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## **Potters, Profession and their Livelihood Opportunity under Rural Industrialization: A Quantitative Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

*Literary the people who made earthen product are known as “Potters” and the profession is called as “Pottery”. It is also well known that a caste or community defined or given a name according to its occupation and from this point of view the section of people who exclusively belongs to the profession of pottery are known as “Hiras” in Assam. It is observed that the socio-economic conditions of the Hira people have been deteriorating and the pottery workers are shifting to other profession because of the low development of pottery industry. Against this backdrop, an attempt has been made to examine the socio-economic conditions of the targeted populations. The paper also identified some emerging areas where alternative livelihood opportunities may be materialized provided government and other agencies are sufficient enough to take the initiative for rural industrialization. Data are collected from primary and secondary sources and descriptive statistics has been used whenever necessary arises.*

**Key Words: Potters, Profession, Livelihood, Earthen Crafts, Rural Industrialization.**

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### **Section 1:**

**Rationale of the Study:** The study is most substantial in present day context, considering the rising trends of labor unrest and sporadic disturbances arising out of increasing unemployment, low education and extreme poverty among the Hira workers. The rising frustration, step-motherly treatment of the Government and migratory nature of the people associated with such profession naturally draw attention to make in-depth study of the situation. The beauty and significance of our proposed study lies on the fact that since time immemorial the pottery craft is considered as the principal means of occupation by the Hira community people but at present this crafts industry is going to be disappearing from our society. We can ignore the use of various product produced by the Hira people as there is abundant similar substitute products in the market but we can't throw out the artisans associated with this art from our society. The real incomes of the workers associated with this profession have declined over the years instead of increasing in tandem with the growth of economy and therefore it is significant to make a comprehensive and scientific study

regarding the deteriorating economic conditions of this community. The contribution made by the craft industry towards the national income particularly in the state of Assam is very small due to its being unorganized, with the additional constraints of lack of education, low capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework. Moreover, availability of plastic items, competition from the other similar type of industries under global economic market and most importantly our's attitude to its crafts and craftspeople are some of the root causes of deteriorating conditions of this industry. Therefore, the study of socio-economic background of the Hira community people in the state of Assam particularly of Nalbari district is very much essential to understand its population dynamics and socio-economic well-being among many others in proper perspective.

Agriculture is the backbone of Nalbari but the handicraft industry particularly cane and bamboo along with pottery industry occupies an important place in the district. According to the 1971 census report there are altogether 18 numbers of Kumar and Hira dominated villages in Nalbari who are totally depends on this craft industry. It is known to all that a caste or community defined or given a name according to its occupation and from this point of view the section of people who exclusively belongs to the profession of pottery are known as "Hiras" in Assam. The traditional industry located in the district reveals about the own heritage and culture, and on the other hand a huge section of the people from different communities depends on this art directly or indirectly for their livelihood.

With respect to industrial development is concerned in the district it is not advance in nature. Statistically there are 68 no. of MSME in Nalbari district against 1218 registered unit in the State as a whole and the no. of workers registered in these units are only 391 which is very much margin as per its potentialities. Till 2010, only 42 industrial units have been established where 207 workers are engaged. But at present the rural artisans are shifting to other place and occupation for their livelihood because of the deteriorating economic conditions. Thus failure to modernize the rural economy by industrialization and non-revamp of pottery industry yields serious problems to the targeted populations.

The paper mainly concerned with the pottery craft of a marginalized community known as "Hira community" and therefore stressed has been given to bring into focus about the different aspects of this industry in terms of their socio-economic development. Similarly the paper also highlighted about the emerging areas where industrial unit could be established to develop the rural economy. If it is possible then not only the Hira community people but the unemployed youth from the other classes will be benefited. Therefore, the present study may claim enough significant in the State and in Nalbari district of Assam in particular.

## **1.2 Objectives:**

The main objectives of the present study is to-

- i) To know about the present status and socio-economic conditions of the workers associated with the pottery industry; and

- ii) To identify the prospects of livelihood opportunity in lower part of Assam under the umbrella of rural industrialization.

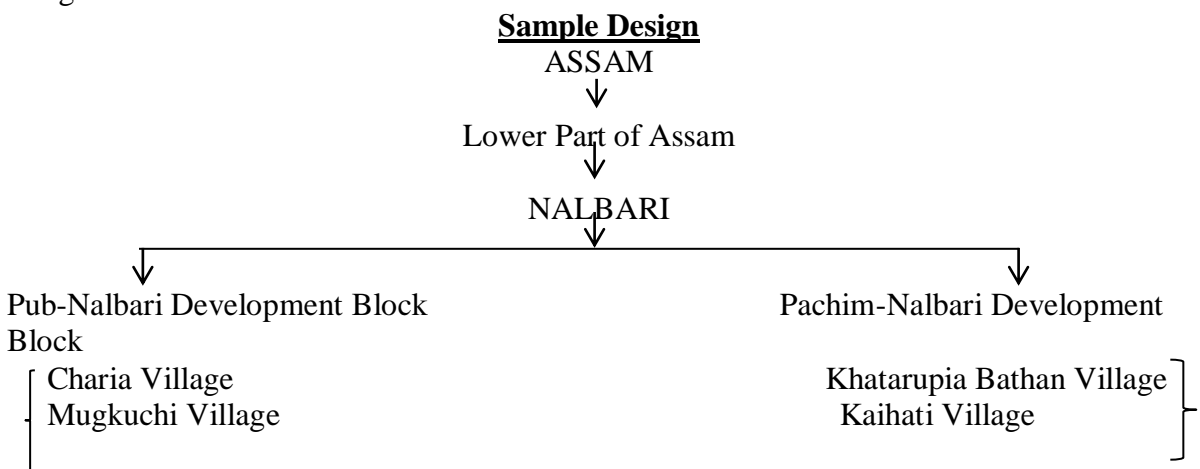
**1.3 Research Questions:** Since the proposed study is exploratory in nature, the following research questions have been framed:

1. Is the socio-economic condition of the Hira people are increasing?
2. Whether there is scope for industrialization in the study area?

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 incorporates data and methodology for the analysis. In Section-3 we do data analysis. A theoretical study regarding the institutions for industrial support in Assam in Section-4 and finally we conclude the work in Section -5.

**Section 2:**

**Data and Methodology:** The sample designed used in selecting the sample is stratified mixed purposive sampling in nature. For primary data, two blocks i.e., Pub-Nalbari Development Block and Pachim-Nalbari Development Block from the district of Nalbari were selected purposively out of seven development blocks of the district. Then two revenue villages from each development block were selected, namely- Charia and Mugkuchi from Pub-Nalbari Development Block and Khatarupia Bathan (Sahpur) and Kaihati villages from Pachim-Nalbari Development Block randomly to pick up the required data. In the next stage, based on the numbers of Hira people who are working in pottery industry seriously were selected randomly from the selected villages. Accordingly 100 percent Hira household were picked up from Mugkuchi and Kaihati village and 50 percent from Khatarupia Bathan and 25 percent from Charia and this exercise yields 58 Hira households in the study area who are working seriously for their livelihood. With respect to methodology is concerned, a well-structured questionnaire based on the objectives of the study prepared by the author and thus necessary information were collected which are quantitative in nature. After this, information’s were converted into statistical figure within a manageable group and then this raw data were classified into some purposeful and usable categories.



In the process of analysis, statistical measures like mean and percentage were used wherever requirement arises. Print and e-materials also used to get the secondary information and finally the validity of the objectives were justified through research questions.

**Section 3:**

**Data Analysis:**

**3.1 Socio-Economic Profile Of Sample Villages:** The study finds that the livelihood sources of the sample households are similar in the sense that the study included only those Hira households who are exclusively depends on pottery industry. So in the discussion of income of the household the study integrated the income received from the production of pottery and selling of it. Additionally the survey made an enquiry whether there is any shifting of workers for livelihood and finds that in some family (13 out of 58 sample) diversification is taking place. But the income received from the other or new occupation does not have a significant impact in reducing the poverty in the family as said by the respondents. Income from the sources like-agricultural and non-agricultural wage, cultivation, off farm activities, livestock and other sources (salary, pension, remittances etc.) is very much nominal. In fact whatever they produce in the form of cultivation or livestock, these are used for domestic consumption purposes and thus cannot contribute in the basket of income sources. In the absence of own land ownership, poor capital, no investment, ignorance and illiteracy leads to the serious problems in the way of socio-economic development of the households.

The significant finding with respect to income received from the pottery business is that they received a nominal income which is not sufficient to run their family. Only 16 household out of 58 surveyed households received income more than rupees 2001 per month (Table-3.1). The income received less than rupees 400 per month is 08 as per our classification. It clearly shows that the Hira people are struggling for survival. Currently they are searching for new avenues or place either to settle or to maintain their family in subsistence level leading to mobility of Hira people to other profession.

**Table-3.1 Socio-economic Profile of Sample Villages**

Attributes		Kaihati	Khatarupia Bathan	Mugkuchi	Charia
Population Feature	Total	13	98	08	190
	Male	06	48	04	88
	Female	07	50	04	102
	Average Age	36.23	25.06	36.87	31.31
	Ave. Edu	5.30	8.63	11.33	8.02
	HHS	4.33	4.9	4.0	5.75
Religion	Hindu	13	98	08	190
	Islam	0	0	0	0
	Others	0	0	0	0

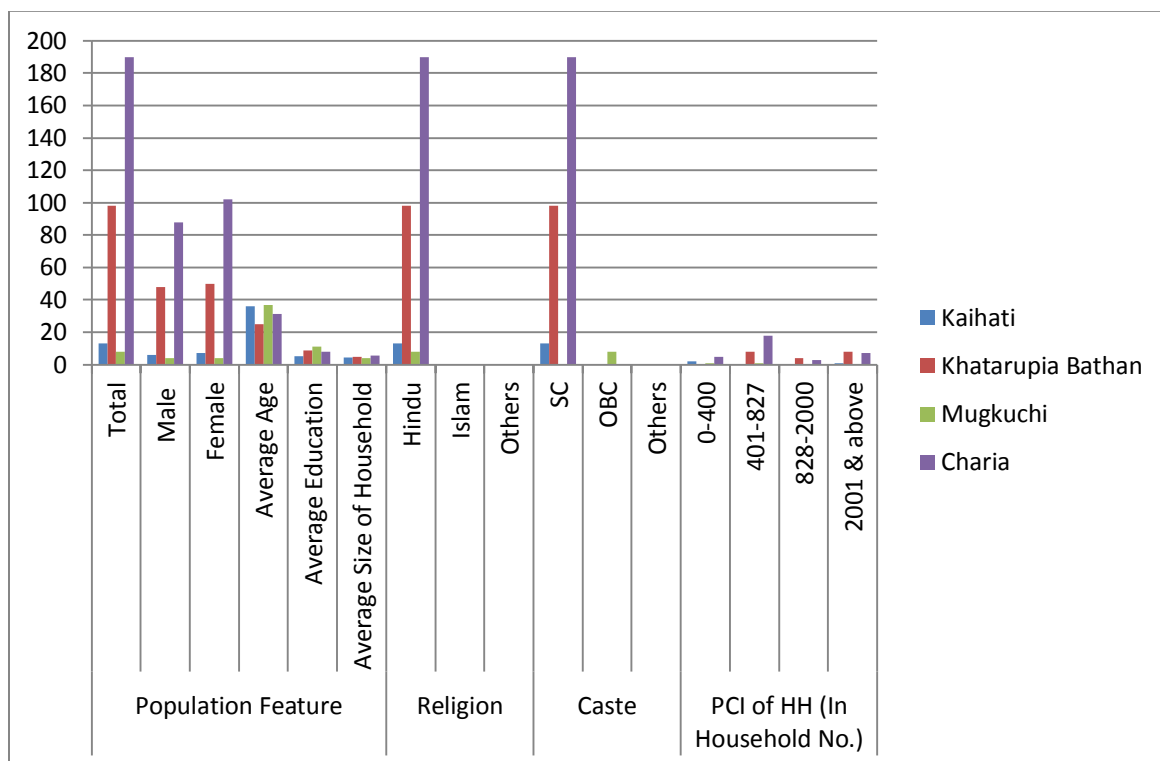
Caste	SC	13	98	0	190
	OBC	0	0	08	0
	Others	0	0	0	0
MPCI of HH (In Household No.)	0-400	2	0	1	5
	401-827	0	8	1	18
	828-2000	0	4	0	3
	2001 & above	1	8	0	7

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2015 & 2016**

*\*MPCI is estimated on the basis of income received from the production and sale pottery only*

Table-3.1 shows that out of 309 surveyed populations it is found that the average education level in completed years is very low in all four villages. But the age composition in average size is a positive factor in this regard while speaking about the scope of development of pottery industry if they are ready to work in this industry. In Charia, household size is comparatively high (5.75) than other three villages.

**Figure-3.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Sample Villages**



It is also found that till to date only Hindu people are busy in making pottery items in the study areas. Community wise, 301 people belongs to the schedule caste whereas only 08 belongs to other backward class community among the surveyed household.

### 3.2 Decomposition of Sample Household (Apl/Bpl as Per Tendulkar Committee Report, 2012)

Table-3.2 shows the economic status of sample household. As per the report of Tendulkar committee (2012), a household is said to be below the poverty line (BPL) if the monthly per capita income is less than rupees 828. In the present study it is estimated that 35 households are in BPL category and 23 are in APL category among the sample households.

**Table-3.2: Decomposition of APL/BPL Household**

Estimated MPCPI of HH (Rs)	Kaihati	Khatarupia bathan	Mugkuchi	Charia
0.....400	2	0	1	5
401.....827	0	8	1	18
828.....2000	0	4	0	3
2001.....and above.....	1	8	0	7
No. of BPL Household	2	8	2	23
No. of APL Household	1	12	0	10

**Source: Authors own Estimation**

**3.3 General Profile Of Sample Villages:** Table-3.3 highlighted about the general profile of the sample villages with respect to different parameters. It is evident that all the surveyed households have the bank or post office savings account and this has become possible due to the government initiative of financial inclusion strategy especially of Jan Dhan Yojana Policy. 23 households have the membership with NGOs which indicates about the status of social capital. Significantly out of 58 sample household, 27 households have the BPL card but the survey results shows that 35 households are below the BPL category as per Tendulkar Committee Report.

Similarly, not a single household made new investment in last 5 years for the development of their industry. Only one household in Charia benefitted from the National Old Age Pension Scheme and all total 07 households received the housing benefit under IAY among the sample households. Not a single household received any assistance from NGOs and the role of NREGA, WPS, NDP, NMP towards the development in the surveyed villages are suspicious.

**Table-3.3: General Profile of Sample Villages**

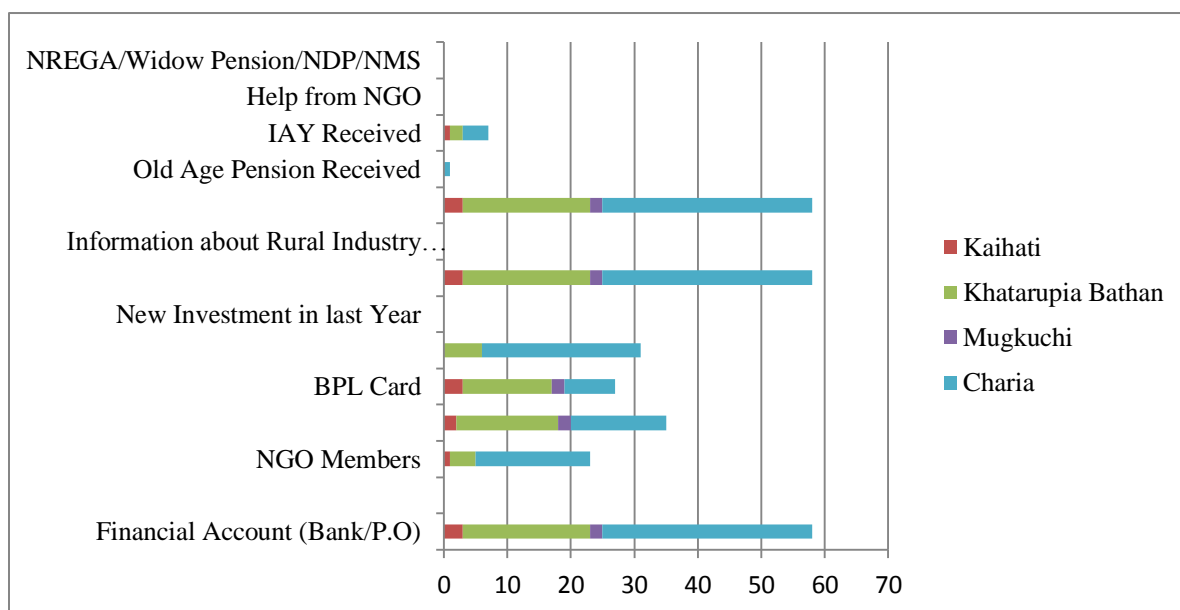
Attributes		Kaihati	Khatarupia Bathan	Mugkuchi	Charia
Financial Account (Bank/P.O)	Yes	3	20	2	33
	No	0	0	0	0
NGO Members	Yes	1	4	0	18
	No	2	16	2	15
BPL Card	Yes	3	14	2	8

	No	0	6	0	25
New Investment in last Year	Yes	0	0	0	0
	No	3	20	2	33
Information about Rural Industry Development	Yes	0	0	0	0
	No	3	20	2	33
Old Age Pension Received		0	0	0	1
IAY Received		1	2	0	4
Help from NGO		0	0	0	0
NREGA/Widow Pension/NDP/NMS		0	0	0	0

Source: Field Survey Data, 2015 & 2016

In the following Figure-3.2 shows the general profile of the sample villages in bar diagram.

Figure-3.2: General Profile of Sample Villages



**3.4 Development Deficit of Sample Villages:** An attempt has been made to identify the development gap in surveyed villages with respect to literacy rate, work participation rate, female literacy rate and female work participation rate in the study area. Thus based on the survey results, Table-3.4 represents the status of development gap of surveyed villages under Pachim-Nalbari Development Block.

**Table-3.4: Development Gap under Pachim-Nalbari Development Block**

Village	Indicators	Survey Result	Estimate for Assam, 2011	Deficit	Priority Assigned
Kaihati	1. Rate of Literacy	61.53	76.89	-15.36	1
	2. Female Literacy	37.50	45.83	-8.33	2
	3. WPR	38.46	30.41	8.05	-
	4. FWPR	60.00	7.21	52.79	-
Khatarupia Bathan	1. Rate of Literacy	61.20	83.51	-22.31	1
	2. Female Literacy	53.34	46.14	7.2	-
	3. WPR	37.75	40.33	-2.58	2
	4. FWPR	64.86	22.30	42.56	-

**Source: Author's own Calculation**

It is evident that government should stress on enhancing educational level of the rural crafts people as the deficit is very high (-15.36) and at the same time female literacy level also need to increase in Kaihati. Similarly in Khatarupia Bathan also literacy level and female work participation of the people need to increase. Pottery is female labor oriented crafts industry and under such circumstances if the female workers not interested to extend the help in this regard then it is obvious that this industry is going to be dying in very soon.

**Table-3.5: Development Gap under Pub-Nalbari Development Block**

Village	Indicators	Survey Result	Estimate for Assam, 2011	Deficit	Priority Assigned
Mugkuchi	1. Rate of Literacy	37.50	80.06	-42.56	1
	2. Female Literacy	33.33	45.16	-11.83	2
	3. WPR	50.00	43.37	6.63	-
	4. FWPR	75.00	25.02	49.98	-
Charia	1. Rate of Literacy	60.00	64.19	-4.19	1
	2. Female Literacy	45.62	42.02	3.6	-
	3. WPR	38.94	28.82	10.12	-
	4. FWPR	63.51	14.14	49.14	-

**Source: Author's own Calculation**

Table-3.5 shows the status of development gap of surveyed villages under Pub-Nalbari Development Block. It is evident that government should stress on enhancing educational level of the Hira people as the deficit is very high (-42.56) and at the same time female literacy level also need to be increase in Mugkuchi. Similarly in Charia the literacy level of the people need to be increase. The survey finds that the highest level of education attained by the household members among the Hira family is very low. Hardly 11 persons have the



qualification of 12 and more than 12 out of 309 surveyed populations which is a serious concern.

#### **Section 4:**

**Institutions for Industrial Support:** To strengthen the industrial sector, government has set up the following institutions/offices for the benefit of local industrial person/entrepreneurs at different levels:

1. Directorate of Industries and Commerce in all NE States;
2. District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICCC);
3. Directorate of Rural Development (DRDA);
4. State Industrial Development Corporations (SIDCs) like ASIDC, AIDC etc.;
5. Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE);
6. North Eastern Technical and Consultancy Organisation (NEITCO);
7. Micro-Small and Medium Enterprise Development Institute (MSME-DI);
8. National Small Industries Corporations (NSIC);
9. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC);
10. North Eastern Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation (NEHHDC);
11. North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC);
12. Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT);
13. Agriculture and Process Food Export Development Authority (APEDA);
14. Marine Product Export Development Authority (MPEDA);
15. Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC);
16. Inland Container Depot (Dry Port) etc.

Apart from such facilities and measures, government has been approved recently a number of packages including credit, cluster based development, technology and marketing, Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstructions (BIFR) etc.

**4.1 Scope of Livelihood Opportunity in the Study Area:** The potentiality of industrial development in the study area is vast assuming demographic advantages of the Hira people and other growing unemployed youth from other communities, in heritage skill of pottery making art, growing demand of fashionable earthen pots, new business opportunity under Look Act Policy, growing border trade relationship with the neighboring state and countries. In other words, there is a good scope in the development of rural craft industry along with the other related entrepreneurship business in the study area. Considering geographical isolation, stress should be given on the use of locally available resources as per the demand. Using the advantages of government policy, the local units need to be emphasis in improving their competitive efficiency. In this context, following livelihood opportunities are identified and it is expected that if such industrial units are established then it will increase the employment not only to the Hira community people but to the unemployed youth of the other communities as well.

Thus the major thrust areas in this regard are-

- i. Earthen craft industry with commercial and competitive basis and for this tie-ups could be made with the countries like-Bangladesh, Thailand, China etc.;
- ii. Terracotta industry with the cooperation of local and international professional bodies;
- iii. Cane and bamboo industry products including home furniture and decorative items;
- iv. Zapi industry i.e., a traditional item made of bamboo and dry leaf of trees which has high socio-cultural values in Assamese society;
- v. Handloom and weaving industry also has a good prospect in the study area and for this tie-ups could be made with the professional designer and readymade textile industries;
- vi. Production of different kinds of doll, toys and other decorative flowers and vessels etc.;
- vii. Production of leather shoes, bags, chandal, purse etc. and for this tie-ups could be made with the companies like Bata, Khadims, Sree Leathers etc.;
- viii. Agro and food processing based industrial units like poultry, pork, fish etc. and for this a possible tie-ups could include companies like-Arambagh, Venkateshwara etc.;
- ix. Manufactures of pickles, sauces and chutney in collaboration with brands such as Mothers, Ruchi and Priya etc.;
- x. Papad preparing with possible tie-ups companies like Lijjat, MTS etc.;
- xi. Cashew and snack foods with the help of Haldiram, Bikaji etc.;
- xii. Extraction and processing of medical plants with the cooperation of Himalaya Drug, Dabur, Patanjali etc.;
- xiii. Manufacture of bamboo products like- boards and tiles, agarbati sticks, furniture and accessories with the tie-ups of home products companies;
- xiv. Milk processing and dairy products in association with companies like Mothers Dairy etc.; and
- xv. Cold storage facilities for contact based supply of agricultural produce, meat, and fish products could be explored within the study area.

### **Section 5:**

**Conclusion:** It is clear from the study that the socio-economic conditions of the targeted populations is not increasing and there is plenty of scope to improve their social and economic status by developing rural industries including pottery itself. Analysis shows that the development gap in the sample villages are of basically due to the poor human capital. Problems like unorganized business, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework need to be tailored effectively.

Assuming demographic advantages of the Hira people, in heritage skill of pottery making art, growing demand of fashionable earthen pots, new business opportunity under Look Act Policy, growing border trade relationship with the neighboring state and countries, the pottery industry can be developed within its perspective. Measures like economic and non-

economic can be implemented towards bettering the multiple problems associated with the pottery industry. Again the craftspeople belonging to this Hira community need to be change their mind set and should ponder on own work and culture and government should come forwardly to make alive this industry. It will help in augmenting the socio-economic conditions of the rural artisans-----a vulnerable section of the society who is supplying some essential items since time immemorial to meet some social, cultural and religious needs.

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