hand and modernization on the other hand.

Modernity mainly determines the increased mechanization of production, advanced science and technology, industry replacing agriculture, higher rate of urbanization, powerful democracy, development, etc. It is a process of social change influenced by the development of the different components of society. But modernity also brings some elements of uncertainty, risk, and confusion. Modernity can be categorized as social modernity, economic modernity, political modernity, technological modernity, Cultural Modernity, etc.

First, the Industrial revolution, the France revolution, Renaissance and Protestant Reformation introduced different types of modernity and changes to the structure of human society. It took many centuries to modernize a society. The changes brought by modernity are more extensive and create differences between traditional and modern society. Modernity also has a huge role in the political system of society. This resulting in more power to the new government over many aspects of an individual's life, and

making different laws for all the citizens, etc. Modernity indicates capitalism, progression, the mass system of industry, institutionalization, administration, and surveillance. Modernity is based on certain philosophical and political foundations, viz. holism or totality, reflexivity, rationality, and social movements. Holism/totality refers to the idea that “society” is a unit in some sense and it can be studied as a single entity. Reflexivity refers to the idea that we cannot simply observe society from the outside because we are also involved in it. Rationality refers to the idea that we can understand society in ways which we can explain to other people. Social Movements refer to the idea that creative human action both shapes the social whole and is shaped by it. In this context, C. Wright Mills in “The Sociological Imagination” (1959) assumes greater significance. It is used to imply the ability to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individual. It enables us to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of the modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of women/men are formulated. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography, and the relation between the two within society.

Different sociologists provide different perspectives on the exact meaning of modernity and the process of modernization. Daniel Lerner was the first one to use the term ‘Modernization’ in his study. According to Lerner (1958) Modernization is a positive spirit, affecting public and private institutions. It is a process of social change where less developed societies adapt the characteristics of a more developed society. But apart from affecting the institutions modernity also has a great impact on people's personalities. The process of modernization is similar all over the world. Modernization indicates the progressive evolution of the individual of a society. It changes the traditional mindset of the individual and brings a progressive outlook.

The development of science and technology is one of the important causes of Modernity and the process of modernization. Because it leads to various developments and changes in social relationships and replaces the traditional ideologies. We can notice the impact of these advancements on the agricultural field, industrial sector, family

structure, tradition, etc. According to Alatas (1972), "Modernization is a process by which modern scientific knowledge is introduced to the society with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better and more satisfactory life in the broadcast sense of the term as accepted by the society concerned." Rustow and Ward (1964) stated that Modernization simply means the application of modern science to human affairs.

The social life of the people is very different in modern society than the traditional one. Modern society is affected by industrialization, globalization, and science and technological advancement. Gore (1982) gives his perspective on Modernization, "it is a process of changing society from primarily agricultural to primarily Industrial Economy. These changes in modern Science and Technology affect the social structure of a society. This also makes people's life easier. So, one community or society's culture or day-to-day life is affected by these changes."

Smelser (1964) said that modernization is a complex set of changes that take place almost in every part of society as it attempts to be industrialized. Modernization involves some ongoing changes in society's economy, politics, education, tradition, and religion. In his theory, he said that modern societies have some different social structures and this gives a clear definition of the functions and political role of those societies. But he also described that although these differentiations help in the development of modern institutions, it has some problems of integration and of coordinating the functions of different new institutions. It changes the simple and ancient handicrafts toward the application of modern scientific ideas and technology for more production in less time and less cost. Society has become now industry-centered. The modern economy differs very substantially from individual ones. Because of Industrialization most people now left their traditional occupation and want to engage in different industries.

Modernity changes the individual's way of life and pattern of production. In traditional society, people used natural resources for earning their livelihood. But in this modern and advanced society, people manufacture those resources before use. Harrington (2005) stated that "Modernity indicates what is happening at that time. He also said that modernity is a particular point of the period. The changes in society can

also influence the economic condition, political condition and value system of a society.” Inkeles & Smith (1974) also used the term 'modern' to indicate individual functioning. Individuals share some same attitude in different modern societies like accepting the new ideas and methods, express opinion, being interested more in the present and future than the past, punctuality, use of science and technology, belief in justice, etc. They worked on the concept of 'modernity and found that modernity is mainly an attitude and value. Modernity refers to the dynamic nature of society.

Peter Childs (2013) stated that "Modernity is experiencing a new lifestyle which has been brought by industrialization, urbanization, and secularization." And all these changes affect the traditional and cultural life of the people in a community or society. Here one less developed society wants to be more developed. Modernity forces an institution to change its structure, meaning, and values. These changes occur gradually. So, it is difficult to say when these changes started to turn the traditional society into a modern society. But Gusfield (2001) remarked that a society may have both modern and traditional values in certain aspects. Modernity is not the opposite form of tradition. This is the renewing and renovation parts of the social changes. Modernity helps people to understand society in a new way. As compared to traditional society, production, education is more advanced in modern society. People are more developed here. Modern society easily can be distinguished from pre-modern society.

In 1893, Durkheim in his book ‘The Division of Labour in Society’ defined modernity from the perspective of social solidarity. According to him, modernity creates dependence based on functions. In modern society, people depend on one another which creates solidarity in the society. He said, in modern society, evolution would lead mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity among the people. He also opined that modernity means stratification. If a society is more stratified then the level of modernity is also higher in that society. Here stratification does not create disorganization. In modern society, people do different occupations, work, activity. And as a result people also have different ways of life, thinking, experiences. So here people considered themselves as an individual after that a member of a community or society.

For Simmel Modernity is nothing but a city life and money economy. In city life, modernity is more intensive and the money economy spread modernity all over the world. Money represents the economic value of everything. Simmel said that all the characteristics of modernity are found in city life. So, in the city individual can experience modernity or modern society. It is witnessed that industrialization brings development, development leads to capitalism, and capitalism results in the superiority of power. This impact of modernity shifts our simple traditional society into a modern bureaucratic and capitalist society. He never thought of any alternativeness of changing society, but he questioned the tragedy of modern culture. (Simmel, 1900; Frisby, 1992). Simmel was different from the other classical theorist of modernity.

Max Weber called modernity rationality. He said that rationality is the main cause of human actions. So, modernity is the same as rationality. And rationality replaced the tradition of a society. Bureaucracy is one of the examples of the rationality of modern society. According to him, there are four types of rationality- formal, substantive, theoretical, and practical. And today's modern world is a mainly formal rational world. Because formal rationality is dominating every action of modern society. His perspective was more focused on protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism (Symonds, 2015).

But Marx defined modernity as commercialization or relation in terms of production. Antonio (2003) in his edited book 'Marx and Modernity' discussed the perspectives of Karl Marx on Modernity. According to Marx, modernity is a commodity in this new world. It is mainly based on production. It is bought and sold as a part of the trade. In a modern world, more production means more profit. Modernity leads to a capitalist society. Including economic and non-economic items, everything is just a commodity in modernity. Even religion and culture are also considered as the commodity in this modern world. For Marx, industrialization and Modernization made everything just a product of trade and this is the reason of the owner-worker-product-consumer relationship of modern society.

The contemporary theorists of modernity said that modernity is an unfinished project and still the European countries are experiencing the process of modernization. Because they experienced a new form of modernity. Giddens addressed modernity as multidimensional. Giddens focused on more nation-state rather than the Society in terms of modernity. According to him, modernity brings capitalism, industrialism, administrative power, and military power. Modern society is more radical and universal than pre-modern society. He completely denied the earlier definitions of modernity which indicated the development in society. According to him, in the contemporary world modernity indicates institutional development which brings fragmentation and dispersal, a situation where dispersal is dialectically connected to profound tendencies towards global integration and dialectic of powerlessness and empowerment regarding experience and action. Giddens defined the modern world as 'Juggernaut' because modern society is more dynamic and advanced. It can also harm society badly (Giddens, 1990, 1996).

Ulrich Beck (1992) followed the perspectives of Giddens on modernity. But he more focused on the dark side of modernity and the risks in the society created by modernity. He called modernity the 'Risk society', 'second modernity' and 'late modernity'. According to him, modern society is full of danger which always creates risk for the individual. He also mentioned that western society is facing risk due to modernity in the field of fast food, global warming, environmental degradation, etc. Besides, the positive consequences of the advancement of science and technology also bring many risks to the life of individuals. Because technological changes can lead to more new forms of risk. These forms of risks are not only limited to the health and environmental field. It also has influenced the interrelated changes of human life, for example, employment, job security, challenges in tradition and customs, changing family patterns, and personal relationship of individuals.

But George Ritzer was different. Ritzer (1993) highlighted the bright side of modernity. He called modernity as hyper rationality. It is one of the main features of contemporary society. He extends weber's theory of modernity.

Zygmunt Bauman's (1989) perspectives on modernity are slightly similar to Beck's perspectives. According to Bauman's perspective, modernity and postmodernity result in the holocaust. He said that pre-modern barbarity or irrationality didn't create the holocaust but it is rendered by modernity and rational bureaucracy.

For Jurgen Habermas (1997), modernity is an unfinished process and the prime reason for rationality. According to him, modern society is more complex, differentiated, and integrated. Modernity brings an increased rate of differentiation, secularization, and institutionalization. And He is convinced by the impacts of modernity. As Wagner (2012) said that today's modernity is not what it used to be.

In India, the concept of modernity is first developed in the time of British rule. This brought many changes to Indian society. Different Indian sociologists also define modernity and modernization from their perspectives. Srinivas (1947) said, "modernization takes place by the 'media exposure' which is connected with participation in the field of the economic, political and increasing rate of social mobility." He also stated that the term 'Modernization' mainly indicates the positive changes. And that is the reason that he always prefers to use the term 'westernization' to indicate the changes brought by British rule. Modernization includes advanced technology, democratic institution, ideology, and values.

But Gandhi rejected Modernity. In *Hind Swaraj* (1909) he emphatically mentioned, "If India copies England, it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined".

According to Yogendra Singh (1973), the concept of modernization is broader than the concept of Westernization and Sanskritization. He writes in his book that Modernization is an elasticized form of society than the traditional one. It suggests an open world view, like science is passing a phase of self-falsification and self-transcendence in its value structure. Also, the process of Modernization cannot fully replace the indigenous beliefs, customs, traditions from society. It just transmutes or develops those traditional forms. Tradition also cannot stop or delay the process of modernization. So, it is very difficult to separate tradition and modernity from one another. Modernity means some expected forms of changes in the social structure of

societies. This leads to changing social relationships, growth of institutionalization of new roles, etc. Singh also stated that due to modernity little tradition slowly changes to a great tradition.

In the Indian context of Modernity, Muley & Ray (1973) described the term 'Modernity' as a rapid and profound transformation of society. Here the traditional lifestyle of people of society transforms into a modern and advanced way of life. Modernity includes some variables like literacy, cosmopolitanism, lifestyle, empathy, aspiration, innovativeness, achievement, fatalism, etc. Dipankar Gupta (2000) defined Modernity as an attitude that describes universalistic norms where the position or worth of an individual as a citizen is unavoidable and where one's achievements matter more than family background and connections. Once Modernity is understood in this fashion, it is evident that India still has a long distance to go. Because in India the mode of relations between individuals is not modern. The true form of Modernity is how individuals relate to each other.

Sociologists have given different theories of the Modernity. The theoretical framework of Modernity can be unfurled in the ways that the debate is far from over. One must understand the dialectic of engaging with and interrogating modernity. And in this context, the present study is a critical reflection of the dialectic of engaging with and interrogating the hitherto existing practices of the Earthenware Culture among the Hiras in South Kamrup of Assam.

Here in the present study, Modernity mainly indicates the changes that occur in the structures of society and cultural institutions. modernization, industrialization, urbanization facilitated production, transportation, communication, etc. As a consequence of modernity, traditions are gradually changing their original form. Modernity also touches on the microstructural phenomena of society like family structure, caste system, village groups, etc. In a traditional Indian Society, this is a traditional norm that the children follow their father's caste-based occupation. That is their ascriptive status. But because of Modernity, large number of people have changed their occupations from traditional to modern. They are moving towards the industrial

sector. Family's traditional occupation becomes secondary now. Their interests in traditional family norms and values are gradually decreasing. They don't want to follow their tradition and culture. New generation people in this modern era don't want to overlap their caste and economic status. So, the traditional culture of Indian society is gradually changing. Modernity transits the joint families to a nuclear family. Because people are more tend to follow the trend of urbanization. New changes of urbanization and industrialization offer more job opportunities to the individuals in the urban areas. Because of modernization people are now more conscious of education. They want to get professional, vocational education to get better job opportunities. At present modernization also brings tremendous changes to the field of science and technology. So as a result, different new techniques of production, mode of production took place in the society. It changes the traditional village structure to a modern one. And this process of modernization also affects the traditional craftsmanship and cultural occupation of the Hira community in Assam.

The Hira community people are socio-economically and educationally backward. Though due to modernity different changes occur in human society, Hira community is struggling for a better livelihood. They are still exploited and discriminated by the other upper class and community people. So, Max Weber's theory articulates the backwardness of the community in light of protestant ethics. Talcott Parsons justifies disequilibrium in the functioning order of society. Marxian theory recommends an alternative model for people of the community in distress and destitution. Because the socio-economic condition of the Hira community is very poor at present. The community inhabiting their small village is known as 'Hirapara' which is close to rivers or streams is caught by vicious circles of poverty and allied difficulties. So, these above-mentioned theories are very important to understand the present status of the Hira community and their earthenware culture.

1.2 Review of Literature:

Assam is famous for its cultural heritage. There are many indigenous artisans or craft men who practice different types of traditional and cultural art and craft. Hira community is one of the native craft men of Assam. They come under Scheduled Castes communities of Assam. Earthenware making is their indigenous occupational culture. They are following this culture from generation to generation. Their hand-made earthen pots are famous among the people of Assam. From ancient times people's socio-economic life depends on their occupation. Some of the reviews of related literature of the present study are discussed below-

1.2.1 Pottery:

Pottery is one of the ancient arts and crafts of human civilization. From the prehistoric period, people are using pottery. To store different things or food people started to make pottery. There are many types of pottery- stoneware, earthenware, glassware, porcelain, etc. Different scholars also gave their opinion on pottery, the origin of pottery, the development of pottery, etc. Some of the review of literature related to pottery are-

- **Mukharji (1974)** in ‘**Art Manufactures of India**’, discussed the different types of art and craft of India. Regarding the use importance of earthen potteries, he wrote that the Earthen potteries are made in India from very ancient times. Earthen water pots, cooking pots, earthen cups were the earliest forms of earthen pottery in India. Later he also mentioned the Bengal potter communities of India. In India, potters are living in almost every village. In Khulna, Dinajpur, Sewan, and Raniganj in Bengal potters are now also making art pottery. First, the earthen potteries of Sewan in Bengal mainly attract the European peoples.
- **Chattopadhyay (1975)** said in his study ‘**Handicrafts of India**’ that one of the important handicrafts is earthenware. Here author mentioned the process of pottery making. He said that the wheel which is used for making earthenware is the first productive machine invented by man. In different periods people used earthen pots

for their needs. Pottery is universal. In various religious ceremonies different earthen potteries are used like lamps, vessels, musical instruments. One of the common techniques of manufacture an earthen pot is firstly potters shape the clay with the wheel then they complete the pots by beating techniques with the help of a wooden beater and a stone. People from all over India manufacture earthenware of different shapes, sizes, and colours.

- Regarding the potter community of Orissa, **Behura (1978)** in '**Peasants Potters of Orissa- A Sociological Study**' discussed about the nine endogamous sub-castes of potters in Orissa. This is mainly an analytical study. This book mainly deals with the caste system of potters, functions of castes, the life cycle of the potters, tools, and techniques of pottery, their economic religious status. The author also discussed the potters as a peasant community. According to him, pottery is a caste-based and hereditary occupation. There are two groups of potters in Orissa based on language. One uses 'Telegu' language and the other group use 'Oriya'.
- **Singh (1979)** writes about the potteries of India in his book '**Pottery in India**'. Here he explains Pottery making art is as old as human civilization. It is practiced for more than 10,000 years. Potters express their feeling through their potteries. By focusing on the history of pottery he stated that there are many proofs that in the Neolithic age both wheels made and handmade potteries were used in India. In Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilizations also, potteries were the most important craft. It is a belief that when Lord Shiva married Sati, he created some groups of people to make earthen pots. And these people are known as 'Kumharas' or 'kumars'. So some Kumar calls themselves 'Rudra' which is the name of Lord Shiva.
- Pottery is one of the important arts and crafts of human culture. Here **Vidyarthi (1986)** in his book '**Art and Culture of North-East India**' discussed some of the art and cultures which are practiced in North-East India along with their ethnicity and history, changing culture, etc. Here the author said that art is very important for a society. Art is an inseparable part of society since the time of the existence of

humans. In northeast India, people are highly engaged in art and craft. The art and craft among tribal societies are famous for their uniqueness. North-east India is famous for its rich heritage, culture, and art and crafts viz. bamboo canes, handmade pottery, weaving and textile, woodwork, metal works, etc. After that, he briefly discussed the art and craft of North-East India. He said that some tribal community of North-East India makes pottery by hand without using the wheel. They use different types of local clay to make different-sized pots.

- **Mirmira (1987)** discussed the traditional potters of India. In the book '**Indian Pottery**' the author highlights the struggle of the potters with their traditional occupation. He also says that the pre-civilized men did not know the techniques of making vessels for their daily use. They use barks of trees for storing water but this is only for a temporary period. India has been practicing pottery making since the time of human civilization. By mentioning the history, he stated that according to many western authors, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Babylon, etc. took the art of pottery from India. In the northern part of India. viz Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and some parts of Rajasthan practice stone wheels for pottery making. This book discussed the history of pottery and the techniques and methods of pottery making.
- **Krishnan (1989)** in '**Traditional Potters- Entitlements and Enablements of Artisans**' clearly states the social and the economic problems of the traditional artisans and tries to understand the status of the traditional potters. She also suggests some solutions to their problems. The author focused on some powerful entitlements and enablement of all artisans including potters to gain some knowledge about their economy and market. Because all traditional artisans including producers are facing many problems in the field of economy. They are also in the weaker sections of Indian society. The author also mentioned that the potters do this activity usually in the summer. Because in the time of summer the demand for these products increases. Some potters do this pottery activity as their main occupation and some practice pottery only during some festivals.

- **Datta (2000)** in her study on ‘**Chalcolithic Pottery Paintings**’ beautifully discussed the different pottery wares and their demand. The author says that in that period of time, malwa and jorwe wares, savalda ware, imitation Daimabad ware, black, and redware were the famous pottery paintings. Then she highlighted the types of clay using for those pottery making. The clay for making malwa ware is sand and pieces of grass. This type of ware is made by the use of the wheel. Jorwe ware is also made by the use of the wheel. The clay for making this type of ware contained sand and mica. The author also added that the potteries of the Chalcolithic period were very attractive.
- **Arunkumar, Sharma, Mangang, Kipgen & Kiranbala (2012)** in their edited book ‘**The Tribes of Nagaland**’ highlighted the art and crafts among the tribes of Nagaland. Naga people are rich in art and crafts. Their wood carving, metal crafts, bamboo and cane crafts, weaving, pottery are world-famous. Naga pottery is mostly a feminine activity. Two villages of Nagaland- Tseminyu, and Ungma practice steel and aluminium pottery. Naga potteries are famous for their simplicity and functional value.

From the above discussion, it is said that many scholars from all over the world research and study about the pottery industry, different types of pottery, potter's caste system, socio-economic life, etc. Pottery is one of the important handicrafts of our society. From ancient times even in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilization also, potteries were the most important craft. No one can deny the role of pottery wares in our lives.

1.2.2 Pottery of Assam:

Assamese pottery is famous for its uniqueness. In Assam, two potter communities Hira and Kumar make earthen pots. Different scholars' studies on the Assamese pottery. Some of the studies related to pottery of Assam are-

- **Dhavalikar & Ansari (1970)** in the study ‘**Excavation at Ambari (Gauhati)**’ discussed the handmade and wheel-made potteries in Ambari. There are many

potter communities are living that practice traditional pottery making. Authors also mention that they have been classified into two periods based on their cultural materials- first one is from 7th to 12th century A.D. where potters used Kaolin clay for making pottery and second one is from the 13th to 17th century A.D where most of the potteries are Muslim glazed.

- In the context of history and origin of pottery **Roy (1977)** highlighted the pottery practice among the different tribes of Assam in his thesis '**A Study of Ceramics From Neolithic to Mediaeval Period of Assam: An Ethno-Archaeological Approach**'. Pottery is related to one community's beliefs, customs, traditions, and culture. He studies two main potter communities of Assam- the Hiras and Kumars from a sociological and technological basis. Kumar uses a wheel to make pottery and Hiras uses their hands to shape an earthen pot. In social hierarchy also these two potter communities are not the same but both of these communities are mainly peasant. Mainly these two potters live close to the urban areas for their craft. They don't follow inter-marriage between these two potter groups. And this keeps away one potter group from sharing their knowledge, ideas, techniques with other potter groups. The pottery of Hiras is simple. The Kumar potteries are more diverse and varied than the Hira potteries.
- **Phukan & Bhattacharya (1987)** in their book '**Loka Kalpadristi**' highlight the beautiful crafts and creation of the people of Assam. They said that Kumar, Hira, Goldsmith are the real occupational artisans of Assam. Most of the artisans of Assam are the Scheduled caste communities. Their economic condition is not very satisfactory. Generally, in Assam, there is a Kumar village or a Hira village near temples or other religious places. They also added that according to Herbert Read, pottery is the most simple and difficult art. Potters follow the design of natural things to make the pottery. In 1838 Mount Gamari wrote that the Assamese potters didn't know how to use the wheel. Because he saw the potters making pottery by hand only. First Bhutiya Kumar uses the Wheel to make pottery in Assam.

- Regarding the indigenous crafts of village communities, **Baruah (2005)** in his book '**Axomor Loka-Sanskriti**' discussed that the indigenous artisans manufacture not only household products but also religious products. One of the important crafts is pottery. There are not many ancient samples of pottery in Assam. Because earthen samples are not lasting for too many years. Also, these samples are considered as impure after using them once. But in the State Museum in Guwahati, many ancient pottery samples are preserved there. The art on the earthen pots can easily attract the eyes of people. Kumar makes earthen toys also for entertainment. After pottery, brass and wooden products are some of the important crafts.
- **Goswami (2005)** has studied the indigenous crafts and industries and their historical background in '**Indigenous Industries of Assam**'. And the author found that most of the potters in the village earn their livelihood by agriculture and the pottery work is only their secondary occupation. Generally, Hindus destroy the pottery products after use once. So, potters don't get proper profit from pottery-making craft.
- In the context of Art and Craft **Sarma (2008)** in '**Traditional Crafts of Assam**' stated that the women folks are influenced by the craft and arts in the villages. Assam is rich in craftwork. Here author discussed the pottery craft of Kumar of Salmora village which is their traditional occupation. They make different types of the pot including both traditional and modern design.
- **Goswami (2010)** mentioned about the Kumar pottery of South Kamrup in his Ph.D. thesis '**A Study on Kumar Pottery of South Kamrup and Their Cultural Counterparts**'. Here he said that kumars are mainly peasants. Pottery is their secondary occupation. In Assam, there are four occupational communities- Kohar, Kumar, Sonar, and Hiras. Here researcher also highlighted one interesting thing that the agriculture and indigenous crafts are close to each other. Both Kumar and Hiras produced unique earthen pots. Hiras earthen pots are not used in any religious

function. But the reason has remained unknown. According to some people Hira pots are produced by their women artisans and women are not pure. So, these products are not used in any religious function. But in south Kamrup Kumar potteries are produced for mainly religious purposes. Their products are hardly used in the temple also. But the socio-economic condition of both potter communities is same.

- **Goswami (2012)** also described the traditional crafts of Assam in his Ph.D. thesis '**Traditional Crafts of Assam and Their Role in Employment Generation- A Study in Lower Assam (With Special Focus on Some Selected Crafts)**'. Mainly crafts are produced for three main purposes- for household use, limited clients with whom the potter who produce goods in the face to face contact, commercial purposes. From the ancient period, indigenous crafts are the source of income among the villagers. In the Ahom period also, many artisans practiced different crafts. In Assam, the pottery industry is one of the earliest crafts. Most of the potters are today also following their ancient techniques for making pottery. Kumar pottery is mainly a masculine craft and Hira pottery is mainly a feminine craft. But in present times these male potters left practicing pottery. The researcher said that at the time of the field visit she only observed economically backward and widow potters.
- In the context of North-East India, **Sharma (2012)** in '**Glimpses of North-East India Archaeology**' focused on its history and archaeology. Majuli is famous for its art and culture. Pottery is one of the important crafts in Majuli. Though the potter community of Majuli is mainly used the wheel for manufacturing pottery, in Salmara, it is different. Here females are the main artisans in pottery making art.
- **Das (2014)** discussed the potteries of Majuli in her book '**Majulir Mrit Silpa**'. According to her, the expression of beautiful thinking in a creative way is a craft. Craft culture can affect the social life of an individual. One craft can represent one communities' culture. Pottery is an example of an ancient craft. Nothing can replace the potteries in Indian culture. In every function like the birth ceremony,

death ceremony, marriage, religious ceremony, earthen pots are used. Even some people of Assam especially pregnant ladies also eat some earthen pots. This earthen pottery is called 'meda khola' or 'khoba khola'. In many folk stories, folk music there is mentioned about pottery. Many traditional beliefs are also there related to pottery. Before industrialization, earthen potteries were famous in Assam and North-East India. In Majuli most of the people from the bank of the river practice pottery. Though here both male and female potters participate in pottery making, but in most of the time female potters prepare the clay and make pottery. In this book author also highlighted the difference between Kumar and Hira.

- **Mishra & Mansuri (2016)** discussed the red clay pottery and the problems of the pottery industry in their article '**Problems of Indian Red Clay Pottery (Terracotta) Industries and Policies for development**'. Here author highlighted one fact that almost 60% of artisans already left their traditional red clay pottery and if proper measures are taken this percentage could be increased to 75%. Because they are facing several changes in continuing their traditional occupation. The non-availability of clay is one of the major problems in the pottery-making profession. Also, they don't have proper scientific technology for pottery making, proper machines for clay processing, non-availability of fuel, etc. in this scientific era. The authors also recommended some suggestions to uplift this traditional industry. Some initiatives should be taken by the central and state government for the development of this village industry.
- **Nath (2018)** describes the technological changes that occur in the field of pottery. In his article '**Pottery and Technological Change in Assam: A study of Jorhat and Sivsagar District**' stated that in these two districts, the growth rate of the pottery industry has been increased. Here also author discussed the different types of pottery making- chalcolithic pottery, harappan and post harappan pottery, ceramic pottery, and terracotta craft. But in this modern complex world, every potter community is facing serious socio-economic and political problems. The

author also highlighted some case studies of the potters of upper Assam to focus on this handicraft.

- **Regon (2019)** in his study '**Division of Labour and Socio-Cultural Uses of Pottery Products in Assamese Society**' stated that the pottery industry has an important role in the Indian rural economy. It is important for both the economy and the culture of our society. In this study, the author discussed the division of labour in the pottery-making activity of the potters of the Majuli district. There is a peaceful co-operation between among the men, women and the children of the potter family. This also provides them employment. Here author mentioned that most of the family of Majuli district belongs to the Kumar community and pottery is their primary occupation. Here 64% of potters are female and 36% are male potters. Although the majority of the potters are female the role of males and children is also equally important in pottery making.

From the above-mentioned literature related to Assamese pottery, it is found that the majority of scholars focused on the techniques and methods of pottery making in Assam and the socio-economic condition of the potter communities. Hiras don't use the wheel as Kumars do. Hira potteries are simple but Kumar potteries are diverse. Earthen pots don't last for a long time. But in the Museum of Assam, some of the rare and unique potteries are preserved and those easily attract the eyes of people. But now in Assam, most of the craftsmen left practicing their craft. They are now engaged in other occupations.

1.2.3 Hira Potters of Assam:

Hira community is the indigenous potter community of Assam. they make earthen products with the help of a wooden beater and different-sized round-shaped stones. Hira community is only found in Assam. They are practicing earthenware making from generation to generation. Some of the scholars highlight some aspects of the life of the Hira community. Some of the literature related to Hira potters are-

- **Das (1956)** in his article ‘**A Note on the Hira Potters of Assam**’ discussed the Hira community of Assam and their techniques, materials, and preparation of pottery making. He also mentioned that the pottery making of Hiras is a feminine activity. Here author mainly tries to focus on the pottery industry in the Lakhimpur district. Hiras have their special type of Brahmins which are lower than the upper castes Brahmins in social stratification. The vessels made by the Hira potters are stronger than the Kumars. Because it is thicker than the vessels made by Kumars.
- **Bandopadhyay (1961)** also gives a brief description of the methods of assembling the clay, pot making, firing, decoration of the Hira community in his study ‘**Hira Potters of Assam**’. Hiras is the traditional pot maker of Assam. Their specialty is that they make pottery by hands only without using the wheel as Kumars do. Hira potters use one sticky type of blackish clay for making pottery. This special type of clay is known as 'Hiramati'. Mainly during the winter and spring, the Hiras collect the clay from the river. They use a wooden spade to collect the clay. The Hira males work in a group for collecting and carrying the clay. He also mentioned that some potters make pottery inside their home and some make pottery outside their home.
- **Das (1990)** in ‘**Asomor Mritsilpi: Hira Samproday**’ Studies about the potter community of Assam. Hiras and Kumars are native and traditional potter communities. There are most Hira people are living in the Kamrup district of Assam. They are also found in Goalpara, Darrang, Nagaon, sivsagar, and the Lakhimpur district. According to the 1881 census, the namasudras and the Hiras are included in the same category. Instead of using the wheels, Hiras use one stone and a wooden beater for making pots. They manufacture pottery by using beating technique. They made all the parts of a pot differently and at the end join them. They made 3 to 5 different earthen parts for making one pot. Different sized stone is used based on the size of the pot for making pottery. These stones have different names. After completing one part of a pot, it is kept for drying. And after drying

this part they made another part and join it with the previous one. And thus, they complete the whole pot and keep it for drying. And lastly, they burn it.

- **Sarma (1991)** in his M. Phil dissertation on ‘**The Study of Hira Community in and around in Barpeta District**’ mentioned that the Hiras are the traditional potters of Assam and this is their hereditary occupation. The standard of living of Hiras is very poor in rural areas. He also discussed their origin and history and their status as a scheduled-caste community.
- Regarding the practice of traditional occupation **Nayak (1992)** in ‘**A Socio-Economic Survey of Hira Community Living in and Around Barpeta**’ stated that in Bamuna, Sundaridiya and Bodorurtoop of Barpeta district only 32% potter families out of hundred are still practicing their traditional occupation for earning their livelihood. Rest of 68% of potters left their craft and stated new occupation in these modern times. Because of many reasons new generation of this potter community are leaving the pottery making tradition.
- **Medhi (1992)** in her thesis on ‘**The Potters and Pottery of Nalbari District of Assam- A Study in Ethno-history and Ethno-Archaeology**’ discussed about the Hira and Kumar potters, their potteries, technological and socio-cultural aspects of pottery, and history of pottery in the Nalbari District. The traditional potters, viz. Hiras and Kumars are now also practicing pottery making. Here researcher stated that in the Nalbari district Hiras are the Scheduled Caste communities but Kumars are the sub-caste of Kalita. Hiras prepare their clay much carefully than the Kumars do. The clay which is used by Kumars is known as 'Kumar mati' and the clay of Hiras is known as 'Hira mati'. Hiras of the Nalbari district also make terracotta products. These two potter communities are happy in practising their traditional occupation. According to them, pottery is a good and reputed occupation.
- **Sharma & Sarma (1998)** discussed the production of Hira products in two villages of South Kamrup in ‘**The Hira Potter and Their Potteries: A Case Study of two Hira Villages of South Kamrup, Assam**’. They said that mostly

Hira potters who lived in joint families produce good quality earthen products. They produce good quality earthen products to fulfill the demand of the customer. The amount of production of the earthen pots depends on the size of their family.

- **Sarmah (2001)** in her thesis '**The Hira Potters and Potteries of South Kamrup: A Study of their Ethnography and Occupational Mobility**' discussed the pottery of the Hira community. She also studies the ethnohistorical background of Hira potters and here she mentioned that the pottery-making methods of the Hira community are considered as the most ancient and earliest methods of pottery making. As pottery making is a feminine activity among the Hiras, so this is transmitted through female lines by marriage.
- **Khatun (2003)** in her thesis '**Occupational Mobility Among the Hiras in the Environs of Barpeta Town**' discussed the occupational mobility of the Hira Community, the historical background of the Hira community, the demographical background of the Hira community in rural and urban areas, the procedure of earthenware making, etc. Here researcher stated that Hira Community is the second-largest potter community of Assam. Hiras try to remove their backwardness and develop their condition by modern education, modern way of living, etc. Most of the Hira people left their traditional occupation pottery because of the old techniques of pot making. They are not getting any economic benefits from this occupation. This is one of the main reasons for occupational mobility among Hira people. Educated parents never want to allow their children to engage in their traditional occupation. Modernity affects their traditional occupation.
- **Duary (2008)** in his article '**Traditional Hira Potters of Lower Assam. Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge**' focused on the origin of the Hira community from the lower part of Assam, their traditional beliefs in pottery, and the socio-religious life of this potter community. Here the author also discussed the Instruments used for making pottery and also the traditional techniques of making Hira pottery stage by stage. Hira community people follow the system of division of labour for their pottery-making activity. He also reveals that at the age of 12-15

Hira artisans become experts in their field through gradual practice. Hira potteries are mostly famous among the village people of Assam.

- **Das (2011)** in his book '**Axomor Hira Homprodai**' describes the socio-economic condition of the Hira community. He also discussed the cultural side of the Hira community. The author of this book himself is a person of the Hira community so he knows every aspect of the Hira community very well. Here he mentioned that though they do earthen work, but the making of the earthen statue is not the work of Hiras. Hira people only produce earthen products for domestic use. The potters of West Bengal, Tamilnadu, Kerela, and Karnataka are all from the Hindu religion and comes under the sudra caste group. But the social status of the Hira community differs from place to place. The upper caste priest doesn't serve the Hira people. So they have their priest. But the number of the Hira priest is very few. There is only one priest among the many villages. In this book author also discussed the 'All Assam Hira Honmiloni'. In 1952 for the first time, Hira Honmiloni (Committee) was formed. Through this committee, the Hira people raise their voices about their problems to the government.
- **Medhi (2011)** in her thesis '**Socio-Economic Status of Hira Women: A Case Study of Barpeta Assam**' discusses the socio-economic status of Hira women in the Barpeta district. Here the researcher tries to find out the problems of Hira women and their position in society. In Barpeta district, Hiras live in urban areas as well as village areas. But some Hira families shifted to the urban areas for their better livelihood. Hiras are now also following the traditional family pattern. Pottery making is the main occupation of Hira women. In a year Hira woman engaged in pottery making for 8-9 months and the rest of 3-4 months they engaged in their household work. So, their economic condition is not satisfactory. Hira families of urban areas are economically developed than the Hira families of the rural areas. One of the main constraints on the economic development of the Hira pottery is an old traditional craft. Now there are many skilled and modern pot makers. So, people choose these attractive products.

- **Bezbaruah & Bezbaruah (2020)** in the article ‘**Socio-Economic Plight of the Hira Community of Assam: An Overview**’ study about the demography, populations, rural-urban continuum, occupation, the religion of the Hira community of Assam. Here author did a comparative study between the Hiras and the other scheduled caste communities. The authors mentioned that the total population of the Hira community was 6,473 according to the 1881 census. The total population of Chandal was also the same at that time. But according to the 1972 census report total population of the Hira community was 6,473 and on the other hand total population of Namasudra was 23,240. Here author focused on the growth of these three communities. Here the author also discussed the Pottery making profession of the Hira Community.

All those studies on the Hira community reveal their socio-economic condition, techniques, and methods of earthenware making, etc of Hira community. The majority of the Hira people are living in the lower part of the Brahmaputra valley. Hira Earthenware is mainly a feminine work. Male only help them in collecting the raw materials and marketing the products. It is also seen from these studies that now most of the male Hira members started to engage in another field for earning their livelihood. And many Hira potters are following earthen pot-making culture as a secondary occupation. The new generation of Hira community is more interested in doing other jobs rather than making earthenware. But still in some areas of Assam, Hira potter practices earthenware making. The socio-economic development among the Hiras is very slow. In the present scenario, most of the Hira community people are socially, economically, educationally backward. But the Hiras who live in urban areas their socio-economic condition is better than the Hira from rural areas. From the above discussion, one thing is also clear that all Hiras from different districts of Assam are using similar techniques and methods for earthenware making and their lifestyle is also similar.

1.2.4 Negotiation with Modernity

In the present study, Modernity mainly indicates all the changes which are taken place due to advanced science & technology, westernization and industrialization. It changes the way of living, way of thinking, dressing styles, etc of individual. Due to modernity, technological innovation has taken place. Modernity changes the traditional society into a modern society. Many scholars study about the changes in society, the impact of Modernity, etc. Some of the studies related to negotiation with modernity or social change are-

- In the context of industrialization and modernization **Miller & William (1951)** in the book. '**Industrial Sociology**' discussed the reality of modern industrial society. Here authors stated that for occupational mobility the people who work in the labour force need more than ten years. Higher Authority and managers generally change their position very quickly and achieving long security on the job. Skilled manual and clerical workers change their places in work frequently in the first stage of their occupation but later they show great stability. Domestic, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers move to other jobs in their entire work life and find difficulties to get security or stability in their work This book mainly focused on the mobility of the social position of the individual in the industrial sector.
- **Saraswati (1963)** in his article '**Caste Craft and change**' discussed the changes in the caste-based occupation of an individual by highlighting the point that craftsmen always practice their traditional occupation from generation to generation. But now in this modern time, many changes occurred in our society. Now there is occupational mobility prevalent among the new generation of those traditional craftsmen. Due to population growth, lack of technological tools, marketing problems, ideological changes most of the craftsmen and artisans left their traditional occupations and engaged in other occupations.
- **Eisenstadt (1964)** in his article '**Social change, Differentiation and Evolution**' said about the new changes in society that modern society and traditions are

completely different not only based on economic and political fields but in the basic integrative characteristics in the political, economic or cultural area also. And because Social Mobility creates a different institutional pattern.

- **Nijhawan (1969)** in his study '**Intergenerational Occupational Mobility**' explained the occupational mobility of a village community from generation to generation. He said that in present times children don't want to continue their fathers' occupation. son of a white-collar professional, workers, farmers everyone now started to engage in other occupations. He also mentioned that during the past two decades because of industrialization people are started to engaged in various occupations. Now it becomes broader. One individual's economic status mainly depends on their educational qualification, occupation, income, lifestyle, etc. He also added that one of the prime reasons for occupational mobility among the inter generation is because of their ambition, education, etc.
- **Sachchidananda (1974)** in his report on '**The changing Menda**' discussed the people of the scheduled caste, with special reference to change examines major difficulties in conceptualizing and understanding problems of the community and nature of change that occurred among its various people because of those changes what consequences they are facing.
- On the traditional occupational mobility, **Singh (1976)** in his study '**Occupational Mobility among Scheduled Caste**' highlighted both internal and external reasons for the traditional occupational mobility in special reference to Jaunpur district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. He discussed all the occupational mobility that happened in this district and their main reasons, mentioning the 10 scheduled caste communities of this district. Among all those scheduled caste community's new generation people left their parental occupation and for this both internal and external forces are responsible.
- **Dev and Lahiri (1984)** in their book, "**Cosmogony of Caste and social mobility in Assam**" stated that Assam is also facing the impact of Modernity in present times.

Modernity pressurizes the traditional society, norms, and values. The development of Education, communication facilities, growing western culture in our society forced people or traditional caste-based societies to involve outside of their ancient culture. Modernity affected the political field also.

- **Dutta (1991)** discussed the mobility among the people of society in his book '**North East: A study of mobility and Political behaviour**'. In this book, he stated that at present people are more interested in the development of the urban and industrial areas. Where the rural areas are still facing educational problems, economic problems. There is no upward mobility in rural areas.

Here most of the Scholars discussed the impacts or changes that occur in society due to modernization and industrialization. Occupational mobility among people is one of the main impacts of Modernity. So now the rate of occupational mobility among the scheduled castes communities is increased. So many scholars are also interested to study the changes among the scheduled castes communities. In India, most of the occupation is caste-based. Many people inherit their occupations from their forefathers. But because of modernity or modernization now people start to change or shift their occupation traditional to modern. Here many scholars' study about the small communities and how they are now affected by the modern norms and values of society.

1.2.5 Scheduled Caste:

Different scholars studied the castes system or varna systems of Indian society. They tried to highlight their socio-economic condition and the problems faced by the backward people. Some of the review of literature related to scheduled caste are-

- **Das (1986)** in '**A Glimpse of Scheduled Caste & Their Socio-economic Development in Assam**' discussed the scheduled castes of Assam and their socio-economic conditions. Here he stated that Hira Community is one of the sixteen Scheduled castes communities of Assam and women are the main artisans in the pottery making among the Hiras. Now many of them left their pottery occupation

and starting to engage in other businesses. Due to economic backwardness, most of the Hira people are also not educated.

- **Rayappa and Mutharayappa (1986)** in '**Backwardness and Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India**' focused on the dimensions of backwardness and efforts made so far to improve their living conditions. The emphasis has been mainly on economic backwardnesses such as asset ownership, employment, income, indebtedness, and skills. The study also lists several measures taken by different agencies of the government to promote their welfare.
- Regarding the poverty among the different Scheduled Caste Communities, **Sharma (2004)** in his study '**Poverty Among Scheduled Castes**' found that there is a wide gap between the target and achievements and the allocations and releases in the anti-poverty programmes meant for Scheduled Castes.
- So far stratification is a concern, **Pathak, and Pandey (2005)** wrote in '**Scheduled Castes Development, A Study of Special Component Plan**' that the highly stratified Indian society with many glaring inequalities among the different social groups. The caste system has segregated the Dalits and other weaker sections from the rest of society to an extent that they were denied even basic human rights. Interestingly, the absence of freedom of occupation, low earnings, implicit restriction on needs, and stigma on menial labour destroyed the economy of lower castes particularly Scheduled Castes. As a result, Scheduled Castes remained socially outcastes, economically dependent, politically powerless, and culturally backward.
- **Bhaimali (2007)** in '**Development of Scheduled Caste**' states about the Indian Caste System which is, in fact, a two-tier construction i.e. upper caste and lower caste. The caste system alienated a large part of our society from the mainstream. The division of society according to privileges enjoyed by the people paints carefully the picture of social exploitation of a community by another community. He attempts to describe the different development aspects of Schedule castes.

- **Sipra Sen (2009)** in her book '**Tribes and Castes of Assam**' gives the description of Assam State and the ethnology of the tribes and castes. She describes the main aspects of geography, agriculture, forest, geology, historical and political administration, district council, etc. with ethnological aspects of about sixty communities. She studies its twenty-three districts and descriptive ideas on many other aspects of land and people of Assam.
- **Verma (2011)** examines the backwardness of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, the other backward classes, and the minorities in the book '**Empowerment of Weaker Sections in India, Perspectives, and Approaches**'. They are facing many problems like social, economic, political, educational for a very long time. This book mainly highlighted the issues, problems, perspectives, and measures for the development of these weaker sections. Therefore, there are many articles in the constitution of India for the protection of the interest of the weaker sections of the country.
- One of the edited books '**Backward Classes and Social Justice**' by **Makwana & Pais (2011)** discussed about the caste stratification systems of Indian society. A caste is mainly related to the social, economic, political systems. This book mainly deals with the backward classes of India, their policies and programmes, the problems of Dalits, and their developments.

On the above-mentioned literature, scholars discussed about the different scheduled caste communities, their social stratification, their problems, and the backwardness of those communities. In the present scenario scheduled castes people are facing many problems due to changes in society. All over India, traditional scheduled castes people are changing their traditional occupations. Now they are facing economic problems, educational problems, and social problems. The different scholars also suggest some measures to improve the condition of Scheduled castes people. Govt, also made many policies and programs to uplift the condition of those people. But there is a vast gap between the target and achievement of those programs and policies which is there are them.

1.3 Research Gap:

The study of a small community in a regional setting attains prominence in the present-contemporary society. Anthropologists and sociologists specifically engaged themselves in this kind of study to investigate and resolve the nature, structure, and feature of interrelationship vis-à-vis intricacy emerging out between one community and another. Community studies are highly concentrated. Small community study attracts the attention of researchers and scholars. Different researchers and scholars conducted studies on the scheduled castes, socio-economic life of backward class people, traditional art and craft of small communities, pottery making art, feminine occupation, etc. By reviewing different literature related to the present study, the research gap is highlighted here. From the reviews of all these studies, it is found that the study of a community or their art and craft on a large scale has notable effects. These scholars have taken an interest to study and found many important and interesting facts. Different studies have been made on the art and craft of a particular caste or community specially about the Kumar community. Here most of the scholars highlighted that most of the craft men of our society inherit their craft or art traditionally. Regarding the Hira community, there a few studies are made about the ethnohistorical status of the Hira community, their techniques and methods of pottery making, their socio-economic condition, their backwardness, etc. But it is notable that in those works of literature scholars study earthenware as the occupation or trade of the Hira community only. Earthenware making is also an inseparable culture of the Hira community. It is their indigenous identity more than just an occupation. Also, the impact of modernity on the earthenware culture of the Hira community in a regional setting is rather rare. Though few scholars discussed about how the occupational mobility is occurring among the Hira community people at present. But it is very much important to focus on not only occupational mobility but also the impact of modernity on every aspect of their earthenware culture. So, the present study is an attempt to reflect the impacts of Modernity on Earthenware making culture of the Hira Community and how it affects the day-to-day life of the Hira people.

1.4 Rationale for the Topic:

The study of micro-community in a regional setting attains a special significance in the present juncture of society and Indian society in particular. Community study, though diverse and vary across regions, mainly carries out by sociologists and social anthropologists to empirically and systematically investigate issues and problems of communities in profundity. In this present study impact of modernity on their cultural occupation and the socio-economic status of the Hira Community will help to find out the causes of their backwardness and to know how Modernity affects the present condition of their earthenware culture. In North-East India, especially in Assam, there are few studies have been done on the Impact of Modernity on the culture of some artisan communities. But no one studies the impact of modernity on the earthenware culture of the Hira community till now. So, the researcher chooses to study what are the cultural changes among the Hira community in their indigenous craft. Then it will be possible for us to suggest some measures to remove those problems from their lives and improve their condition.

The problems mainly facing by this Hira community are characterized by lack of education, lack of proper facilities in education, the practice of traditional occupation with old and slow techniques and methods, low monthly income, low social status, etc. Development in economic and social fields is most important to build up an impact on their socio-economic status in society. Then only it could be possible for them to participate in economic, social, political, and administrative affairs. In many studies, scholars discussed the impact of Globalization, Industrialization, Modernization on different Scheduled Caste Communities in India. But it is also important to throw light on the people of the Hira community that how they are struggling for their existence in this changing situation. This study focused on the social-economic condition of the Hira community, their social participation, educational level, their occupation, income, their earthenware culture, methods and techniques of pot making, marketing, changes they are facing at the present scenario, positive and negative factors affecting the Hira Earthenware culture, reasons of their backwardness, etc. This will help policymakers

also to implement some policies and programs for the development of the Hira Community and to uplift their indigenous occupational culture.

1.5 Research Questions:

The present study centres on the following Research Questions:

1. What are the socio-economic factors adversely affecting the Hira community?
2. How is earthenware culture ritually embedded with the Hira community?
3. How is the Hira community able to negotiate with the new and western forms of earthenware culture?

1.6 Objectives of the Study

Keeping in view the impact of modernity on the earthenware culture and the socio-economic Status of the Hira Community the present study has been conducted with the following objectives–

1. To examine the socio-economic factors which adversely affect the life and livelihood of the Hira community;
2. To understand the close embeddedness of the Hira community with their traditional earthenware culture;
3. To analyze the process through which the Hira community has been trying to negotiate with the new and western form of earthenware culture.

1.7 Research Methodology

The methodology is a set of ideas or guidelines to proceed in gathering and validating knowledge of subject matters. It provides guidance for carrying out an investigation relating to the research problem. The research methodology includes the universe of the study, target group of the study, sample frame, method of data collection, tools for data collection, and data analysis.

1.7.1 Universe of the Study:

For the present study, South Kamrup of Assam was preferred. It is situated on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River.

In South Kamrup all sections of people irrespective of caste, creed, and religion live. Out of those populations, one special class of people who belongs to the Scheduled caste community is there. This section of people is the Hira community. Their main occupation is earthen pot making without using a wheel.

Hira people are the sample for the study in South Kamrup, Assam. In Assam, a total of 267 Hira Villages are there. And in Kamrup district there are 42 Hira Villages. Kamrup district is the oldest and ethnic identity of the Hira Community. Every year most of the earthen products are manufactured in the Kamrup district as compared to other districts of Assam. And the majority of the Hira villages are in the South Kamrup- 26 Hira Villages. Hira Community from South Kamrup is still practicing their indigenous cultural occupation for earning a livelihood. So, it is expected that the Hira people from the South Kamrup can be considered as the representative of the whole Hira community of Assam. For the present study, Hira people are purposely selected as a sample from six different villages having special artistic characteristics i.e. Azara (Hirapara), Dhantola, Satpakhali, Darisatra, Chamaria, and Tarigaon. It was believed that a micro-level perception of earthenware making of the Hira community of South Kamrup is methodically more reliable than a generalised account for the Hira community in Assam as a whole. Also, to know a generalised picture of earthenware making in Assam and Kamrup district, macro-level data were collected from different sources.

1.7.2 Target Group of the Study:

Hira Households from the six sample villages- Azara (Hirapara), Chamaria, Dhantola, Satpakhali, Darisatra, and Tarigaon are the target groups for the present study. These villages are mainly from rural areas. The sample Hira households for the study are the traditional artisans of the South Kamrup.

1.7.3 Sample Frame:

For the sample frame, it is needed to select a small group of people who represent the whole community. Hira community is a small regional community that is famous for its Earthenware-making activity. To identify and select the Hira villages as a sample from South Kamrup, first, the researcher visited the office of Directorate Corporation of Scheduled caste, Guwahati Assam, Assam State Development Corporation for Scheduled Castes Limited, Guwahati Assam, and Concerned Block development Offices. Hence, from those offices, details and locations of the Hira villages were collected. Then at the beginning of the field survey, the researcher visited all those 26 Hira villages for a general overview and collected important information. From these villages' researcher collected the total number of Hira households and Hira population. Based on the total Hira population and Hira households, there are 10 large Hira villages that have more than 30 Hira households each. At that time by focusing on the awareness of Hira people about the changes occur in their traditional culture in the recent past years, direct or indirect relationship with the earthenware making culture and their unique characteristics of art and craft, 6 villages were selected as a sample which can represent not only the south Kamrup but also the whole Hira artisan community of Assam for the present study. These selected six villages are Azara (Hirapara), Chamaria, Dhantola, Satpakhali, Darisatra and Tarigaon. Hira people in these sample villages are living with other caste and community people and still, they are directly or indirectly in touch with their fore fatherly cultural occupation. As the present study is completely based on the Earthenware culture of the Hira community so it is most important that respondents should also know the impact of modernity on their fore-fatherly culture. Hira people of these six villages are well aware of the changes that took place in recent years in their culture due to social changes and modernity. They are also able to give information to the researcher as compared to the other Hira villages. This helped the researcher to get a clear picture of the present status of their Earthenware culture and Hira community. So, the researcher preferred the above-mentioned six villages as the sample for the study. These six sample villages come under five blocks- Boko, Chamaria, Chaygaon, Rani, and Rampur.

In Assam the total number of Hira population is very few i.e., 55,300 (2011 census). Among the total scheduled caste population of Assam, only 2.48% belongs to Hira community. And total number of Hira households in Assam is 12,829 only. Besides, the present study is qualitative in nature. So, total of 60 households were selected to conduct interviews. From each sample Hira villages, 10 households were selected for the present study. For the present study, the researcher selected Hira households as a sample instead of an artisan because it is not possible for a single artisan alone to be involved in earthenware-making culture, the whole Hira household participate in their occupational culture. For selecting the households from the sample villages, the researcher first visited the headman of the village. For the pilot study village headman provided important and valuable information and the idea of the particular village and the villagers. Those pieces of information helped the researcher to identify one or two Hira households for conducting the interviews. Then the snowball sampling was used for the selection of the rest of the Hira households as the sample for the study. Because at this present time many people from other castes and communities also shifted to the Hira villages from different places. And they are living with the Hiras together in their respective villages, Also, majority of the Hira people already left their earthenware making culture and engaged in other occupation. So, in the surveyed villages it is very difficult to identify the Hira households and find out who would be able to provide reliable data for the study. These methods of framing the sample were applicable for the rest of the sample villages also. Further, some case studies were also conducted to support fact findings. For the case study, six respondents were selected who were willing to provide information related to the study.

The field survey to collect primary data for the present study was started in January 2017 and then the main part of data collection was started from the month of July 2017 to April 2019. During this time researcher has visited the field from time to time for collecting the necessary information and data. The researcher also visited some market places where the Hira people display their products for sale to collect information about the present market demand or value of the Hira earthenware.

1.7.4 Methods of Data Collection:

After the sample frame and the pilot survey of the sample villages of the present study, an interview schedule was formulated by keeping in view the objectives of the study. The interview schedule was prepared in such a way as to highlight the present socio-economic condition of the Hira community and the impacts of Modernity on the earthenware culture at present. As the present study is qualitative in nature. So for primary data collection, both interview schedule and case study methods were used which helped to get a proper portrayal of a present scenario of the Earthenware culture of the Hira community. For each sample of Hira households, a separate interview schedule was used. The researcher personally conducted the interviews of the respondents as most of them are not properly educated. The researcher translated each question into simple Assamese language for the respondents to understand the questions better. The researcher used both structured and unstructured interview schedules for collecting the data from 60 households. For conducting interviews from each sample Hira households mainly headmen or elderly people are selected as they are more aware of the Hira earthenware culture.

The observation technique was used in the entire period of study to get a clear picture of the socio-economic life and Earthenware culture of the Hira community. It is very important to observe the facts about which Hira people are not aware or they hesitate to tell. The researcher also observed all the socio-economic factors which are responsible for the changes in their day-to-day life. The researcher also attended some of their ceremonies and rituals related to earthenware making. Thus, how the primary data were collected related to the study.

Also, for this field survey, permission was obtained from the headmen of the six surveyed villages.

While secondary data were drawn from published books, journals, government gazettes and any other printed materials available related to the study.

1.7.5 Tools for Data Collection

Interview scheduled was used as one of the tools of data collection in the field by the researcher. Hira people from the six villages were interviewed by using this interview scheduled. At the time of the pilot study, the Interview scheduled was tested and the researcher made some necessary corrections. For content, validity the researcher included various types of both open-ended and close-ended structured questions. Also, at the time of the interview, some unstructured questions were being asked to the respondents for a better picture of their present status.

At the time of the survey, some audio-visual tools were used for recording the field information or data.

1.7.6 Data Analysis:

After collecting the data from the field by conducting interviews, case studies, and personal observation, data were organised and analysed. For the analysis of the data from the close-ended questions, the researcher used simple percentile method by using tables, some of those data were analysed with the help of descriptive analysis, and also some of the data were presented with the help of a pie diagram and bar graph. To analyse open-ended qualitative data, content analysis and descriptive analysis were used.

1.7.7 Field Experience:

The respondents of the present study are the Hira people, So, during the period of data collection, the researcher had to face many challenging situations in the field as the majority of the Hira respondents are educationally backward. So, they don't have a proper idea about their monthly income, how many earthen products they sell in a month, the reason for their backwardness, their history, or what they want from the government to improve their ancestral craft, etc. Also, the respondents of the present study are mainly village people. So, they feel embarrassment to answer in front of the researcher. Sometimes they are also scared that their answer may cause a problem for them. And sometimes, they don't want to give information because they think that it was

not profitable for them and they will not get any benefit from it. So, it is very difficult work for the researcher to convince them for the interview.

So, the present study is an attempt to cover all objectives of the study within such limitations, by giving attention to the Hira people of the South Kamrup.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis:

Data collected from the primary and secondary sources relating to the problem of the study has been included in the following pattern of Chapter-

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introductory Chapter included the introduction of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Theoretical Framework: Modernity and its constituents, Review of literature, Research gap, Rationale of the Study, Research Questions, Objectives of the Study, Research methodology, Structure of the Thesis.

Chapter 2: Genealogy of the Hira Community

In the second Chapter, the Researcher included the background of Kamrup district, Background of the South Kamrup, Demographic Background of Hira Community, Rural-Urban Continuum among the Hiras in Assam, Literacy among the Hira Community in Assam, Details of Hira Villages in South Kamrup, Demographical details of the Surveyed Hira Villages of South Kamrup, Original and Development of Pottery Industry in General and Assam and the Historical Background of the Hira Community.

Chapter 3: Socio-economic Status of Hira Community

Chapter three included the Social Indicators, Economic Indicators, Other Indicators which help to measure the socio-Economic status of the Hira Community. Social Indicators i.e. Educational Qualification of the Respondents, Types of Marriage, their relation with other caste or community people, Family Structure, socio-cultural Institution, Status of Women, cultural festivals, Food Habits, Drainage System, Health & Sanitation, etc. Economic Indicators i.e., Occupation of the Respondents, Income of the Respondents, Earner of the Family, Ownership of Land, types of Houses, Banking

Facilities, Electricity, etc. Other Indicators i.e., govt. Schemes & Policies etc. This Chapter also Included the Negative and Positive Factors Affecting the Socio-economic Life of the Hira Community and some case studies to support the Fact Findings.

Chapter 4: Hira Community and Earthenware Culture

This chapter highlights the Raw Materials, colouring Materials, Firing Materials and tools used in Earthenware Making, Method & Techniques of Earthenware Making including clay preparation, pot making, firing, Decoration, types of Earthenware, Demand & Marketing, Modernity and Earthenware Culture of Hira Community, and some Case Studies on the present status of Earthenware Culture of Hira Community.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

The Concluding Chapter included the summary of the findings of the present Study, the Delimitation of the study, and lastly, this chapter also included the scope for the future study.

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