

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the Findings of the study:

The present study entitled "Impact of Modernity on the Earthenware Culture of and the Socio-economic Status of Hira Community: A Study in South Kamrup of Assam" is an attempt to discuss all the aspects of Hira Earthenware culture. This study tried to find out the changes that occur in the Earthenware culture of the Hira community due to Modernity and their socio-economic condition at this present time. Few suggestions are also given to improve and develop the condition of the Hira community in general and South Kamrup in particular. This study is based on both Primary and secondary data.

The introductory chapter deals with the introduction of the study, statement of the problem, review of literature related to the present study, Research gap, rationale of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, research methodology, structure of the thesis. Earthenware is a type of Pottery ware. People of different times from different periods practiced pottery. In India, many traditional potter communities practice pottery making. They practiced pottery making from generation to generation. Because India is a caste-based society. Here the majority of the people inherit their occupation from their father. In India potter is known as Kumar/Kumor/kumbhar/Kumbhakar etc. But in Assam, there is also one special class of potter community who are practicing this craft from their ancestral time. This special class of people is known as 'Hira'. They make earthen pots. Earthenware making is not only their occupation but also their culture.

But the tremendous changes are taking place in recent years threatening the essence of the traditional occupation and the socio-economic status of individuals due to modernity. Some changes are drastic while others are more gradual that occur daily. Here the question arises that to how far the Hira community is still following their indigenous earthenware culture in this changing modern scenario. In the context of

Modernity, different scholars have given their perspectives. In the present study, Modernity mainly indicates the changes that occur in the structures of society and cultural institutions. Modernity touches on the microstructural phenomena of society like family structure, caste system, village groups, etc. It changes the traditional village structure to a modern one. And this process of modernization also affects the traditional craftsmanship and cultural occupation of the Hira community in Assam.

The second chapter included the background of the Kamrup district and South Kamrup, the Demographic Background of the Hira Community, the Original and Development of the Pottery Industry in General and Assam, and the Historical Background of the Hira Community. There is a total of 55,300 Hira population in Assam as per the 2011 census. In Assam total scheduled caste population is 2,231,321 (2011 census). Here 2.48% is the Hira population. There are a total of 27,860 male and 27,440 female members of the Hira community in Assam according to the 2011 census report. In South Kamrup there is a total of 26 separate Hira villages. These villages are locally known as 'Hirapara' or 'Hirachupa'. For the present study, six Hira villages from the South Kamrup were selected as a sample.

Pottery making is famous in different places in India. Potters in India are practicing pottery for more than 10,000 years. According to many western authors, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Babylon, etc. have taken the art of pottery from India. Potteries reflect potter's feelings and expressions. Potteries among the tribal of North-east India has their own distinct identity. They are rich in art and crafts viz. bamboo canes, handmade pottery, weaving and textile, woodwork, metal works, etc. Some tribal communities of North-East India manufacture pottery by hand without using the wheel. Two villages of Nagaland, Tseminyu, and Ungma do steel and aluminium pottery. They use different types of local raw materials to make those products.

Assamese potteries are also famous for their unique styles. Earthen products have an important role in Assamese society. Here people are traditionally very attached to earthen products. In Assam, both handmade and wheel-made potteries are equally famous. From the review of different literature related to Assamese pottery, it is found

that in Assam two potter communities Hira and Kumar manufacture Earthenware. But there are many differences based on Social stratification, earthenware making techniques and methods, etc. Kumar potteries are more diverse than the Hira potteries. Kumar potteries are used for both domestic and religious purposes. But Hira potteries are only used for domestic purposes.

Regarding the historical background of the Hira community, one shocking fact found from the field is that Hira community people are not aware of their historical background. So no one has the proper details of the origin and historical background of the Hira community. These earthenware-making techniques and methods by using hands are considered as the oldest technique. But still, how and when they started to make earthenware is unknown. Regarding the origin and development of pottery, many stories are there. In Bengal, potters have been practicing pottery since almost 1500 BC. Pottery played an important role in different periods. Also, some of the scholars said that Basketry is the basis of the development of Pottery in India. In North-east India still, people make potteries by using Basket. In Assam first pottery was witnessed in the N.C. Hills district of Assam in the Neo-lithic period. There are also many signs of ancient potteries on the wall of temples in Assam.

Apart from knowing the origin and the historical background, it is also most important to know their socio-economic condition before knowing the life of a regional community. **Chapter three** deals with the socio-economic status of the Hira community at present. Again, six case studies were also conducted to know their socio-economic status. Data reveal that the social indicators play an important role to measure the social condition of the people of a particular community. Though modernity changes the different aspects of society or people's life, still the social condition of the Hira community is not so good in the present times. The literacy rate is very low among the people of the Hira community of sample villages. Educational awareness is yet to develop among them. Most of the people are illiterate and the primary level drops out. Due to economic hardship, they had to drop out of school. Even they are not aware of the education of their girl children. The female members of

the Hira community engage in earthenware making from a very early age. Because of their lower social status also other communities people exploit or neglect them. Hira people from Chamaria and Darisatra visit the common Namghar (Religious place) with the other community people. There they face ignorance from the other upper caste people like Kalita, Mahanta, etc. Here from the field, one thing is clear that though modernity already broadens the mindset of the people but the older generation of other upper caste groups is still holding the same outdated mindset about casteism.

Hira community is mainly an endogamous group. They prefer the bride from the same community. They want to preserve their traditional skill within their own community. In the Hira family, women have an important role in the total household's income. But still, when it comes to making an important decision always male members got the preference. Because Hira society is a male-dominated society. Here their male children of the family got the authority after the father.

The main problem the Hira community facing is poverty. Hira people are born and brought up in poverty. It is found from the field survey that most of the Hira people's (34) monthly income come under the range of Rs. 4000-6000 in the sample villages. The shocking fact is that not a single Hira household's monthly income is above 10,000 Rs. in the surveyed villages. As we know that earthenware making is their indigenous occupation but now most of the people left this occupation and engaged in other occupations. Because in the market also the value of Hira earthenware is decreasing nowadays. And it could not able to fulfill their needs. Many families make earthenware culture as their secondary occupation. The Hira families whose primary occupation is earthenware making their economic condition is also worse than the families who left earthenware making. They are compelled to start some other secondary occupations for livelihood. But the respondents who left earthenware 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.

Most of the Hira people of sample villages are not aware of every scheme and policies which are there for them. They only know about some basic programmes which are for scheduled caste people. 48 out of 60 Hira families don't have awareness about government schemes & policies. And by chance, if they could know about those, some middlemen don't let them take advantage of those programmes. Some rich people also from the village took all the advantages of those. According to them only those who have special contact with govt. officials, they only got advantages. But still, some Hira people from the sample villages got benefitted from the Indira Awas Yojana, they got a toilet, free gas connections, job cards, old age pension, widow pension, free electricity connections, etc.

This chapter also discusses the challenges faced by the Hira community in their daily life in this science & technological era. Some factors directly and deeply affect the day-to-day life of the Hira community. Some of these factors are positive and some are negatives. Positive factors develop the socio-economic life of the Hira community. Positive factors are- earthenware making culture give the Hira artisans a unique ethnic traditional identity. Also, this culture gives women artisans employment. From the field, one thing is clear that many 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. This provides self-empowerment to Hira women. The tools Hiras use to manufacture earthenware are all-natural and low cost. They don't have to spend lots of money to get those tools. So, they don't need other expensive scientific materials for making earthenware. Any young unemployed people also easily can start earthenware making. It would help the people to earn money and promote the rural cottage industry and handicrafts. And the most important one is its eco-friendly nature. Earthen products don't pollute the environment or create any global warming. Earthenware is 100% eco-

friendly in nature and it can be easily and completely recycled. It preserves energy and resources.

On the other hand, some factors bring negative impacts on the socio-economic life of the Hira community of the sample villages. These factors are more powerful than positive ones. One of the negative factors is- costly raw material. We know that the raw materials used for earthenware making are all-natural. But now, people have to buy all those materials by spending lots of money. So, it's become costlier with time. Advanced technological machines also have a strong impact on the field of the Hira earthenware culture. There are many cheap and machine-made products available in the market which are gradually replacing the Hira products. Because Hira artisans are still using the same outdated and slow techniques of earthenware making. So, they cannot compete with those machine-made alternative products. Lack of educational awareness among the Hiras also brings negative impacts to this culture. Lack of the proper storeroom is also one of the major problems Hiras are facing. This culture mostly depends on weather and season. So, bad weather and the rainy season often create problems for the artisans. Limited earthen products, lack of properly organized market, the lack of proper training programmes for Hira people, improper govt. schemes & policies, ignorance from financial institutions also affects negatively the life and cultural occupation of the Hira community.

The fourth chapter highlighted the details of Hira Earthenware Culture including tools used in Earthenware Making, raw materials used in Earthenware making, method & techniques of earthenware making, demand & marketing, Hira earthenware culture negotiating with modernity, and some Case Studies. Earthenware making is the indigenous culture of the Hira community. Hira young girls to elderly women all practice this culture. In earthenware making, Hira follows some traditional beliefs, customs, norms, and values. And still, they are following those traditional beliefs. For making Earthenware Hira artisans need one sticky type of greyish clay for making the vessels. This special type of clay is known as 'Hiramati'. Also, they need raw materials like sand, one type of colouring material which is known as Gerumati,

and firing materials i.e., firewoods, paddy straw, dry leaf, coconut husk, rice husk, bamboo, cow dung, and ashes. All those materials Hiras use for making earthenware are all-natural. They don't use any kind of chemicals during the earthenware-making procedure. They collect these materials from different places in South Kamrup. South Kamrup is famous for good-quality Hira clay. So, artisans from different places come to South Kamrup for collecting this glutinous clay.

The tools which are used for making earthenware are naturally available. These tools are- wooden beater, round stone with different sizes, spade, old cotton cloth, one earthen pot or bucket to store water, paintbrushes to colour the earthen pots and baskets. These are all low-cost natural tools.

Regarding the methods of traditional Hira earthenware making, all Hira artisans from different places follow the same ancient techniques. To manufacture the earthen product they follow different stages. First Hira women mix sand and water with the Hira clay with the help of a wooden beater and spade for preparing the clay for earthenware making. And then they remove the unwanted parts of clay, stones, or straw. The process of preparing the clay is locally known as 'Mati mara' among the Hiras of south Kamrup. From this prepared clay Hira woman make some small earthen discs. Then with the help of a wooden beater and round stone, they shape the vessel. In the meantime, they keep applying water with the help of old cotton cloth on the earthen vessel. It keeps the pot moist and helps the artisan to give a desired shape to the vessel. First, they separately make the different parts of an earthen vessel, and after that artisan join these separate parts to shape the vessel by applying water. After making each part they keep the vessel under the sun for drying. Then comes an important stage of earthenware making, it is firing the manufactured earthen vessels. So, some Hira families come together and choose some open fields of the village or someone's courtyard for firing the earthen products. They call this firing process as 'thupa dia' in the local language. Firing is the final stage of earthenware making. Next, the male Hira members carry the products to the market for selling. Selling is mainly depending on the demands of that product.

Each Hira villages have their speciality regarding earthenware making. The types of earthen products are different from village to village. Some of the types of earthen products which are still manufactured in the surveyed villages are- Kalah (Earthen Pitcher), Choru (Frying Pan), Japchoru (Steaming pot), Tekeli (Miniature Vessel), Marriage ghat (marriage vessel), Baira (wide-mouthed small earthen pot), Lurkha (wide-mouthed medium earthen pot), Dabar (short neck round earthen pot), Nagara (Musical Drum), Kurkuri (Musical Instrument), Daina (Musical Instrument), Khola (clay bread), Jonga (long earthen pot), Guli (fishnet sinker). From the field survey, it is found that in some places Tekeli (miniature vessel) is used for the religious ceremony, but Hiras called it 'Kumar tekeli' to sell them in the market. Customers also don't think twice before buying it because of the word "Kumar".

Earthenware making is one of these types of cultural occupations where demand matters the most. If the demand for earthenware decreased then production will also decrease. So, artisans manufacture earthenware based on their market value. Earlier many people thought that earthen products are best for utilitarian use. But as time passes, people started to choose glassware, plastic container, aluminum container, and other metallic products. Gradually these products are replacing the Hira earthenware. Because according to Hindu belief, people should throw away the earthen pots after using them once. So, customers also more prefer alternative ceramic products. Most of the Hiras don't want to continue this culture because of low commercial values. But still, Hira earthenware has a special place in Assamese society because of its unique design and quality. For example, cooking in an earthen pot can help to circulate both water and heat through the cooked food and it is also healthier than other metallic cookware. Also, cooking in an earthen pot fills the different nutrition like calcium, phosphorous, iron, magnesium, and sulphur which make our immune system strong. For storing and bringing water from one place to another people are using an earthen vessel from ancient times. In an earthen vessel, the elements of the earth contain with clay particle prevents the bacterial formation. While storing water in an earthen vessel, the alkaline nature of clay with the contact of water balances the p^H level. For making and preserving the curd, people prefer a different size, shape Hira earthen vessels.

Also, for making and preserving traditional rice beer in a good condition for a long time some Assamese communities like Ahom, Mising use the earthen vessel. They don't use the Kumar vessel for making it. It is said that Hira earthenware makes the foods tastier. But this is not enough. Because Hira is a small community residing in some particular areas of Assam. Many people don't know about the Hira community. The demand for Hira earthenware is only limited to some parts of Assam. So, practically, we can say that Hira earthenware is losing its demand with time. And this beautiful Assamese craft is dying a slow death.

The researcher also described the changes in the field of the Earthenware culture of the Hira community that occurred by negotiating with modernity. All the changes Hira people are facing in the present scenario are due to modernity. It is the main cause that now the traditional occupation of Hira people of those surveyed villages of South Kamrup is also influenced by these changes. As a consequence of modernity, Hira traditional villages are facing the situation of occupational mobility. Nijhawan (1969) in his study 'Intergenerational Occupational Mobility' said, "in present times children don't want to continue their fathers' occupation. son of a white-collar professional, workers, farmers everyone now started to engage in other occupations". So, the Hira community is not exceptional. They started to shift their occupation to other fields. Because at present, changed family structure, changing educational system, absence of an organized market, restriction in marketing earthen product by some route, changes in the relationship, decreased demand of Earthen product and increased demand of other ceramic machine-made product, difficulties in collecting the Hira clay are the consequences of advancement science & Technology and these give Hira artisans a very tough time and different challenges. Traditional Hira earthenware is deeply influenced by the western and modern international market economy. Now people are more focused on this type of market economy. But Hiras still following their ancestral method and techniques of earthenware making so they had to face all those challenges in this modern era. The application of scientific knowledge and advanced techniques in earthenware making is most needed for the improvement of this culture. But the knowledge of scientific techniques, methods, and tools among Hiras is zero. The

traditional and primitive methods Hira artisans use for making earthenware are very simple but lengthy and costly. They have their traditional beliefs and they want to carry them forward. So there is a clash between the indigenous norms and values and modern norms and values. Now earthenware-making occupation failed to improve the socio-economic condition of the Hira community. In the market also Hira products could not able to compete with other alternative ceramic products made by scientific machines and technology. So, most of the time Hira artisans only get a little amount of money as compared to their hard work and time. Now many Hira people already shifted to the urban areas for earning their livelihood. In the present scenario occupational mobility among the Hiras is a common thing. This occupational mobility is somehow vertical and somehow horizontal among the Hira villages of South Kamrup.

Under all those changing situations not only the artisans of South Kamrup in particular but also the whole Hira community, in general, would be compelled to leave their cultural craft if proper, essential resources and facilities are not provided. But as earthenware culture is Hira's fore fatherly occupation so Hira people are prestigiously attached to it. It is not possible for the Hira community to completely leave this culture. From the present study, it is clear that at present the Hira community people are deprived and exploited by some external forces or people. So appropriate measures should be taken up to improve and uplift the condition of these potters and their Indigenous craft.

5.1.1 Major Findings and Discussion:

Based on the objectives of the present study researcher found some interesting facts which can reflect the impact of modernity on the earthenware culture of the Hira community and their socio-economic condition. The first objective of the present study 'To examine the socio-economic factors which adversely affect the life and livelihood of the Hira community' is covered in chapter 3, 'Socio-Economic Status of Hira Community'. Some of the interesting findings of chapter 3 are stated below-

- Data from the field show that 21.67% (13) respondents are illiterate in the study area in this modern time. They are not aware of the importance of education. 48.33% (29) respondent's educational level is primary, 15% (9) respondents' education level is high school, 10% (6) respondents' education level is higher Secondary and only 5% (3) respondents have degree-level education. It shows that the percentage of respondents in level high school, Higher Secondary, and Degree is relatively low. And the percentage in the Illiteracy and primary level is high. Most of the Hira people are not interested in the continuation of education in the surveyed villages. They drop out of school after the primary level.

But one important fact is also observed in the field that in many Hira families of the surveyed villages, their girl children don't go to school and only engaged in earthenware making. In 58.33% (35) Hira households of the sample villages, girl children don't go to schools. They help their mother in earthenware-making activities. And those who went to school or college, now they are drop-out. While they send their male children to school.

- Hira is essentially and traditionally an endogamous group and they always prefer the bride from their same community. They have a traditional belief as Hira earthenware making is a mainly feminine craft, so they want to preserve this art and craft within their community. But now in this present era, there are some inter-caste marriages also took place. Some of the Hira people choose their mate from other castes preferably from Kaibartas, Namasudras, etc., and even from the higher caste Kalitas, Brahmins, etc.
- From the surveyed villages it is found that out of 60 households 36 Hira households' head of the family is their father, the mother is the head of the family of 10 households' and lastly, the son is the head of the family of 14 households. In Hira Earthenware culture females are the main artisans and most of the time Hira families earn money because of the hard work of those female artisans. But still, because of patriarchy, only 10 women are the head of their families. And it is

because these 10 women don't have their husbands and their children are also young. So, they are the head of the family.

- Only 12 (20%) Hira Families are aware of the government schemes & Programmes of Scheduled caste and handicraft compared to the rest of the sample Hira families. The rest of 48 (80%) Hira families only have a basic idea about the Govt. programmes and policies.
- From the survey it is found that 35 (58.33%) Hira families out of 60 got their houses under the scheme "Indira Awas Yojana" and the rest of 25 families don't get the house. Only 20 (33.33%) out of 60 families got a toilet, 27 (45%) Hira families 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 benefited from these programmes, still there are many people left from getting the benefits of those schemes & Programmes.
- One notable thing is that the Hira people from the sample villages of South Kamrup only know about the above-mentioned schemes & Policies. They are only benefited from the schemes and policies which are there for scheduled caste, backward people, or rural people. But there are many programmes and schemes also available for pottery development. Some NGOs are organizing many programmes for the local artisans. But the Hira people of these villages are not aware of all these programmes and even they don't have any idea about those programmes. Because they are educationally backward and not up to date.
- The relationship of the Hira community with the other Castes and communities varied from place to place. In Azara (Hirapara), Dhantola, Satpakhali, and Tarigaon Hira people don't face any exploitation from the other caste people. Their relationship with those other caste people is good as they are also from scheduled

caste communities. But Hiras from Darisatra and Chamaria face ignorance from their neighbouring other caste and communities. In the surveyed villages their relationship is better with the other scheduled castes as compared to higher caste communities. In the field, it is observed that specially the older generation people from other higher castes don't want to co-operate or keep relationships with the Hira people. But it is also found that younger generation people from different caste groups have a good relationship with the younger people of the Hira community. It shows that majority of the new generation people don't follow casteism.

- At present, 58.33% (35) of Hiras are living in nuclear families. And 41.67% (25) Hira families are still living in joint family systems. This indicates the dominance of the joint family system over nuclear families.
- 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, when it comes to making an important decision always male members got the preference. Also, for money, they have to depend on their husbands as the male head members keep the money with them. So, it is very sad 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 and manufacture it for the family.

The second objective of the present study 'To understand the close embeddedness of the Hira community with their traditional earthenware culture' has been reflected in both chapter 3 'Socio-Economic Status of Hira Community' and chapter 4 'Hira Community and Earthenware Culture'. Some of the important findings are discussed below-

- Data from the field show that only 43.33% (26) Hira household's which is not even half of the total respondent 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 the business. Lastly, only 3.33% (2) of Hira households' main earnings come from wage labour. This data reveals the present status of the primary occupation of the respondents. With the advancement of science and technology Hira artisans also started to change their way of life. According to them, this culture could not fulfill their requirements. So now Hira people are slowly started to change their occupation to another field.

- For livelihood, the primary occupation is not enough for the Hira people. Because from those occupations they only earn a very little amount of money. So, they need to engage in other secondary occupations also. Out of 60 households, 27 families have their different secondary occupations.
- Data from the surveyed villages indicate that 23.33% (14) 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 is relatively high with Rs. 8000-10000 per month. The percentage of Hira families in the monthly income range of Rs. 6000-8000 and 8000-10000 are quite low. So it is visible that most of the Hira families are facing financial problems.
- The majority of the Hira families are Below Poverty Line families or BPL. These families are economically backward. Government assistance is very essential for these Hira Families. Here 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.
- Among 60 households from the six villages Hira women are the principal earner in 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. Though Hira women are the main artisans in the earthenware culture, only 36.67% of women have been considered as the principal earner of their family and in 63.33% of families, their male members are the principal earners.

- 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.
- 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 the majority (60%) of the Hira family's types of houses are Assam type Brick walls, 15 (25%) families have Assam type half wall with bamboo mud plaster houses and 9 (15%) family's types of houses are Assam type mud wall with a thatch roof. These data indicate the changes that occur by negotiating with modernity in the sample Hira villages. The Housing pattern of the Hira community has changed over the years.
- 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 88.33% of people stated that though they have their accounts in the bank. But they don't get enough money to deposit in the bank. 10 out of 60 households from the surveyed villages said that they created an account in the bank because the elder member of their family gets the pension.
- There are six types of marketing systems are present among the Hira community of surveyed villages. The first one is where customers come to the Hira artisans' house to directly buy the earthen products. Secondly, in some areas, Hira males carry earthen products on their shoulders to the neighbouring villages to sell those products directly to the people. Thirdly, one of the best options for marketing is to carry their products to the local markets. Hira people of surveyed villages carry the earthen products to their local weekly or bi-weekly market for selling. Fourthly, Hira artisans sometimes exhibit their earthen products in some fairs or melas of neighbouring villages for sale. The fifth type of market among the Hira artisan is contract-based. In this process, the artisan makes a deal with the trader or

contractor, or other dealers by mutual agreement. And the last one is the wholesale system.

Another type of traditional marketing system is the exchange of products. During the survey, it is found that only in Azara (Hirapara) and Darisatra Hira people are comparatively following this system. The rest of the villages have already quit following this process of marketing.

In the present study, the third objective 'To analyze the process through which the Hira community has been trying to negotiate with the new and western form of earthenware culture' is included in chapter 4 'Hira Community and Earthenware Culture', So some of the important findings emerged from this objective is discussed below-

- One of the major impacts of modernity on the earthenware culture of the Hira community found in South Kamrup is occupational mobility. Though earthenware making is Hira's ascriptive tradition, now they are gradually leaving this tradition and starting some other new occupations. In the surveyed villages 32 (53.33%) Hira families are still practicing Earthenware making while 28 (46.67%) Hira families already left their ancient culture because of the challenges they are facing due to Modernization and Westernization.
- The Modern Education system is one of the reasons for occupational mobility among the Hira community. In the field survey, it is that the modern education system creates a great impact on Hira earthenware culture. The number of Hira households who are still practising earthenware culture is 32 out of 60 (table:4.4) and out of those 32 Hira families, 10 (31.25%) respondents are Illiterate, 18 (56.25%) respondents' educational level is primary, 4 (12.5%) respondents' education level is high school as shown in fig 4:1. This means only Hira people who don't have proper education practise earthenware at present days. And the Hira people who have comparatively higher education, are not interested in practising their occupational culture. Young generation people of the Hira

community start to enroll in schools, colleges and some of them go to the university even though the number is very few. Considering the nature of work and income-generating capacity of Earthenware culture, Hira people don't want to engage in earthenware-making activities after receiving higher education.

- Hira artisans often face the problems of unavailability of the essential raw materials for earthenware making. Earlier raw materials for Earthenware making like Hira clay, sand, firing materials were available and easily accessible free of cost in the villages. But at present time they need to spend lots of money to purchase those raw materials as a consequence of modernization. In the field, all 32 out of 60 Hira households who are still practising earthenware said that costly raw materials are one of the reasons for their financial backwardness. And rest of the 28-sample households stated that one of the major reasons for leaving their fore fatherly occupational culture is the constant increase of the raw materials cost over the past years.
- One of the impacts of Modernity on the earthenware culture of the Hira community is that there are variable products now available in the market which could be used for different purposes. Those different products are affecting the Hira earthenware market. These products are manufactured with the help of advanced machines which help the producers to save lots of time and hard work. So, Hira earthenware is labeled as old-fashioned, outdated, etc. The knowledge of scientific techniques, methods, and tools among Hiras of surveyed villages is zero. From the field survey, it is found that all 32 Hira households who are still practising earthenware as their primary or secondary occupation are still following their ancestral methods and techniques of earthenware making and firing to negotiate with the new form of earthenware culture. So, there is a clash between the indigenous norms and values and modern norms and values. So, in today's global markets the demand for this local craft is gradually decreasing.

- It is impossible for Hira artisans to make earthen products of the same quality as those modern and stylish products which are made by using scientific techniques and methods. The cheap and imported machine-made products already started to replace the traditional handmade craft in today's market. So the demand for this local Hira craft is reduced with time. It is very shocking that 76.92% of Hira artisans only earn Rs. 4000-6000 and 23.07% Hira household's income are Rs. 6000-8000 per month. Not a single Hira household's monthly income is above Rs. 8000. Only in festive seasons like Bihu, Durga puja, or Diwali, their monthly income increases a little bit. Because at that time the demand of the Hira Earthenwares rises in the market. But on normal days the Hira community is facing a huge loss in this trade.
- Data indicates that in more than half of the artisan families (53.13%) their children don't have any engagement in their indigenous culture and only 46.88% of children help their parents in earthenware making. This shows the disinterest of the young generation of the Hira community towards their occupational culture. In the villages Azara (Hirapara) and Chamaria, only parents in the sample Hira households are continuing this earthen pot-making culture. The researcher didn't find any artisan family in these two villages where their children also have participated in their culture. But in Dhantola village a greater number of children of the Hira families participate in earthenware making as this village is famous for its occupational culture. To uplift, the condition of the earthenware culture in this modern period Hira community needs more artisans in this culture. Because to compete with all alternative scientific products in the market Hira community needs a stable and strong earthenware industry that can fulfill all the demands of the customer.
- 78.13% of Hira households manufacture earthen products just to sell them in the market. Only 21.88% (7 households) manufacture earthenware for both market and domestic use. But one thing is quite shocking that not a single Hira household from the surveyed villages manufacture earthenware only for their domestic use.

This highlighted the fact that the majority of the Hira artisans who are still practising earthenware making are only for earning their livelihood. But the Earlier scenario was different. The respondents of the surveyed villages said that their older generation people mostly manufactured earthenware for domestic use only. They used to produce all the necessary domestic used products by themselves.

- One of the important findings of the present study is that 56.67% (34) Hira households don't want to continue their Earthenware culture if they would get a better income source. Only 43.33% (26) of Hira families want to continue this culture. Because they are habitual to this earthenware culture. But they also said that they want another secondary source of income for their livelihood. Because the money, they earn from selling earthen products is not sufficient for their livelihood nowadays. Also, respondents don't want their children to continue their indigenous Earthenware culture. So they are encouraging their children to look for another occupation.

5.2 Suggestions and Conclusion:

Different factors affecting the socio-economic condition of the Hira community and their Earthenware culture. In this advanced science and technological era these artisans are facing many problems regarding raw materials, demand, marketing etc. which may force the artisan to left this beautiful pot-making culture. It is very important and high time to preserve and protect the earthenware culture and Hira artisans. To improve the condition of the Hira community and their culture some suggestions are made. To give support to this indigenous artisan of Assam, the administration should take some initiatives. Following suggestions are made from the study-

- One of the important problems that the Hira community is facing is the costly and unavailability of raw materials. For this, the district administration should allot some particular area for each Hira village to collect the Hira clay. The government already allotted some places for the Hiras of Azara and Darisatra. But the artisans

from the other places are also facing much more problems during the collection of raw materials. Artisans of the different districts also had to come to the Kamrup district to collect the clay. All these reasons made the clay very costly. They need to pay tractor fees also when they carry the clay from the remote area.

- It is very essential to organize some creative workshops or training programmes for artisans of the Hira community. It will help to make them understand the scientific and modern techniques and methods of pottery making with less cost, time, labour like using modern fuel and energy-efficient kiln, low-cost pottery making home-scale level machine. It will also enhance the traditional skill and talent of the Hira artisans. It is very important for Hira people to compete with other machine-made ceramic products in this contemporary time. Artisans also should try to customize their earthen products to meet the modern and new needs and customer's choices. Or they can try to make a fusion of traditional and modern craft because nowadays people are more attracted towards the combination of traditional and modern design. It would help the artisans to keep alive their cultural occupation and shine in the international market.
- The government should implement some important programmes and policies for the development of the Hira community. Because now also they are facing lots of hardship in different fields. So, to uplift the condition of the Hira people there should be some schemes and policies for the Hira people in particular. The government should look after the problems of Hira artisans and try to solve their problems concretely. From the present research, one thing is clear that most of the Hira people don't know much about the government poverty alleviation schemes and social security measures that are implemented for improving their economic condition. But those schemes and programs failed to remove the problem of poverty permanently. So, it is suggested that the schemes regarding the upliftment of the condition of scheduled caste, specially Hiras should be in a broader context.

- After implementing some special programmes and policies for Hira it is very important to organize some awareness camps to make these artisans aware of all programmes and policies which are there for them. Because most of the Hira people are not aware of the schemes and policies which are there for the backward people. So, it is very important to provide them knowledge about those schemes and policies.
- There should be some full-time place for marketing the earthenware for the Hira community. Because they don't have a proper full-time market for selling the earthenware. So, the District administration should provide some permanent marketplace near the bus stands, railway stations, or other public markets for the Hira artisans. Hira Earthen products should be also available at modern retail places such as shopping malls, supermarkets, etc. It is very important to catch the attention of the customers towards those products. For that, the Hira people need to understand modern marketing and promotional strategies. Also, they have to collect information about the global market for better trade.
- There should be some online shopping websites for the sale of Hira earthenware. So that people from all over the world can see their products and purchase those. This will also help the artisans to earn proper profit from their hard work. Because now the market system has been changed. In most cases, people now more prefer online shopping. District/ State authorities should take some initiatives for this as the Hira artisans don't know about online shopping.
- Special attention needs to be given to improve the educational condition of the Hira people in South Kamrup. Because education is one of the mediums to improve and develop the socio-economic-cultural condition of a particular community or society. And it is found from the field that most of the Hira people are not properly educated.
- Some full-time Hira villages of Assam should be developed and announced as a tourist places. It will help the artisans to develop their earthenware craft and the

confidence of the Hira community people. People from different parts of India also don't have any idea about the Hira community and their unique style of earthenware making. So It will help people from different regions to know about the earthenware culture of the Hira community and impress or attract them to their earthen products. This will increase the demands of those earthen products and help to improve their condition.

- There should be some proper fixed price for every earthen product approved through the govt. offices of the Assam Industrial Development Corporation (AIDC), District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), North Eastern Development and Finance Institution (NEDFI), Khadi and Village Industrial Commission (KVIC), and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE). This will help Hira artisans to get the result of their hard work.
- There should be some programmes organized by some NGO or institution for especially the Hira women as they are the main artisans of earthenware making culture. This will help the women artisans to discuss the problems they are facing during the earthenware-making activity. This will also be helpful to take some suitable measures for the upliftment of earthenware culture and the outcome etc. This will encourage Hira women and help to raise their status.

Earthenware-making is an employment-oriented culture. By using all-natural raw materials and tools people can practice earthenware without the help of any machine. It provides rural people engagement. And Hira women can also engage in this type of rural industry. It plays an important role to improve the socio-economic-cultural life of the Hira people. At present, in some areas, the situation has been changed gradually. Hira community is facing many challenges in preserving their cultural pride in this modern complex world. The identity of the Hira community is in danger. People are now slowly forgetting the traditional artistic culture of the Hira community. So the artisans are now struggling to keep their unique culture alive. Now compared to the investment, Hira artisans only get a little amount of money by selling those earthen products. In the market also now, there are different types of machine-made, durable

products which create a negative impact on the Hira products. But not in a single village, Hira people try to adopt any new and modern scientific methods or modify their old and slow techniques and methods of earthenware making in these modern times. Under all those changing circumstances now many Hira families started to leave their old age occupational culture. And if these will be continued, very soon we will lose a beautiful, unique craft that represents one community's culture. Although the changes in society are inevitable because of its dynamic nature, it is very important to preserve and protect the traditional culture of the Hira community. Without Hira Earthenware Assamese society will be spineless. So proper practical measures should be taken to improve the Hira earthenware culture very soon. And it is also equally important to preserve and protect the skill and talent of the Hira artisans. Because the uniqueness of the Hira earthenware mainly depends on the skill and talent of the artisans. Hira artisans should get the recognition and respect they deserve for their talent. It is the correct time to return the glory of these traditional artisans and the true value of their indigenous culture. So this craft should be extended to the different parts of our country with proper scientific methods and techniques. For the upliftment of the Hira earthenware culture, they have to modify their techniques and methods of earthenware making, need to inform the government to provide them quality raw material, adopt the new and modern design for their earthenware, produce the earthenware based on the new changed society, follow the glaze earthenware making process. This will help the young and unemployed people in our country to earn lots of money. Also, this will help this handicraft to revive and compete with other alternative market products. This will bring good news for indigenous Hira artisans and they will be encouraged to produce more market-oriented earthen products. More Hira people will be interested to continue their fore fatherly craft. The young generation of the Hira community should take the initiative to develop this beautiful craft-making culture. Then only we can expect a bright future for the Hira earthenware. The all-around development of the Hira community is very important for the long-time survival of this beautiful Culture.

5.3 Delimitation of the Study:

1. The present study is delimited to only South Kamrup though many Hira people live in the other part of the Kamrup district and the State.
2. The present study also delimited six Hira villages of South Kamrup. Because it is impossible to cover all the places due to lack of time and resources.
3. The present study is only included 10 Hira households from each sample village.
4. Another delimitation of the study is the researcher tried to put all the points in this study relating to the changes in earthenware culture and the socio-economic condition of the Hira community at present. But some points might have not included in the present study.

5.4 Scope for Future Study

The present study is an attempt to help the Hira artisans in minimizing the challenges they are facing at present and develop their beautiful earthenware culture. Many scholars discussed the impact of Globalization, Industrialization, Modernization on different Scheduled Caste Communities in India. But it is also important to throw light on the people of the Hira community that how they are struggling for their existence and their ancient culture in this changing situation. Now the day-to-day life of the Hira community is influenced by the process of modernization. Modern values and environment gradually replacing the traditional way of living of the Hira community. To developed the lifestyle, most of the Hira people started to look for a new better source of income. At present, their occupational culture is not on the right track. This study focused on the social-economic condition of the Hira community, their earthenware culture, changes they are facing at the present scenario, positive and negative factors affecting the life of Hira community people, reasons for their backwardness, etc. to bring the Hira artisans to the right track. This will also help the artisans to regain confidence regarding their earthenware culture and develop this cottage industry. The present study will help policymakers to implement some policies and programmes for the development of the socio-economic condition of the Hira Community and to uplift their indigenous occupational culture.

To develop and revive the earthenware culture it is very important to remove the challenges from its grass root level. And for this, support from both Government and Non-Government is equally important. The present study opens up new scope for further study in this respect.

References:

- Baruah, B. K. (1986). *A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period)*. Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall.
- Das, B. (1986). *A Glimpse of Scheduled Caste & Their Socio-economic Development in Assam*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
- Gait, E. A. (1901). *A Note on Manufacture of Pottery in Assam*. New Delhi: Central Archaeological Library.
- Medhi, A. (2011). *Socio-Economic Status of Hira Women: A Case Study of Barpeta, Assam*. Ph.D. Thesis, Gauhati University.
- Nijhawan, N. K. (1969). Inter-Generational Occupational Mobility. *Economic and Political weekly*. IV (39), 1553-1557.
- Sarma, S. N. (1985). *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 A.D.)*. Guwahati: Arunoday Press.