

## Chapter 3

### Socio-economic Status of Hira Community

The term socio-economic refers to a wide range of interrelated and diverse aspects involving a combination of social and economic features. It mainly refers to one individual's social position in society. One individual's occupation, education, or income plays a dominant role in measuring his socio-economic status in society. So, it is a position of an individual or a family in a society based on different variables such as occupation, education, income, wealth, housing, sanitation, participation in community life as well as other social and cultural attitude and values, etc. To know the "Socio-Economic Status" of an individual or a family, it is necessary to examine the amount of cultural possession, effective income, material possession, prestige, and social participation of that individual. At this present time development of science and technology deeply influenced the socio-cultural life of the Hira community. This brings many changes among the Hira community in the field of social, economic, education, health, etc. These changes have brought both positive and negative impacts on their lives. And it is impossible for the Hira community to be completely unchanged in this changing situation. These changes are varied from place to place.

**Table: 3.1**

**Village and Block wise Households selected for study**

<b>Blocks</b>	<b>Villages</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>
Boko	Darisatra	10
Chamaria	Chamaria	10
Chaygaon	Tarigaon	10
Rani	Azara (Hirapara)	10
Rampur	Dhantola	10
	Satpakhali	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>

In Assam, the socio-economic condition of the potters is not so good in comparison to the potters of other states of India. At present, specially Hira artisans are facing many challenges as the demand for their earthenware is only limited to Assam. This chapter included the present socio-economic, cultural life of the Hira community and the factors that affect the socio-economic life of the Hira people of South Kamrup in this modern era. For the present study researcher selected 60 households from six villages in South Kamrup. The details of villages, blocks, and no. of Hira households selected from each village are shown in table no. 3.1.

### **3.1 Social Indicators:**

The social condition of the Hira Community in South Kamrup is not satisfying. Hiras occupy a lower position in society. In Social stratification also Hira is lower than Kumar. Here Social indicators like types of family, educational qualification of the respondents, types of marriage, relationship with other community people, religious and cultural institutions, cultural festivals, food habits, etc. are considered as the measurements for the socio-economic status of the Hira community at present.

#### **3.1.1 Education:**

Education is the main factor to measure the development of the socio-economic status of any community or society. Among the Hira community also educational qualification is a key aspect to measure their social status. Education affects the income or the economic condition of that community or society. Because higher educational qualification of the people can associate with more job opportunities and better economic conditions. Equal chances to get an education for women is also much needed to develop a community. So, at this time, it is equally important to make both Hira male and female educated. This is one of the aspects which can improve or develop their indigenous earthenware culture.

But in these particular six surveyed villages, it is observed that the majority of the Hira people are not aware of the importance of education. The number of educated

persons in the Hira community is very few. So, the percentage of Hira people engaged in some higher-level government job is very few in the south Kamrup. From the field, it is clear that as compared to Hira men, Hira women are more educationally backward. The researcher has selected the head members of the sample Hira households of the sample villages for the survey regarding their educational qualifications. Because earthenware making is a household occupation or culture among the Hira community. And the educational qualification of the headman of the family has a huge impact on the socio-economic status of that family and their culture.

**Table: 3.2**  
**Educational Qualifications of The Respondents**

Educational Qualification	No of the Respondents						Percentage (%)
	Azara (Hira para)	Dhantola	Satpakhali	Tarigaon	Darisatra	Chamaria	
Illiterate	1	4	3	3	1	1	13 (21.67%)
Primary	4	6	6	5	4	4	29 (48.33%)
High School	2	-	1	1	2	3	9 (15%)
Higher Secondary	2	-	-	1	2	1	6 (10%)
Degree	1	-	-	-	1	1	3 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>

Data from table: 3.2 shows that 21.67% (13) respondents are illiterate in the study area in this modern time also. They are not aware of the importance of education. 48.33% (29) respondent's educational level is primary, 15% (9) respondents' educational level is high school, 10% (6) respondents' educational level is higher Secondary, and only 5% (3) respondents have degree-level education. It shows that the illiteracy rate is higher among the Hira community of Dhantola Village (4). And also, the number of respondents in primary level education is higher in Dhantola (6) followed by Satpakhali

(5) and Tarigaon (5). Because these three villages are less developed as compared to the rest of the three villages. High school, Higher Secondary, and Degree level education is relatively low in the surveyed villages. Here, three respondents who have degree-level education are from Azara (Hira para), Darisatra, and Chamaria. Because these three sample villages are more affected by the social changes as compared to the other three sample villages. One of the shocking facts is that in the village Dhantola and Satpakhali there is not a single respondent found having higher secondary or degree-level education. These data show that most of the Hira people are not interested in the continuation of education. They drop out of school after the primary level. One of the main reasons for their ignorance towards education is that they think the role of education is not important in their life. It is already mentioned that these data are about the educational qualification of the headmen of the Hira households. So, at that time every Hira individual was deeply influenced by their indigenous earthenware-making culture from the time of their birth as their parents were also full-time potters. Even they were brought up following this culture. From a very early age, they engaged in this art and craft. Hira boys helped their fathers in collecting the raw materials and selling their products. While the girl children of the Hira family helped their mothers in making earthenware. This is one of the reasons that most of them are illiterate and drop out of school after the primary level. The fact is that the percentage of the Hira women in illiteracy is higher than the Hira men. Because they believed that the Hira women are born to make earthen potteries and this is their life. After marriage also, they had to follow their indigenous craft in their in-laws' houses. Another reason of their educational backwardness is our social system. From the very early times, they were deprived and discriminated by the stratification system of Indian society. Because of this system now many people are illiterate in the Hira community.

But it is also observed among the Hira people that some of them are now regretting their education. They wanted to continue their education. But due to poverty, they could not. They also said that if today they had higher education, they would have better living conditions and more job opportunities. Now their economic condition is not good and they are facing many financial hardships, so they want a better life for

their children. The researcher found that at present time, many Hira parents want their children to get into higher education as compared to earlier. But it is also a fact that out of 60, only 25 (41.67%) Hira parents are serious about their children's education. On the other hand, in the rest of the 35 (58.33%) households, parents are not serious about their children's education. It seems that though at present some of the older generation people of the Hira community started to realise the value of education, in reality, the number of people who are serious about this matter and practically follow this is very few. This is one of the reasons that the new generation of the Hira community is also not fully aware of the importance of education. Many of them are still not serious about formal education. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, people have become more progressive. With the progress of science and technology, people are more concerned about getting higher and higher education. But still, among the new generation of the Hira community, awareness for education is needed to be developed. Though it is seen that at present many people from the new generation started to enroll in school as compared to earlier, but still the number of the Hira boys and girls who continue their education to the degree or master degree level is very few. Specially the educational status of the girl children of the Hira community is still in a bad shape. From the field, it is found that in 58.33% (35) Hira households, girl children don't go to school. They help their mother in earthenware-making activities. Those who went to school or college, now they are dropping out. So, educational awareness is yet to be developed among the Hira people of these six sample villages of South Kamrup. Education is playing a vital role in the socio-economic condition and the lifestyle of the Hira community in South Kamrup. So, for developing and improving the socio-economic status and the earthenware culture of the Hira community, it is very much important for them to get the proper education.

### ***3.1.2 Marriage System:***

Marriage is a social institution that plays an important role in our social life. The Hira community is generally monogamous. They practise Hindu rituals and traditions for marriage. Hira is essentially and traditionally an endogamous caste group and they always prefer the bride from their own community. They don't want to give their girl to

the other community, because they have a traditional belief regarding this. As Hira earthenware making is a feminine craft so they want to preserve this art and craft within their own community. Other Higher caste people like Brahmin or Kalita didn't want to marry the Hira people earlier because of their lower status. But it is observed during the field study that some inter-caste marriages also took place among the Hira community at present. Some of the Hira people started to choose their bride or groom from other castes like Kaibartas, Namasudras, etc., and even from the higher community like Kalita, Brahmin, etc. So as a result, now many of the Hira families had to leave their traditional culture. Because their daughters-in-law from other communities don't know how to make earthen pots.

There not any single divorced case was found in the field survey. Nowadays divorce cases are more common among couples. Modernization and westernization affect the lifestyle of Indian families also. But the rate of divorces among the Hira people is very low. Hiras are mainly rural people and follow a simple lifestyle. They are the traditional Assamese people. So according to them, getting a divorce is not an appropriate thing. The parents and elder members of the family try to handle the situation when there some arguments or problems are created between a married couple. And if the situation got out of hand, then they go to the village committee. All sample Hira villages have their respective village committee. These village committees organize some meetings to solve their problems and handle the situation. The orders or advises given by the village committee is accepted and followed by that couple's family without any objection or complaint. It is observed that Hira people don't want to involve or go through any type of judicial Process. Because the majority of the people from the Hira community are illiterate and don't understand the judicial system. So, they rather prefer their village committee to solve their problems.

### ***3.1.3 Relationship with Other caste or Community:***

Social stratification always leads to class struggle and class discrimination. Our Indian society is stratified with different caste and community people from the Vedic period. In South Kamrup Hira people are living with the people of other castes and

communities. The relationships of each Hira people with their neighbouring other caste or community people differ from village to village. Earlier other higher castes people didn't drink or eat together with them. Because they considered Hiras as a lower and impure community. Even the Hira people were badly avoided or discriminated by those people. This is one of the reasons that, from the very early time Hira community is living in their separate villages. Now the time is changed. Hira people have an overall good relationship with their neighbouring people from other castes or communities. Most of the people from other communities now don't consider Hiras as dirty or Impure. Some inter-caste marriages also took place in the surveyed villages. Other caste people come to the houses of the Hira community and enjoy tea together. In the evening time, they also sit together and have a conversation about different matters.

The rate of discrimination and exploitation by the other caste people has decreased with the changing time, but in some cases, Hiras still had to face some ignorance from other higher caste and communities. Some people from other communities still considered Hiras as lower and dirtier. During the field survey, 29 sample households out of 60 said that they still experience exploitation and negligence from the upper caste people in their respective villages. A society with a rigid caste or class system always creates problems in the all round development of the people.

Hiras of Azara said that they have a good relationship with their neighbouring people. Most of their neighbouring people are scheduled caste specially the Kaibarta community. But in the field, one aged respondent said that ***"Last year my son got married to a girl from Kaibarta community. At first, everything was good but now she left our house. Because she didn't like our earthenware-making job. She wanted us to leave this job as it is a dirty earthen work"***. This statement shows that though the Kaibarta community also comes under Scheduled caste along with Hira community people, still some of them think of Hira earthenware making occupation as a shameful and dirty job in their mind.

Hira people from Dhantola and Satpakhali said that they don't get any problems from other caste people. Their relationship with those other caste people is good as they

are also from the scheduled caste. The Hira people of Tarigaon don't face any kind of exploitation from their other neighbouring people. They attend their family functions and ceremonies also. They also exchange food and vegetables.

Darisatra is a common religious place for the people of Darisatra village. There are many higher caste communities like Brahmin, Kalita, Mahanta, etc. So, in their religious place, Hira had to face some negligence from them. In Chamaria also Hira people face the same types of neglect from higher caste people. This is the reason that the Hira people of Chamaria have their specific religious place. Earlier Hira people were not allowed to enter the common religious place of the villages. So, they had to set up their separate religious place.

Modernity changes the outdated mindset of people and helps them to become more open to the other caste and communities. It modifies the old and outdated norms and values of society. One thing is observed in the surveyed area is that at present Hira community people are facing some amount of exploitation from the other higher caste people than the scheduled caste people. Their relationship is better with the other scheduled castes people as compared to higher castes. According to some of the higher caste and community people of South Kamrup, the Hira people are still holding a lower and impure status in society. Even the Hira people also considered themselves lower than the other communities. Hira people of South Kamrup address the other higher caste or community people as 'Chahaki' which means 'wealthy people'. The older generation of higher castes doesn't want to co-operate or maintain a relationship with the Hira people. They neither come to the houses of Hira people nor take any food from them. But it is also observed that the younger generation from different caste groups has a good relationship with the younger people of the Hira community. It shows that most of the new generation people don't follow casteism. They are more open towards all caste and communities. Modernity develops the feelings of brotherhood among the young generation of people of different caste and communities in the surveyed villages.



### 3.1.4 Family Structure:

Family is one of the simplest social institutions. Mainly in rural areas family plays the role of an economic unit. Among the Hira community, the husband and wife divide their works based on gender. The husband engaged in agriculture, businesses, collect raw materials, marketing the earthen products and the wives of the Hira households manufacture earthenware, do household work, etc.

Hira families are mainly patrilineal. In the surveyed villages, Hira men named themselves as the head of the family and Hira women named their husbands or their married son as the head of the family. Out of 60, 36 Hira households' head of the family is the father and the married son is the head of the family in 14 households. So here in this type of family, male members got the authority of the family. Among the Hira household typical headman ship passes from father to son. Their wives or daughters don't get this opportunity. As we know that earthenware culture of the Hira community depends on the women of their families. So, here women are the principal bread earners of the family. They engaged themselves in earthenware making day and night but still, because of patriarchy, in most of the cases the male members have the authority of the household. Only in 10 households, the Hira females named themselves as the head of their family. Because these 10 respondents don't have their husbands and their children are also young age. So, they are considered here as the head of the family. These data show that the Hira community people of South Kamrup are still following the traditional male-dominated type of family.

**Table: 3.3**

#### Nature of the Family of the respondents

Family Type	No of the Respondents						Percentage (%)
	Azara (Hira para)	Dhantola	Sat pakhali	Tari gaon	Darisatra	Chamaria	
Nuclear family	7	6	5	3	7	7	35 (58.33%)
Joint Family	3	4	4	7	3	3	25 (41.67%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>

Data from the table: 3.3 reveal that at present 58.33% (35) of Hiras are living in nuclear families. And 41.67% (25) of Hiras are still living in joint family systems. This indicates the dominance of the joint family system over nuclear families. In the sample villages, people are starting to adopt new ways of life. As a result, the traditional family structure of the Hira community got shifted to a modern one with the passage of time.

Here the highest number of Hira people (7) from Azara (Hirapara), Darisatra, and Chamaria are living in the nuclear family structure. Because in these three villages, people are more tend to follow the new western lifestyle and family structure. With the changing pattern of society as they are affected by their nearby urban or developed areas. This leads to the separation of married couples from their parents' houses. And thus, many small nuclear families are formed over the recent years. Specially in Azara (Hirapara) most of the Hira families are shifted from the village like Dhantola and Sontola as a result of increased urbanization and westernization. They shifted here because of jobs, business, or children's education. On the other hand, the highest number of people from Tarigaon (7) still follows the joint family system because Hira people from this village are more likely to live with their parents, grandparents, married children, grandchildren, etc. They don't go outside of their village for work. Tarigaon village is one of the potter villages with having an artistic specialty, so most of them prefer to live with their family and follow earthenware culture. Also, they are not in a financial state to shift to any other places. These are the reasons that the number of the joint family is higher in this village.

### ***3.1.5 Socio-Cultural Institution:***

The role of Socio-cultural institutions also reflects the socio-cultural life of a community. In the six sample villages of South Kamrup, there are many Socio-cultural Institutions like a club, Temples, Namghar, primary schools, the organization for women, etc. Hira people often visit all those socio-cultural institutions. Those institutions play an important role in the all-round development of the people of the Hira community.

There are Namghars (Assamese Religious place) in every Hira village. Not only the Hira people but other caste and community people also come to those Namghar. From the field, it is found that in Chamaria village Hira community people have their own separate Hira Namghar. But the condition of these institutions is also not good due to the lack of finance. District authority also doesn't give attention to those cultural institutions.

These socio-cultural institutions are there from the time of their older generation. But some of the recent changes are noticeable in those institutions. Educated people from the young generation of the Hira community are taking initiatives to organise many development programmes and activities in the club, religious places, etc. These things gradually started to attract the Hira people towards social awareness activities. One new social institution is women organization which was not in the Hira villages earlier. This helps the Hira women to enhance their skills, they can discuss their interests and participate in many socio-economic activities. This also helps the Hira women to uplift their status and be active in different progressive fields.

Every Hira village has one village committee which plays an important role in the life of the Hira community people. Hira males are members of those village committees. And every Hira villager needs to oblige the decision of the headman. The village committee organise some meetings and programmes from time to time. Even when the Hira people face any problem or issue, they don't go to the police or other legal system, they prefer the village committee. The village committee discusses the issue and tries to solve it as possible as. Hira villagers also accept their advice without any complaints or objections.

### ***3.1.6 Cultural Ceremonies:***

The socio-cultural life of the Hira people is not complex. They are the same as the other Hindu people. They practise Hinduism. Hira community celebrates all cultural functions at both their household and community level. Mainly on those festivals people prefer Kumar earthen products and don't use Hira products. Hiras also follow this

tradition. But sometimes Hira uses their earthen products like saki, dhunadani, dhupdani, ghat, etc. in their households while performing religious festivals. They also use their earthen container to prepare Bhog (one type of food prepared in religious ceremonies) in religious festivals like Satyanarayana Puja.

Some of the Hiras near the satra areas now converted to Vaishnavism. So they don't perform pujas. They celebrate the birth and death anniversaries of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. They admire Sankardeva as a form of God.

In modern society, it is seen that now people are more interested in following the modern lifestyle so gradually religion started to losses its grip. But here in the surveyed villages of south Kamrup Hira people are still following the socio-cultural ceremonies like the way their ancestors did. Even the young generation people are also equally involved in religious things. They engaged in all socio-cultural ceremonies wholeheartedly with the elder people of the family.

### ***3.1.7 Status of Women:***

In a nation's overall growth and development, the status of women equally plays an important role as men. This also represents one community's or society's socio-economic condition. In the field area, the engagement of Hira women is not bad. They are engaged in earthenware-making activities as it is mainly feminine work. Maximum works of earthenware are done by the Hira women. In this culture, Hira women manufacture earthen products with the help of their hands. Women artisans engaged in the earthenware-making activity for the whole day. Sometimes in pottery season, they had to make earthen products for the whole night also. They manufacture pottery in the 9 months of a year. Adult women, old women, widow, and even their girl children also engaged themselves in earthenware-making culture. It is their inherited occupation. Women from the Hira community received this occupational culture from their female line. And still, in present days most of them are following this culture.

To uplift the status of women, engagement is very important. In their leisure time, they are also engaged in weaving, sewing, gardening, etc. Hira women have an important role in their total family's income. Actually, in most of the family, they are the main earner. But still, regarding important decision making always male members got the preference. For money also they have to depend on their husbands as the male head members keep the money with them. So, it can be said that their socio-economic condition is very miserable. They are dependent on their father-in-law, husband, or son. Hira women only use their skill of making earthenware for the family. Besides making earthenware Hira females take more responsibilities than the male members of the family. They look after their children, do household work more than the male members.

One thing also observed from the field is that in many Hira families, their girl children don't go to school and only engaged in earthenware-making activities. While they send their male children to school/ colleges. It shows that Hira families are not aware of the education of their girl children. According to them, earthenware making should be the first preference of the women in the Hira family. But for the development of Earthenware culture both Hira male and female should be equally educated. Society has been changed from traditional to modern but the status of women is still the same among the Hira community. Earlier also Hira females were engaged in earthenware making from a very young age and now also they are doing the same thing in their school-going age. If they get the opportunities to receive a formal education, then it would lead to women empowerment.

### ***3.1.8 Food Habits:***

Food habits of a community or a society represent the social and cultural habits they are practicing. Usually, Hiras prefer the typical Assamese food. Rice is the main primary food of the Hira people. They consume both veg and non-veg foods. Fish is one of the favourite foods among Hira people. Because most of the male members of the Hira family do fishing as the primary source of livelihood or as a secondary occupation. But in the study area, some of the Hiras who practice Vaishnavism don't consume non-veg food.

In some ceremonies, the male Hira members drink wine to celebrate. 'Tamul pan with chun' (betel nut & betel leaf with lime) plays an important role in the Hira society. When a guest comes, Hiras offer 'Tamul Pan with chun' to show their gratitude. This is one of their traditions and this tradition is followed by the Hira community from their ancestral time.

From discussing all the above-mentioned social indicators one thing is confirmed that the social condition of the Hira community people of south Kamrup is still very pitiable. One individual's social status is very much important for their culture and tradition. But data from the field reveal that Hiras of sample villages are still facing many challenges in their day-to-day lives. These challenges and problems need to be solved for the development of this artisan community. Mostly, they follow the traditional way of lifestyle but in the field survey, it is also found that Hira society is undergoing some steady and gradual changes due to modernity. In some cases, it positively leads the Hira society. Specially we can see the impact of modernity in the village Azara (Hirapara), Chamaria, and Darisatra comparatively.

### **3.2 Economic-Indicators:**

Economic indicators are the important parameters that use to highlight and understand the present and future economic status and activity of individuals. It is economic data that measures or interprets the economic status of an individual or family in society. The economic status of a community is mainly affected by its structure of earnings. To know the economic status of the Hira community of the surveyed villages, the researcher tried to study the occupational structure among the Hira households. Because from the primary occupation of a family we can judge their overall health of an economy. From the analysis of the Hira Households of the study areas, it is found that the economic condition of the Hira Community in these six respective villages is miserable. In this modern time, Hira people from rural areas are still practising their indigenous Earthenware culture by using their old and ancient techniques. The families who are still practicing earthenware by using the traditional techniques and methods are economically backward than the others. They have to face many economic hardships as

they are not getting a proper profit from their craft. Poverty is the main problem among the Hiras in south Kamrup. Because of poverty most of the Hira people are now uneducated. Economic indicators include the occupation of the respondents, monthly income, main earner of the family, types of houses, occupied land, saving accounts, etc.

### 3.2.1 Occupation:

The economic status of a family depends on their occupation. Generally, Earthenware making is the Hira community's traditional and primary occupation. From the very beginning, they are considered as the traditional pot makers of Assam. Currently, we can see a different picture of the occupation of the Hira community. Domination of colonial rule in India opened the door of Industrialization so, it is impossible for the Hira villages to remain completely unchanged with time. Industrialization and modernization affect the structure of rural Hira villages. In the survey, it is found that apart from making earthenware, many of the people from the Hira community are now Farmers, fishermen, labourers and some of them have some petty business. So now only a small number of Hira people are still following Earthenware culture as their primary occupation.

**Table: 3.4**  
**Primary Occupation of the Hira Household**

Primary Occupation	No of the Respondents						Percentage (%)
	Azara (Hira para)	Dhantola	Sat Pakhali	Tari Gaon	Darisatra	Chamaria	
<b>Earthenware Making</b>	3	6	5	5	4	3	<b>26 (43.33%)</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	1	-	2	1	3	1	<b>8 (13.33%)</b>
<b>Fishing</b>	2	1	1	-	-	-	<b>4 (6.67%)</b>
<b>Service</b>	2	-	2	2	1	3	<b>10 (16.67%)</b>
<b>Business</b>	2	2	1	-	2	3	<b>10 (16.67%)</b>
<b>Wage labourer</b>	-	1	-	1	-	-	<b>2 (3.33%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>

Data from table: 3.4 shows that only 43.33% (26) of Hira household's which is not even half of the total respondents, the primary occupation is earthenware making. 13.33% (8) of Hira households' primary occupation is agriculture, 6.67% (4) Hira Households' primary occupation is fishing, 16.67% (10) Hira households' primary occupation is both service in different organizations and some petty businesses. Lastly, only 3.33% (2) of Hira households' main incomes come from wage labour.

These data from the field reveal the present status of the primary occupation of the respondents. With the progression of science and technology Hira artisans also started to change their way of life. Those changes and impacts of modernity lead to occupational mobility among the Hira community people. Now, most of the people from the Hira community are not interested in continuing earthenware culture as their primary occupation. According to them, this culture could not fulfill their necessities. As a result, now Hira people are slowly started to shift their occupation to another field. And this is the reason that less than half of the Hira family's primary occupation is earthenware making in present days. Hira people who don't have other sources of income after leaving earthenware culture started to engage in agriculture. Agriculture is also one of the traditional occupations of the Hira community. They are practising it from a very early age. And in some Hira villages, people adopted some occupations influenced by the traditional occupation of other scheduled caste people. In the surveyed villages it is seen that the Hira people whose literacy rate is lower, they are more likely to engage in earthenware making occupation. But the people having education above the primary level they are more tend to engage in other jobs and businesses. Hira People who have higher education think that earthenware-making culture does not fit according to their academic qualifications.

It is reflected from table 3.4 that village Dhantola has the highest number of people with earthenware making as a primary occupation. 6 out of 10 sample household's primary occupation is earthenware making in this village. Village Dhantola is famous for Earthenware culture among the all villages of South Kamrup. This village is known as Potter's village. People from different places come to this village to purchase earthen



products. And this is one of the reasons that the demand of earthen products in the Dhantola village is comparatively higher than the rest of the sample villages. The lowest number of Hira families 3 out of 10 from both Azara (Hirapara) and Chamaria is practising earthenware as a primary occupation. Because these two villages are adjacent to some developed areas. Now people from these two villages have become more interested in other occupations than earthenware making. And people from these two villages are interested to adopt a new and modern lifestyle. Also, another reason for leaving earthenware culture is that Hira females from these villages don't have much knowledge about their indigenous culture. The majority of people of these two villages married from non-potter Hira villages who already left their indigenous culture and started new occupations. The highest number of people engaging in agriculture as the primary occupation is in Darisatra (3 families). The tradition of male members of the Hira households engaging in agriculture is prevailing there from their grandparent's time. It is informed that the quality of land of this village is good for agriculture. People can get more profit from agriculture because earthenware making has become more costly and complicated nowadays. Many people are involved in agriculture than earthenware making as their primary occupation. On the other hand, the Hira people of village Dhantola don't practice agriculture. Earlier Hira people of Dhantola also engaged in agriculture but now people don't want to be engaged in this. Because almost people from every Hira family of this village earn their money by earthenware making. They are more interested in their earthenware culture. Two Hira households' primary occupation is fishing in Azara (Hirapara) as Hira people in this village are influenced by their neighbouring Kaibarta community people. But some Hira people have a traditional belief that Hiras shouldn't do the occupation of the Kaibarta community. It is degrading work for them. And this is the reason that Hiras from Tarigaon, Darisatra, and Chamaria don't practise fishing as their primary occupation. The highest number of Hira families (3) from Chamaria engaged in service sectors as we already mentioned that Hira people from this village are more interested in the industrial sector. They are trying to adapt to the changing lifestyle of society. While in Dhantola village, not a single Hira people engaged in the service sector because it is a pure potter village. And Chamaria has the

highest number of people (3) doing business and Hiras from Tarigaon don't engage in business as a primary occupation because Tarigaon is also one of the full-time potter villages. The majority of the people prefer earthenware making as the primary occupation than doing business. One household from each Dhantola and Tarigaon does wage labour for earning money because these two households' financial condition is very pitiable. According to them, they don't have any other options except for doing wage labour. One respondent of Tarigaon whose primary occupation is wage labour doesn't have her husband and her children are also very young age so she does wage labour for earning a livelihood. But there is not any wage labourer found in the village Azara (Hirapara), Satpakhali, Darisatra and Chamaria. Wage labour is not the choice of the Hira people. They would rather prefer to involve in other work.

Though some of the Hira artisans are still practising earthenware making, now this indigenous culture is gradually losing its identity. Because in the market there are many other products available which are alternative to Hira earthenware. And it is very unfortunate that Hira people are not able to earn a decent living only by selling their earthenware. At present, the money they earn from their primary occupation is very less and it is not enough for their livelihood, their children's education, to get the raw materials for earthenware making, their medical expenses, etc. This culture also needs to depend on weather or season as it is seasonal employment or activity. Because of this nature artisan's income is also differs from place to place or season to season. So the artisans of the Hira community whose principal occupation is earthenware making are compelled to depend on other secondary sources of income. In the surveyed villages, apart from earthenware making, 19 out of those 26 Hira households whose primary occupation is earthenware making, started some secondary occupations including fishing, agriculture, business, etc. nowadays. As Herskovits (1974) stated that, "Craftsmen in illiterate societies seldom involve exclusively in one particular kind of work. Rather, only those who are 'experts' carry on a given craft. Craftsmen do other things in particular, as their secondary occupation for subsistence by working in the fields, engaging in agriculture that they and their families will consume. Craftsmen of these societies do not give a living in the sense that much narrower intra-industrial

specialization of machine cultures does". But it is also seen in the surveyed villages that some of the Hira families whose primary occupation is not Earthenware making but still practise this culture as their secondary occupation. It is because of the love for their indigenous culture.

**Table: 3.5**  
**Secondary Occupation of the Hira Households**

Secondary Occupation	No of the Respondents						Percentage (%)
	Azara (Hira para)	Dhan tola	Sat pakhali	Tari Gaon	Darisatra	Chamaria	
Earthen ware Making	2	-	-	1	2	1	6 (10%)
Agriculture	3	-	1	1	2	-	7 (11.67%)
Fishing	3	-	-	-	-	-	3 (5%)
Business	2	-	1	1	-	3	7 (11.67%)
Wage labourer	-	2	-	2	-	-	4 (6.67%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>27 (45%)</b>

Here table: 3.5 reveals that out of 60, 27 households have different secondary occupations. 10% (6) households from three surveyed villages Azara (Hirapara), Tarigaon, Darisatra, and Chamaria practise earthenware making as a secondary occupation. For the money, they depend on other occupations, because Earthenware making is not enough for earning a livelihood in this modern era. But still, they have a love for earthenware making as it is their indigenous culture and they can't leave it. 11.67% (7) Hira households' secondary occupation is agriculture. Hiras from Azara (Hirapara), Satpakhali, Tarigaon, and Darisatra engaged in agriculture as a secondary occupation. On the other hand, only 5% (3) of Hira households' secondary occupation is fishing who are from Azara Hirapara. 11.67% (7) households' from Azara (Hirapara), Satpakhali, Tarigaon, and Chamaria secondary occupation is business. And 6.67% (4)

Hira Households' from Dhantola and Tarigaon do wage labour as a secondary occupation.

Above mentioned situation reflects that apart from helping in the collection of the raw materials and marketing the products most of the male Hira members engaged in other different jobs to earn their livelihood though they earn very limited. But this money can be helpful for them in buying the raw materials, hiring vehicles to collect the raw materials, and supply their products to the market.

**Fig: 3.1 Primary and Secondary Occupation of the Respondents**

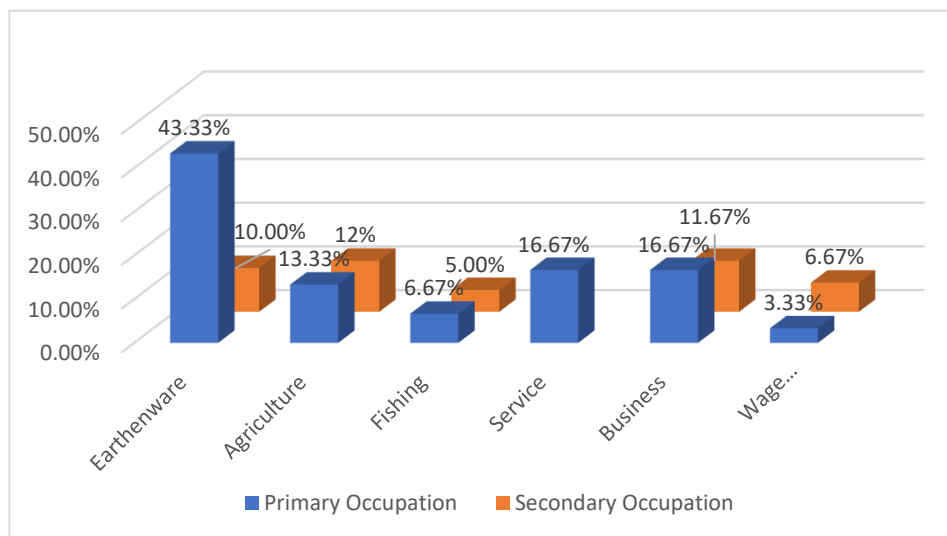


Fig: 3.1 shows a comparative picture of primary and secondary occupation of Hira households of the six surveyed villages. From this diagram, we can see a clear picture of the fields that Hira people are more interested nowadays. This reveals that after leaving earthenware-making as a primary occupation, the highest number of people are engaging in the service sector (16.67%) or business (16.67%). Only a few percentages of people do agriculture (13.33%), fishing (6.67%), or wage labour (3.33%) as a primary occupation. Regarding the secondary occupation, more people are engaging in agriculture (12%) and business (11.67%). And 10% of people practise earthenware making as a secondary occupation. These data reveal that most of the Hira people even don't want to continue earthenware culture as their secondary occupation also. This

shows that apart from earthenware making, at present more people from the Hira community are moving towards the service sector in different organizations or starting a business or agriculture. Comparatively, the percentage of Hira people engaging in fishing, wage labourer as both primary or secondary occupation is lower than the service and business sector in the surveyed villages. So, the impact of modernity is visible on the occupational structure of the Hira people in surveyed villages.

### 3.2.2 Income Structure:

Income is one of the essential indicators for measuring the economic status of the Hira community. But it is very difficult for the researcher to get exact information about the income of the Hira community as they don't have a proper record of income. The income of the Hira community also changes depending on weather, season, and market value of the earthen product. Their income mainly differs from time to time and season to season. The demands of Earthenware also increase or decrease depending on the season as Earthenware making is a seasonal occupation.

**Table: 3.6**  
**Monthly Income of the Hira Households**

Monthly Income	No of the Respondents						Percentage (%)
	Azara (Hira para)	Dhantola	Satpakhali	Tarigaon	Darisatra	Chamari	
<b>Below Rs. 4000</b>	2	4	2	1	3	2	<b>14 (23.33%)</b>
<b>Rs. 4000-6000</b>	5	6	6	6	6	4	<b>34 (56.67%)</b>
<b>Rs. 6000-8000</b>	-	-	2	3	-	3	<b>8 (13.33%)</b>
<b>Rs. 8000-10000</b>	3	-	-	-	1	1	<b>4 (6.67%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>

From table: 3.6, it is found that 23.33% (14) Hira households' monthly family income is below Rs. 4000, 56.67% (34) households' monthly income range is between

Rs. 4000-6000, while 13.33% (8) households have an average income of Rs. 6000-8000 and 6.67% (4) households' family income are relatively higher with Rs. 8000-10000 per month. Data prove that most of the Hira people's monthly income comes under the range of Rs. 4000-6000. This amount of money is not enough for the Hira people to live a better life. And only 6.67% of Hira people from the surveyed villages earn Rs. 8000-10,000 per month. The shocking fact is that not a single Hira household's monthly income is above Rs. 10,000 in the surveyed villages. Those Hira people whose earthenware making is the only source of income, their monthly income is comparatively lower than the rest of the Hira people who engaged in other occupations. Because at present, earthenware-making culture has become non-profitable as mentioned earlier. In the market also the value of Hira earthenware is decreasing nowadays. So, the Hira artisans whose only primary source of income is earthenware making get a low amount of money by selling their products. Also, the rainy and flood seasons affect badly their monthly income. The Hira people who choose other occupations their monthly income is also miserable. Because the majority of the Hira people don't have the proper education and skills to engage in better and highly paid jobs. After leaving their culture, they engage themselves in some private-sector jobs with low salaries, small shops or businesses, agriculture, fishing, wage labour, etc, and the money they earn from those occupations is also not sufficient. So the Hira people from the surveyed area of south Kamrup had to face many challenges with the changing circumstances.

From the above-mentioned table, it is also found that the monthly income of the Hira households of Dhantola village is comparatively lower as 4 out of 10 families have below Rs. 4000 income per month. While the Hiras from Azara (Hirapara) have a relatively higher monthly income. This village has 3 households out of 10, having an income range from Rs. 8000-10000 per month. This is an example of the impact of modernity as in village Dhantola majority of the Hiras primary source of income is earthenware making. They are practising it without using any modern and scientific techniques and methods. They are manufacturing earthen products with the help of old and time-consuming slow methods and procedures. So, at present, they had to face a

huge loss as there are already many alternative machine-made products available in the market. But comparatively the monthly income is higher in the village Azara (Hira para) as it is already mentioned in table 3.4 that at present 7 out of 10 Hira households already left earthenware making and started other occupations. The percentage of Hira families in the monthly income range of Rs. 6000-8000 and 8000-10000 is quite low. So, it is visible from the survey that most of the Hira families are facing financial problems. It is clear that the present status of earthenware occupation affects the income range of the Hira artisans negatively by negotiated with modernity. This earthenware-making activity has not brought any better financial changes to the lives of the Hira people.

Hira community people from the surveyed villages are in the below poverty line. Data from the surveyed villages reflect that majority of the Hira families come in Below Poverty Line or BPL. These families are economically underprivileged. Government assistance is very essential for these families. Here only 5 families (8.33%) have an APL ration card. And rest of the 55 families (91.67%) family's type of ration card is BPL. This explains the poor economic status of the Hira households of the surveyed villages in recent years.

### 3.2.3 *Principal Earner of the Family:*

In Hira Households, women are the principal earners as they are the main artisans of earthenware making. Male Hira members also participate in this craft-making activity by assisting the women in collecting the raw materials and marketing the goods. From the survey, it is clear that although women are the main artisans in earthenware culture, now in many Hira households male Hira members are considered as the main earner of the family.

**Table: 3.7**

#### **Principal Earner of the Family**

<b>Principal Earners of the Family</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Women Artisans</b>	22	36.67
<b>Husband</b>	19	31.67

<b>Father-in-law</b>	11	18.33
<b>Son</b>	8	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Here data on the table: 3.7 shows that among 60 households from the six villages Hira women are the principal earner in only 22 households (36.67%), in 19 (31.67) households principal earner is their husbands, 11 (18.33) households' principal earner is their Fathers-in-law and 8 (13.33) households' principal earner is their sons.

From the above data, it is clear that only in 36.67% of Hira households women are the principal earner, and in 63.33% of families, their male members are the principal earners. Earlier in every family of the Hira community women were the principal earner as at that time they were full-time potters. The role of Hira women was more dominant in this earthenware culture than the men. Because one whole earthen product is only manufactured by the skill and touch of Hira woman artisans. But now with the changing time, Hira people started to leave their indigenous culture and the male members of the family started different occupations for earning money. And this is the reason the women artisan from the Hira community started to lose the position of principal earner of the family and the male members got this position. The researcher also found that most of the Hira households (49) have more than one earner in their families and still their monthly income is unsatisfactory.

#### **3.2.4 Ownership of land:**

The land is also one of the important factors which show one family's economic structure. The land is not just a property, it also determines the way of life. As it is known that the economic status of the Hira community of South Kamrup is not satisfactory. Their income is also low. According to them, their forefathers were not capable or aware of owning land. As a result, the present generation of Hira people is suffering.

The majority of the Hira people of the surveyed villages don't have agricultural land. They only have a very small area of land for their houses. One respondent from village Dhantola said that *"All our neighbouring people from other communities have*



*their agricultural land. So, their income and living condition is also good. They earn a good amount of money by doing agriculture. But we don't have any agricultural land. So, we still need to depend on Earthenware making.”*

Table: 3.8

## Ownership of Land among the Hira Respondents

Land ownership	No. of Household	Percentage (%)
No land	6	10
Less than 1 bigha	25	41.67
1-2 bigha	22	36.67
2-3 bigha	7	11.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown on the table: 3.8, 10% (6) of Hira families don't have their land. 41.67% (25) of Hira families have less than 1 bigha land. 36.67% (22) of Hira families have 1-2 bigha land. And only 11.67% (7) Hira families have 2-3 bigha land. This indicates that most of the Hira families possess a small size of land. But for earthenware culture, Hira artisans need a more open place. They also need a place for drying, storing, and firing the pots. And because of the small size of land, many artisans don't have proper storage room for storing the earthen pots and in some cases, Hira families have to use their neighbour's place for drying and firing the pots. So many artisans of the surveyed villages now don't want to continue the earthenware-making activity. Many of the Hira families of the surveyed area have domestic animals and birds like goats, hens, pigeons, etc. With the proper size of land, they could have started some poultry farms or animal husbandry also which would help them in their earnings.

### 3.2.5 Housing Pattern:

Hira community people make their houses in the Assamese style. In front of the main house usually, they have one courtyard and one backyard in the backside of the house. Some Hira families have one storeroom or shed for storing the earthen products they made in the side of their courtyard. Many Hira people use locally available

materials like bamboo, thatch, dried straw for making their houses, and apply cow dung with mud on the walls. Some Hira families also construct modern-style houses in South Kamrup. Types of Houses is one of the important measures to understand the living condition of the Hira people and their living standards. It shows their economic condition. Mainly three types of houses are seen in these surveyed villages. The traditional Assamese type of Houses is still existing among the Hira community of South Kamrup.

**Table: 3.9**  
**Housing Pattern of the Hira Respondents**

Type of Houses	No. of the Households						Percentage (%)
	Azara (Hirapara)	Dhantola	Sat pakhali	Tarigaon	Darisatra	Chamaria	
Assam type of brick wall	8	4	5	8	5	6	36 (60%)
Assam type half wall with bamboo mud plaster	1	4	3	2	3	2	15 (25%)
Assam type mud wall with thatch roof	1	2	2	-	2	2	9 (15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>

As shown in the table: 3.9 that the majority (60%) of the Hira family's types of houses is Assam type Brick walls, 15 (25%) families have Assam type half walls with bamboo mud plaster houses, and 9 (15%) family's types of houses is Assam type mud wall with a thatch roof. These data indicate the changes that occur by negotiating with modernity in the sample Hira villages. Because as reported by the local Hira people of the sample villages, earlier every Hira family had Assam type houses having half wall with bamboo mud plaster or Assam type houses with mud wall with a thatch roof. But now at present 36 Hira families have Assam types houses with brick walls. This shows that the Housing pattern of the Hira community has changed over the years. Many

traditional Hira houses are replaced by modern cemented houses. So, several Hira families from the surveyed area started to change their lifestyles. However, as compared to the other four villages, Azara (Hirapara) and Tarigaon both villages have 8 out of 10 households with Assam-type brick wall houses. But most of the Hira people are still living in small-sized houses with two or three rooms. On the other hand, Village Dhantola has the lowest number of Hira families (4 out of 10) living in Assam-type brick wall houses. 35 out of 60 Hira families got their houses under the government scheme 'Indira Awas Yojana'. But as shown in table 3.9 there are still many Hira families who are living in poor housing conditions. In the present time also with the changing lifestyle, they could not able to build a proper house for themselves as most of them are under financial difficulty.

### 3.2.6 Banking Facilities:

Banking or finance plays an essential role in the improvement of a small-scale industry like earthenware making. Artisans need different types of credit to maintain or develop their craft or occupation like long term, medium term, short term, etc. They had to depend on these. From the survey, data indicate that 47 (78.33%) Hira families are taking a loan from different rural banks because of different purposes. Their monthly income is not enough for running the earthenware occupation, schooling of their children, or fulfilling the needs of their family.

Saving accounts is also one of the most important for the security of an artisan. So, the researchers investigated that whether they are having any bank accounts or not.

**Table: 3.10**

#### **Bank Accounts of the Respondents**

<b>Bank Account</b>	<b>No. of the Households</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	53	88.33
<b>No</b>	7	11.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

From the field data, it is found that most of the Hira People have their saving bank account. Table:3.10 reveals that 53 (88.33%) households have their savings accounts in the bank. While only 7 (11.67%) households don't have their savings accounts. But all those 53 Hira households stated that though they have their accounts in the bank. But they don't get enough money to deposit in the bank. 10 Households out of 60 households of the surveyed villages said that they created an account in the bank because the elder member of their family gets the pension. Otherwise, there is no use of this account for them. The money they earn is very limited so the Hira people preferably save it in the house only rather than go to the bank.

### **3.2.7 Electricity:**

Electricity plays an important role to measure the socio-economic condition of the Hira community and the growth of society. Apart from their household needs, Hira artisans also require proper electricity to operate the earthenware industry. Mainly Hira artisans manufacture earthenware in the open space of their courtyard but in the evening or night, they need proper electricity for earthenware making. Because in the pottery season many full-time women artisans make earthenware till the night. All Hira families have electricity connections in the surveyed villages of the present study area. The government provided them free electricity connections. But in the surveyed villages of South Kamrup, the electricity connection is very poor though they all have electricity connections. Because of insufficient electricity, sometimes they had to face problems, and it also hampers the earthenware-making activity. Then they had to use a kerosene lamp or earthen lamp at night. Respondents from the surveyed villages said that often heavy storms and rain damaged the electric post or cables. Many times, branches of trees fell over the electric posts or cables. And because of that even sometimes after heavy rain or storm power outage occurs for two or three days. Students also face many problems because of the poor electricity service.

### **3.3 Other Indicators:**

Other indicators include the indicators apart from social and economic which also equally affects the overall development of the Hira community. Health factors, political factors, awareness of Govt, schemes & policies, household gadgets, drainage systems, communication, etc. are important to measure the socio-economic and cultural life of the people of the Hira community.

#### ***3.3.1 Government Schemes and Programmes:***

Earthenware is one of the important handicrafts and cottage industries of India. Since the time of Independence, people are more interested in using handicrafts. Mahatma Gandhi also took initiatives to promote the handicraft and cottage industry of our country. Gandhiji invited the people of India to use handicrafts and boycott foreign things. After the independence when the first National Congress was formed since then the government started to work on the development and upliftment of Handicrafts and cottage industries by following the ideology of Gandhiji. The government also established different organizations for the development of those handicrafts. The main aim of those organizations was to remove all the problems from the field of handicrafts. For the potters also both central and state governments implemented some programmes and schemes. Some of the programmes and policies are financed by Central Govt. while some programmes and policies are under State Govt. The government also provides some funds to the potters. In 1956 Central government formulated one Khadi and Village Industries Commission for the upliftment of all cottage industries of the rural areas. This commission announced pottery as one of the important cottage industries. Also, the government established one Central Village Pottery Institute in Karnataka under this commission. This institute gives training on how to make pottery for the global international market. These training are also available for the potters of Assam. At that time central ministry ordered the government of Assam to provide all the raw materials for pottery making to the Hira artisans of Assam. There are also many schemes and policies for the upliftment of Scheduled caste people. Many people from all over the country are benefitted from those programmes.

The Government also allotted many schemes for the socio-economically backward people for their all-round development. The central government announced two commissions for the employment and economic development of Scheduled caste people. These two are Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) and Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP). This TRYSEM programme was implemented in the year of 1979 and still, it is working for the training of rural youth. And IRDP programme was implemented in 1980. Under this programme, different tools are provided to the rural people for employment.

Under the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) one programme was created and that was Special Component Plan. And this programme was very much effective for the potters of Assam. Under this programme, the District authority permitted the Hira artisans to collect the Hira clay from some of the particular clay fields in some districts of Assam. Assam Government also established some training programmes and institute for the potters. In Assam, one Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board was created in 1953. Under this programme, interested people can join in the pottery training programme. There are also many schemes like scholarships for scheduled caste and backward students, pension for elderly people & widows, Houses under Indira Awas Yojana, toilets for hygiene, etc.

Also, another two important programmes for uplifting the condition of handicrafts and the artisans which are implementing by the Government of India are- National Handicraft Development Programme (NHDP) and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Schemes (CHCDS). NHDP mainly deals with the components like up-gradation of technology, benefits for artisan, mobilization of artisan under Ambedkar Hastship Vikash Yojana, better marketing facilities, etc. CHCDS covers two schemes under this programme to promote and uplift the rural handicrafts- Mega Cluster and Integrated Development and Promotion of Handicrafts Projects.

Central Government implemented Schemes of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) in 2005-2006 for making those traditional industries

more productive and better marketing facilities. Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (KGVY) was implemented by the government to promote and develop the village industries. This scheme also includes different programmes for empowering the traditional artisans of India. Pottery Programme (Kumhar Sashaktikaran) also comes under this scheme.

The government also conducts some research and surveys from time to time to know and understand the present status of handicraft and based on those evolutions they formulate some schemes and programmes. From the above discussion, it is seen that Government has already taken many initiatives for the development of artisans of India. In recent years also government and many non-government organizations are organizing many programmes for the development of the handicraft based on their present status and demand. These are very good initiatives taken by the government or other organizations which can help the artisans to compete with the modern and scientific machine-made alternative products in the market. But there is a vast gap between the target and achievement of those programs and policies. In the surveyed villages of South Kamrup, one thing is observed that the majority of the people among the Hira Community don't know about the Govt. Schemes and Policies, are there for them. They are not aware of all these programmes as most of the people are educationally backward.

**Table: 3.11**

**Awareness about Government Schemes and Policies**

<b>Awareness about Government programmes</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Have</b>	12	20%
<b>Don't Have</b>	48	80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in table: 3.11 only 12 (20%) Hira households are aware of the government schemes & Programmes of Scheduled caste and rural people as compared

to the rest of the sample Hira families. The rest of the 48 (80%) Hira families only have a basic idea about some programmes and policies. All over the country, many people can enjoy those government and non-government schemes and programmes. But the Hira people from the study area don't have any media to know the information about all the programmes. Most of the time because of some corrupted Government officials they could not get what they deserved.

Table:3.12 reveals that some of the Hira families got some benefit from the Govt. Schemes and Policies.

**Table: 3.12**

**Hira Households Benefitted by Govt. Schemes & Programmes**

<b>Schemes &amp; Programmes</b>	<b>No. Of Households</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Indira Awash Yojana</b>	35	58.33
<b>Toilet</b>	20	33.33
<b>Gas Connection</b>	27	45
<b>Old age Pension</b>	27	45
<b>Widow Pension</b>	13	21.67
<b>Job Card</b>	45	75
<b>Electricity Connections</b>	43	71.67

From table; 3.12, we found that 35 (58.33%) out of 60 sample households got houses under the scheme "Indira Awash Yojana" and the rest of the 25 Hira households don't get houses also, only 20 (33.33%) out of 60 households got a toilet, 27 (45%) Hira households got the gas connection, 27 (45%) elderly people from Hira families are getting old-age pension, 13 (21.67%) Hira Widows are getting widow pension, 45 (75%) Hira people are the job cardholder and 43 (71.67%) Hira households got free electricity connections under the government scheme of "Saubhagya" (Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna). Though some people are benefitted by these programmes, still there are many people left who are not benefitted by all those schemes & Programmes. According to the rest of the people who are not getting this benefit, people having a



connection with government officials can only get these benefits. They don't have any connections with those officers so they are left. In those villages, many Hira people don't get benefits from the Govt. Schemes & Policies because of some middle man. One respondent from Satpakhali said that *"I am now 50 years old. Till now I am not getting any help from Govt. Only at the time of my father, he got some. Now my neighbours also have houses under Indira Awasht Yojana. But I have not got any help; neither house nor toilet."*

One notable thing is that the Hira people from the sample villages of South Kamrup only know these above-mentioned schemes & Policies. They are only benefitted from the schemes and policies which are there for Scheduled caste, backward people, or the rural people. But there are also some programmes and schemes available for handicraft or pottery development. Different NGOs are also organizing many programmes for the local artisans. For Hira artisan financial assistance is more important than other government programmes. But Artisans from the surveyed villages don't have any idea about the handicraft and funding schemes like Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises, Rural Non-Farm Sector Schemes, Council for Advancement of Rural Technology, Babasaheb Ambedkar Hastship Vikas Yojana, Mega Cluster Scheme, Bima Yojana, Research and Development Scheme, etc. which are granted by the government to uplift their craft. Because they are educationally very backward and not up to date. According to them, they are not getting any help from outside to keep alive their earthenware culture. And this is one of the reasons that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century also these artisans are using the same ancient techniques and methods of earthenware making. They are not getting any training regarding the use of scientific earthenware-making techniques and methods.

### ***3.3.2 Household Items:***

The consumption pattern of a person is an indicator of that people's status in society. This also affects the socio-economic life of a household. This determines the standard of living of a people. The people of the surveyed Hira villages are changing their mindset and started to adapt urban lifestyles over the period of time. With the

advancement of science and technology, Hira villages are also started to change their structures. As we know that in this present time due to ideological changes and technological advancement broader social changes have taken place. For instance, the traditional occupation particular type of clay making process by the Hira artisans in this changed modern scenario describes a different picture in the present. Globalization, Modernization, and advancement of the educational system changed the lifestyle of the Hira community and the poor section of them are becoming more influenced by the latest trend of society and changing their way of lifestyle. Modernization also influenced the lifestyle of the Hira people of the Surveyed villages. Earlier Hira people use mud stoves for cooking. But now the majority of the people have gas connections. Even regarding the cooking utensils, earlier all the families of the Hira community used their earthenware for domestic use. Their purpose of producing earthenware was mostly for domestic and household use. But now even in their houses, different steel and plastic utensils replaced the earthenware. They started to purchase different cookwares from the market which are cheap and more durable also. The dressing style among the young generation people of the Hira community is too touched by the western style. But the older generation people of the surveyed villages are still following the pure Assamese traditional attire. Respondents of the surveyed villages started to purchase different contemporary and new household items for their daily use.

**Table: 3.13****Household Items in the family**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Light, Fan</b>	60	100
<b>2</b>	<b>Television</b>	52	86.67
<b>3</b>	<b>Fridge</b>	2	3.33
<b>4</b>	<b>Gas</b>	39	65
<b>5</b>	<b>Bicycle</b>	53	88.33
<b>6</b>	<b>Motor cycle</b>	28	46.67
<b>7</b>	<b>Water Filter</b>	9	15

<b>8</b>	<b>Sewing Machine</b>	11	18.33
<b>9</b>	<b>Mobile Phone</b>	56	93.33

Data from the table: 3.13 shows the percentage of the Hira households having household gadgets for their daily life use. These data show that every Hira families from the surveyed villages have light and fan connections. Though the sample Hira villages are in the rural area but having light and fan connections is now a common thing among them. Because they all have electricity connections in their houses. Out of 60, 43 Hira households got free electricity connections under the government scheme, 52 (86.67%) sample Hira households have the television, 2 (3.33%) families have a refrigerator. But these two families purchased the refrigerator for their shop because both families have their small shop in front of their house for earning their income, only 39 (65%) out of 60 Hira households have the gas connection, and the rest of 21 (35%) sample households are still using chowka (mud stove) for cooking food, 53 (88.33%) Hira households have the bicycle and 28 (46.67%) have the motorcycle in the house, 9 (15%) families have a water filter in their house, 11 (18.33%) Hira families have a sewing machine and 56 (93.33%) Hira households have mobile phones. From the field data, it is revealed that with the changing time, the living standard of some of the Hira people of surveyed started is somewhat uplifted as compared to earlier. They buy different modern gadgets for daily life usage. But from a broader sense, these changes in their lifestyle are not sufficient to live a better life in this modern era. Also, there are still many Hira families who have a very low standard of living in South Kamrup. They can't even think of buying new modern gadgets or household objects because of their very poor financial state.

### ***3.3.3 Casting vote in Election:***

The freedom to vote is a fundamental right of every citizen. In the surveyed villages it is noticed that the majority of the people are conscious of casting votes. They want to choose the best leader for their area. From the field data 57 (95%) out of 60 Hira households cast their votes in every election. Only 3 (5%) Hira families don't go to cast

their vote because according to them, the voting center is far away from their home. They are also not aware that casting vote is very important for a citizen of a country.

#### ***3.3.4 Drinking water:***

The majority of rural areas of South Kamrup don't have proper water facilities. They bring water from nearby ponds or neighbour's tube well. These are the sources of their drinking water. Also, 85% (51) of Hira families don't have water filters (table: 3.13). They directly drink without filtering the water. Only 15% (9) of Hira households from the field purify their water before drinking.

In the surveyed villages, 33 (55%) Hira families don't have tubewell. Only 27 (45%) Hira families have tube well in their households. Hira people of Village Darisatra, Chamaria, Satpakhali, Tarigaon, and Dhantola don't have proper water supply connections. Because they can't effort the bill as their economic condition is not good. But in the village Azara Hirapara, some exceptional cases are found. Now 4 out of 10 sample households got the connection of water supply in their houses. As this village is a little bit developed as compared to the rest of the sample villages and people are also getting an education. So, these families don't want to face drinking water problems. But they drink that water directly from the tap without filtering.

#### ***3.3.5. Drainage System:***

For better hygiene and sanitation, the proper drainage system is quite essential for a village. It also shows the growth of that society. But during the field study researcher noticed that till now there is not any proper drainage system in the sample villages. Only there are some channels formed by some natural causes. It is one of the main reasons that the Hira people have to face floods every year in their locality and it affects their earthenware culture and destroys many natural resources. This results unavailability of raw materials needed for Earthenware making. Blocks only made two small drainage systems in the Hirapara village of Azara. And rest of the sample villages are still suffering from the problems of the proper drainage system.

### ***3.3.6 Health & Sanitation:***

Respondents of the study area are more health-conscious. They regularly went to the medical for a check-up. The hospital or PHC is not so far away from the surveyed villages. They also take Homeopathic treatment for small health issues. But in some serious cases, they need to come to Guwahati Medical. Then they face some problems as the distance of the rest of the five surveyed villages except Azara (Hirapara) is quite far away from the city.

But regarding sanitation, many Hira households' condition is not so good. Although the Indian government launched many programmes for sanitation like 'Swachh Bharat Mission' to make aware the village people, but still in the surveyed villages some of the Hira families are using the kutchra toilet. Only 39 out of 60 Hira households have pucca toilets. It is also witnessed in the field that the majority of the Hira family live in very unhygienic conditions.

Another cause of their unhygienic living condition is that they don't have a proper place for domestic animals like cows, goats, hens, ducks, etc. in their houses. So, the absence of gaps between the people and animals causes numerous health issues and an unhygienic atmosphere for living.

### ***3.3.7 Communication and Transportation:***

At present, the communication and transportation system has been developing in the surveyed villages. Now the communication system is better in south Kamrup as compared to earlier. But still, from the surveyed villages to the city, some tiny lanes which are running through rural areas are in bad conditions. Specially in the time of rain and flood, people suffer some difficulties in those areas. And they are facing these obstacles for a long time. In the time of rain and flood, people from these Hira villages had to face problems in going to school, colleges, markets, workplace, etc. The communication system of Azara is good as it is adjacent to Guwahati city. Here transportation is also better than the rest of the surveyed villages. In Darisatra and Chamaria villages communication system is better as compared to villages Dhantola,

Satpakhali, and Tarigaon. In summer, in the village Dhantola and Satpakhali, all the roads become cover with mud and floodwater. It becomes very difficult for large vehicles to run in these areas. The bridges of Dhantola and Satpakhali are also not in good condition.

All the social, economic, and other indicators have been discussed which measures the socio-economic status of the Hira people of the surveyed villages. To sum up we can say that in South Kamrup particularly in these six villages Hira Community is living in very poor condition. They suffer from multiple problems. In this recent scientific era also the economic lives of the majority of them are in bad shape. Their monthly income is very low, Education awareness is yet to develop among them. Lack of education deeply influenced their social condition.

### **3.4 Factors Affecting the Socio-Economic Life of Hira Community:**

Earthenware making is considered one of the oldest cottage industries of Assam. Hira community is following this culture from immemorial. Hira earthen products are different from place to place. In the surveyed villages of South Kamrup, the Hira community is affected by different factors and facing numerous challenges in their social and economic life. These challenges are diverse in nature. Some of these factors bring some positive impacts and some are negatives. Those negative impacts compelled the Hira artisans to leave their indigenous old-age culture.

#### ***3.4.1 Positive Factors:***

Traditional identity, womenfolk, low-cost natural tools, eco-friendly nature, simple techniques are some factors that bring positive impacts to the socio-economic life of the Hira people.

##### **a) Traditional Identity:**

Hira community of South Kamrup is practicing Earthenware culture from ancient times. Each generation follows this occupation as their culture. In south Kamrup there are a total of 26 Hira villages. Every village is famous for its artistic specialty. The size,

shape, types of earthen products are different from village to village. In the surveyed villages also, the researcher found that each village has its specialty. Though their methods and techniques of making earthenware are the same, but they don't make every type of earthen pot.

In this modern time, Hiras are facing numerous problems. But still, most of the artisans in these villages are practicing their indigenous culture and they are in favor of developing this cultural craft. This will keep alive their old-age beautiful craft. According to 25 (41.67) sample Hira families of the surveyed villages, this earthenware culture provides them a special identity that they don't want to lose. Other occupations cannot give this type of specific identity to the Hira people. Because people only appreciate them for their unique earthenware-making skills. But people generally don't value the artisans. And this is one of the reasons that 6 (10%) Hira families who have other primary sources of income also practice earthenware as their secondary occupation. Earthenware culture is an example of the beauty and mesmerizing talent or skill of the Hira artisans. So, most of the Hira artisans don't want to adopt any modern or scientific techniques for making earthenware. According to the artisans of the field area, traditional craft indicates the unique and traditional skills of the traditional artisans. And if those traditional artisans adopt any modern method or techniques then it will be no longer traditional. They are also scared that if their earthenware culture becomes industrialized then it would lose its traditional Hira craftsmen.

**b) Women Engagement:**

Hira earthenware culture is mainly a women folk. Only women from the Hira community can manufacture earthen products. Male members help them in collecting the raw materials and marketing the products. It is one of the customs of the Hira community. Their girl children also engaged in this from a very young age. From the field, one thing is clear that 7 (11.67%) women from other communities start making earthenware after getting married to the people of the Hira community. They learn the techniques and methods of earthenware making from their mother-in-law. They stated that this craft-making culture gives them happiness. Women can engage themselves in

this craft-making activity in their free time also. Hira women enjoy practicing this earthenware-making activity. This provides self-empowerment to Hira women.

**c) Low-Cost and Natural Tools:**

The tools Hiras use to manufacture earthenware are all-natural. They don't have to spend lots of money to get those tools. They need round stones of different sizes, a wooden beater for making earthenware. They can get these tools from nature. In the field, the artisans collect the stones from the river bank. And they collect the wooden beater from their nearby forests. Other tools like spade, old cotton cloth, earthen buckets, baskets are also available in households. All the sample Hira households stated that they don't face any problems in collecting the tools for making earthenware.

**d) Promotion of Cottage Industry:**

Earthenware is one of the important cottage industries. It is a low-cost occupation and it doesn't require any scientific and technological tool. So, any people can start this occupation. Unemployed youth can also engage themselves in this occupation and earn money. As earthenware-making activity needs many artisans, so it could employ the unskilled and semi-skilled unemployed people of villages. It will benefit the people and also help in the growth and development of earthenware craft and the cottage industry.

**e) Eco-Friendly Nature:**

Directly collected things from the earth in their natural condition is called eco-friendly. Earthen products are environmentally friendly. Hira Artisans use all-natural raw materials and tools for making earthenware. The minerals present in Hira clay are all-natural. Their process of manufacturing earthenware is eco-sustainable. That is the reason that the Hira products are more sustainable than the other alternative plastic and metallic products. These products don't harm or pollute nature because it does not contain any harmful chemicals. Nowadays people are more aware of recycling, environment friendly, and sustainability. Earthenware is 100% eco-friendly in nature and it can be easily and completely recycled. It preserves energy and resources. Many people prefer those products for different festivals, ceremonies, functions, etc. In many



places, people are already campaigning about the ban on plastic use. In the recent year in Diwali, the majority of the people preferred earthen lamps to decorate their houses in India instead of Chinese lighting products. In Assam also, many government and non-government organizations felicitated artisans for their hard work. So, Hira people can continue this craft-making culture as it doesn't create any kind of pollution or global warming. It will also boost the socio-economic and cultural status of the Hira community people.

### ***3.4.2 Negative Factors:***

We have already discussed the positive factors which affect the socio-economic life of the Hira community and help to boost their condition. But there are some negative factors also which very badly influenced the Hira artisans and compelled them to think twice about continuing their indigenous culture. Those negative factors are very powerful and dominant as compared to the positive factors. The impact of those factors creates many burning problems in the day-to-day life of the Hira community. Now they become directionless in this dynamic world. Since the early ages, they were facing many challenges, but recent trends increase the difficulties of the Hira people. Some of them are-

#### **a) Problems in Collecting the Raw Materials:**

Hira community needs different types of raw materials for making earthenware which is available naturally. It is found from the survey that 51(85%) Hira families face many challenges in collecting those materials. Earlier Hira clay was available on the riverbank. But now it becomes so rare and difficult to get this type of sticky clay because of natural and geographical reasons. Generally, they collect the Hira clay and store it for the whole year. But in the rainy season, they can't go to collect the Hira clay. Mostly in the time of winter Hira people collect those clay. But sometimes the neighbouring people of those clay fields don't allow them to collect the clay. Because now many clay fields are illegally occupied by the people from neighbouring villages. Those people started

agriculture there. So, they stop the Hira people from collecting the clay from those fields.

Also, this beautiful culture of making earthenware could be disappeared soon because of erosion. Artisans will be forced to leave their traditional crafts. According to the Brahmaputra Board, collecting the clay from the riverbank is considered as the main cause of erosion. And Government already banned collecting the clay in some areas of Assam.

**b) Advancement of Scientific Techniques and Methods of Pottery:**

The Impact of Globalisation and modernization leads to the advancement of science and technology. And the advancement of science and technology changes the lifestyle of people. It changes people's food habits, dressing style, occupation, etc. The advancement of technology also influenced the economic life of the Hira community of Surveyed villages.

Society is changing with time. Now Indian markets also promote more modern and western goods. As a result, people are now addicted to imported modern stylish, delicate ceramic products and prefer to buy those. So, this affects the market of earthenware products of the Hira community. Hira earthenware culture is becoming obsolete and about to vanish. Hiras don't get proper profit in this earthenware business. So those Hira people who engaged in earthenware making had to face many financial pressures. And the rest of the Hira people who already left their cultural occupation, their financial state is also not good. Even if they want, they could not be able to engage in any other better job to improve their standard of living as they don't have proper educational qualifications and skills. Increased Modernization, globalization, and industrialization make this unique culture demand less by-passing time.

**c) Slow and Lengthy Techniques and Methods:**

Hira community is famous for its unique beating earthenware-making technique by using hands without the wheel. They are following these techniques and methods from their ancestors' time. But now the time has changed. There are many alternative

machine-made products available in the contemporary market. But Hira artisans are still practicing those old and slow techniques and methods for manufacturing earthenware. It makes the process of earthenware making very lengthy and costly. Earthenware making is this type of activity where the perfection of the artisan matters the most. So, the artisans need to apply some technological and innovative methods and techniques in the earthenware-making process.

Because of the joint family system, caste system, religious beliefs Hira community doesn't want to change its traditional norms and values. One interesting fact in the field survey found that every Hira household is still following their traditional beliefs and customs regarding earthenware making. And they don't try to adopt innovative and scientific techniques and methods. So, the chance of development or improvement of this cultural occupation is very less. Because traditional earthenware making is very time-consuming. Artisans need more time to complete one single earthen product. Apart from that, traditional Hira earthenware making has become very costly nowadays. Artisans need to invest a large amount of money during the process of earthenware making. It makes the Hira earthenware more expensive than the other alternative products in the market. And this is one of the reasons that in present days only a few people consume Hira earthenware.

Another fact is that the Hira artisans still follow the same and ancient process for managing their cultural industry. In the earthenware-making activity of the surveyed villages, artisan works as the labourer, investor, salesmen, etc. So, this cultural activity completely depends on the family members of their households. If someday they could not able to participate in this work for some reason, then their cultural occupation would be closed. So, this is one of the reasons that most of the artisans of the Hira community don't prefer to go outstation even for training also.

**d) Lack of Educational Awareness:**

Education plays an important role in the development and growth of a community or society. Education can give a family a better socio-economic life. In the case of the

Hira community also education is very important to promote their indigenous occupational culture. Proper vocational or professional education can benefit the artisans in the promotion of their indigenous craft. But most of the people of the Hira community are educationally backward. In the surveyed villages also the majority of the people are not aware of education. And lack of educational awareness is one of the obstacles that Hira people are facing in the modern era. They don't have any idea about the better techniques of earthenware making, proper programmes and policies, the best potential markets for trading their earthenware, the best place to promote their products, etc. So, this becomes an indirect cause for the degradation of their beautiful craft-making culture.

**e) Lack of Storeroom facility:**

Storeroom for storing earthen products is one of the important and major factors that help artisans to produce earthenware on a large scale. Hira artisans make many earthen products at the same time. So, they need to store those products in their storeroom. It helps them to keep their products safe and of good quality. Also, before and after the firing of earthen pots Hiras need to keep their products in the storeroom.

Usually, Hiras have one extra storage room on the side of their courtyard. But from the field survey, it is found that many Hira artisan families don't have the proper storeroom facilities.

**Table: 3.14**

**Storeroom Facilities for the Hira Products**

<b>Proper Storeroom Facilities for the Hira Products</b>	<b>No. of the Households</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Have</b>	22	36.67
<b>Don't have</b>	10	16.67
<b>Already Left Earthenware Making</b>	28	46.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Researcher already mentioned that at present there is a total of 32 Hira households (53.33%) out of 60 who are still practicing Earthenware culture. But table: 3.14 shows that 22 (36.67%) out of 32 Hira families have storeroom facilities. They can store their products in the storeroom. But the condition of the storeroom of many artisan families among those 22 households is in a bad state. Some of those storerooms don't have a roof, some don't have walls. The storerooms of the Hira families have mud floors. So, on rainy days or monsoon, the floor of the storerooms becomes damp or wet. 10 (16.67%) Hira Families don't have any storage room. They don't have a proper place to keep their earthenwares safely before and after the firing. In the rainy season, these artisans had to face many stressful circumstances. Because they can't keep their earthenware in open places without a shed or roof. The researcher observed that they keep their earthen products under the bed, near the chair, or in any open place in a bad condition. These 10 Hira families also can't produce earthen products in a large margin as they don't have sufficient place to store them. It also affects their economic condition. Some respondents in the surveyed villages said that in the rainy season they cannot continue making earthenware. Then at that time, they had to face unemployment or be compelled to start other businesses.

**f) Problems of bad Season and Weather:**

Earthenware culture mainly depends on the season. But Assam is a rainy and flood-prone area. In the rainy season, Hiras had to face many problems in collecting the firing materials. So, at that time, it is very difficult to get firing materials like firewoods, paddy straw, husk, etc. in good condition. And if somehow, they were able to manage the raw materials, it became a difficult task for the artisans to store those in a good state in such weather. The majority of the Hira families in the surveyed villages purchase those firing materials at a high price. So Hiras had to face a huge loss when those materials become ruined due to the bad weather. Male Hira members faced many problems during the collection of clay, sand, etc. In this season of rain and flood artisans could not able to make a large number of earthen pots. They had to decrease the number of earthen products as they need to dry them under the sun. Also, in the time of rain and flood

artisans had to wait for many days to dry the pots. It causes loss to artisans' families in the Earthenware-making occupation.

**g) Temporary and Unorganized Market:**

The absence of a Systematic and proper market for selling earthen products creates many negative consequences on this occupational culture. There are not any specific markets or shops which can provide Hiras financial strength or where they can display or promote their Earthenware. There are only some temporary weekly or bi-weekly markets for Hira artisans to sell their products. Due to the lack of a properly organized market, they don't get the opportunity to exhibit their earthen products. This affects the earnings of the Hira people. It is also a reason that now the economic condition of the majority of the Hira people is in a bad shape. Many people don't know about the Hira products even in Assam also. Only a few people know about them. So, it is very important for Hira artisans to promote their earthen products for a better trade. Many times, the middle man exploits the Hira artisans by paying them a little amount of money and keeping the main part of the profit with themselves.

**h) Ignorance of Financial Institution:**

In most of the areas, Hira people need to take a loan from the rural bank or other NGO for different domestic or employment purposes. But it is very unfortunate that in most of the cases Hira people are facing ignorance from the bank or NGO. They suffer many difficulties in getting a loan from financial institutions.

Data from the field reveal that 48 (80%) Hira families of the sample villages face problems from the bank or other financial institutions when they apply for a loan. Hira artisans of Tarigaon said the people from the bank don't allow a thump impression for giving them the loan. Hira people need to put a handwritten signature. Without a handwritten signature, they don't want to approve a loan. It is a huge problem for the people of the Hira community as most of the people are illiterate. So economic growth is not possible among those rural Hira people.

**i) Improper of Government Schemes:**

The socio-economic condition of the Hira people is not so good. So, they need proper measures to uplift their socio-economic condition. Maximum Hira people who produce earthenware come under the Below Poverty Line. So, it is tough for them to develop or improve their fore fatherly profession. They need external support for the revival of their cultural occupation.

Handicrafts are also an important part of the Indian Economy. So, Govt. should take an eye on developing and broadening the craft industry of Hira artisans. But in the present scenario, Hiras are not getting any help from outside regarding their culture. They need proper funds for earthenware making. A large number of Hira people already left Hira villages and shifted to urban areas seeking low and unskilled works for themselves. Because the earthenware Industry at present times can't provide an artisan a good life. So they need financial support from the state or district authority for continuing and uplifting this culture. This will help Hiras to overcome their challenges in earthenware making.

The government is promoting many schemes and programmes for scheduled Castes, improvement of different handicrafts. But there should be some special schemes and programmes also for the Hira community and Hira earthenware. Another notable problem among the Hiras is that they are not aware of many schemes and programmes which are there for them (table: 3.11). So, there should be some programmes to spread awareness about the beneficiary schemes and policies of the Hira community. Then only it can help in the all-round development of this category of the artisan.

From the above discussion, we can say that all these factors intensely affect the socio-economic life of the people of the Hira community. The impact of those factors on the socio-economic life of the Hira community is long-term. Though earthenware making is an employment-oriented culture, it is also a reason for the backwardness of the Hira people. Now in this modern and industrial time, it is not enough to only follow the traditional methods of earthenware making. To compete in the modern market economy Hira people also should take some initiative from their side to develop their

earthenware culture. Most of the time Hira left earthenware culture and engaged in other unskilled or low-grade jobs. But this is not the solution. This could not help the Hira people to develop their socio-economic life. Different organizations, NGOs, district authorities should also look after this matter very closely.

### **3.5 Case Studies:**

As discussed in chapter 1, to study the different nature of the Hira community the present study was conducted consisting of 60 selected Hira households. But 6 individual case studies from the 60 Hira households were also utilized to highlight the importance of the socio-economic status of the Hira community and the impact of Modernity on the Earthenware culture of the Hira Community of the Research area. Here 3 case studies were conducted to know the socio-economic status of the Hira community of the selected Villages.

- **Case Study 1**

**Mr. A**, 45 years old Hira man from Satpakhali Village of South Kamrup said that in this village many families are engaged in earthen pot making activities. But in the rainy season, the number of Hira families who make earthen pots becomes reduced. As a consequence, they face financial problems. In the rainy season, their family also stop producing earthenware and engaged in agriculture. He has 1 bigha agricultural land received from his father. So, he also engages in agriculture during that time.

This is one of the reasons that they don't have a proper idea of their monthly income. It mainly depends on their production. Every week the number of earthen products they sold is different based on the production of earthen products. They also don't know how many earthen products they are going to manufacture in a month. Out of those manufactured earthen products how many products they would carry to market also depends on the weather. Because last week the weather was not good and this is the reason that most of the artisans of their village could not be able to burn their earthen products.



They are also facing difficulties in the rainy season because they don't have any storage room for storing the earthen products. They store all those products in front of their house. But still, their family will continue to make earthen pots. He believes that his children will not extend their occupational culture.

He also added that only death can separate him from their traditional earthenware culture.

- **Case Study 2**

**Mrs. B**, 35 years old energetic lady from Chamaria Village told that their income is not so good with the earthen pot-making occupation. They earn 1000 Rs. per week. Only her husband and she practice this earthenware culture in their family. Their sons and daughter-in-law don't know how to make earthenware. One of her sons was worked in Gujrat. But because of some health issues, he quit his job and returned home. Now this family is facing economic hardship. The price of a big earthen pitcher is only 30 Rs and the small one is only 10 Rs. They do so much hard work for making earthen products and get only this much in return.

Their income per month from this craft also depends on the weather, the amount of earthen pots production, etc. If one day they can sell 900 earthen pots then the next day it may be only 200 pots. And someday they may not be able to sell anything; so that day they had to buy things from the market on credit. She also added that earthen pot making has now become very expensive. They need a minimum of 3000 Rs. in a month to collect the clay from the river. To buy the clay they have to pay Rs. 500 per vehicle and Rs. 300 as vehicle fees to bring the clay to their respective places.

She also mentioned that Earthenware making provides them employment. So, these artisan's livelihood mainly depends on the selling of earthen products they produced. Because earthenware is their only source of income. The socio-economic condition of Hira families who left the earthenware craft is more reliable than the families who are still practicing this craft.

- **Case Study 3**

**Mr. C**, from Tarigaon, 55 years old man stated that he has been living in this village since his birth. His family is not getting any cooperation from the government or outside. Earlier once Government assured them to provide potter's wheels so that they could manufacture earthen products easily. So, the Hira people of Tarigaon submitted their required papers for that. But after that, they didn't get any responses from the govt. officials. But they got toilet under the govt. policy. According to him, other people got houses also under the scheme "Indira Awas Yojana". But they didn't get it. Govt. does not provide proper water supply facilities. So, they had to carry the drinking water from neighbours' tube well. They got a gas connection under the govt. scheme. But they are not getting any help to keep alive their earthenware culture. According to him, Govt. officials also overlook them because of their economically underprivileged position.

### ***3.5.1 Summary and Findings of the Case Studies:***

Above mentioned three case studies reflect the socio-economic condition of the Hira community in the present light. From these case studies, some interesting facts and findings are found. These three respondents are from full-time artisan families. They are following this culture for many years. But now in contemporary times, they are facing some socio-economic problems in earthenware making. The growth of earthenware making is mainly based on the season or weather. In the rainy or bad season, the artisans are forced to stop making earthenware. Because after making the earthen products they need to dry them under the sun for few days. And in the bad weather, the artisan could not be able to dry them. And as a result, sometimes it is possible to grow mold in wet or damp earthenware. It is an immense loss for the artisans' family. So, in the time of Rainy or flood season artisans earn money from other sources of income. And this is why most of the artisans from the sample villages don't have an idea about their monthly income. Their whole income depends on the season. For making earthen products, drying, firing, marketing they have to depend on the weather or season. And that's why at present most of the people from the new generation don't want to engage in earthenware culture. Even after facing so many challenges in earthenware making, they only earn a very small

amount of money by selling those earthen products. With the dynamic time, now collecting the raw materials for this cultural occupation has become very costly. Hiras need a high amount of money to invest in the earthenware industry because of its costly raw materials. They had to buy the clay and the firing materials, high transportation, etc. But compared to this they only get a small amount of money by selling those earthen products. This affects the socio-economic condition of the Hira people. So, the socio-economic condition of the Artisans whose primary occupation is earthenware making is more critical than the Hira people who already left this culture. But many artisans are still practicing earthenware culture because they are attached to this culture even after their poor financial condition. From the case study, it is also found that the Hira people in Tarigaon are not getting any help from the government or the outside to uplift their occupational culture. They were ready to apply for Kumar's wheel also to increase their production of earthenware and compete with the other ceramic products in the market even though they don't like the earthenware making process of Kumar. But they didn't get any responses from the government officials regarding the distribution of potter's wheel. There are many schemes and policies for potters and scheduled caste community people also. But most of them don't know about the all schemes which are there for them and if anyhow, they got to know about those, the middle man or some govt. officials ignore them or don't give them what they deserve as they are poor and backward people. Now Hira people are having a very low standard of living. But Hira people who shifted to other urban areas because of different reasons have way better-living conditions than the Hiras who live in rural areas. Their social position is also higher as compared to the Hiras from rural areas.

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