CHAPTER - VII

DEMAND AND MARKETING
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7.1 Demand:

The most important and deciding factor in regards to the progress and development of any industry — simple or sophisticated, craft or enterprise or unit, is its demand. Demand operates as amplifying mechanism for promoting or demoting the production. Moreover, demand can control and maintain the balance of production in the market. When demand increases, the production also will have to be increased at the same rate. Arnold has given an excellent justification in regards to the demand of the ceramic products. He opines, "Demand can provide both regulatory and deviation amplifying feedback for ceramic production. If there is no demand for ceramic containers, there is no advantage in making pottery and demand acts as a deviation counteracting mechanism preventing the development of the craft. If demand for ceramics is limited, demand acts as a deviation counteracting mechanism, permitting some production, but limiting its development into a full-time craft. If, however, demand for ceramic vessels is great or growing, demand acts as a deviation amplifying mechanism which results in the intensification of pottery making and its evolution into a full-time craft." (Arnold, 1989: 127).

This is very true in regards to the production of ceramics in Assam. The fact is, in certain areas of Assam like Darisatra and Jharikuchi villages of Boko and Dimoria blocks respectively, potters become full-time craftsmen due to its demand in those areas. Contrary to it, in certain blocks like Chandrapur, Chayani etc. the production is limited counteracting the limited demand. Moreover, in some areas the potters are totally deviating from pottery production because of negative demand.
However, demand for ceramic vessel regulates several factors to accommodate the need and choice of the common man. Some of these are — availability, durability, fragility, cheapness, technological advantage, density and growth of neighbouring population etc. Demand in terms of production on the other hand, is also closely related with the transport and marketing facilities of a particular area.

Nevertheless, ceramic vessel has some definite technological advantages. In regards to this, Arnold opined, "As a channel for energy and nutrient flow, ceramic vessels provide a number of advantages over containers of other materials like basketry, hide, wood, stone or more regional materials like bamboo, coconut shells, gourds or calabashes. First, the refractory properties of pottery permit the direct and sustained heating of water and food. Cooking using ceramic vessels makes it easier to process food by boiling or steaming. These procedures render food more digestible or palatable by limiting the cooking temperature to 100 degrees C. and by preventing carbonization of food surfaces and the excessive loss of water content." (Arnold, 1989:128). In fact, the refractory properties of the clay expand the range of food preparation and preservation techniques which are not possible with any other non-metal containers. This is one of the remarkable property and technological advantage of the ceramic vessel.

The demand of ceramic vessels manufactured by the Hiras could be categorised primarily into two aspects — (i) utilitarian and (ii) non-utilitarian. As far as the utilitarian factor is concerned, it is mostly related to the cooking vessels and the vessels used for other domestic purposes. Assamese people are habituated to snack food and usually take varieties of snacks between the principal meals both in the morning and in the afternoon. In rural areas, in particular, they prefer home-made snacks instead of purchased snacks like cake,
biscuit etc. Generally, they prepare assorted types of cakes from rice-powder and in addition to self consumption they feel happy to offer those to the guests and invitees. As a matter of fact, they need different types of cake preparing devices. In response to their demand, the Hira manufacture different kinds of vessels like *Pat charu*, *Jap charu* etc. which are used for preparing the rice cakes of various categories.

Moreover, the tribals have divergent demands for earthen vessels. They require vessels for sundry occasions and utilities. Besides cooking, they need vessels for preparation of rice-beer. Apart from their regular use of vessels like *Bhatar charu*, also they need a good quality of vessels for large scale rice beer and liquor preparation and conservation. For this, they want vessels like *Jonga*, *Kata*, *Hari* etc. for fermentation. The rice-beer prepared and stored in earthen vessels remain in good condition for long period of time without being contaminated as it mostly happens in metallic vessels.

The curd or *doi* is considered as a great delicacy by the Assamese people. Hence, for all kinds of graceful occasions like marriage party, feast of varied kinds, curd is an indispensable food item for them. Among the Hindus, curd is an essentiality even for offering pujas to the almighty. In fact, the Assamese people count a feast incomplete without curd. However, for preparation of curd earthen vessels of different shapes and sizes are necessary. Most preferred earthen vessels are *Doi basan*, *Ghai*, *Kata* etc. For this, the vessels fashion by the Hira potters are highly preferred by the client. In South Kamrup, metallic container like bowl or glass are never used for fear of toxicity or even food poisoning. In fact, ceramic vessels are often free from such contamination and so the demand of these vessels persist from long time.
The non-cooking type of vessel like pitcher (Kalah) has great demand and is intensively used for water carrying and storing purposes. Water stored in earthen pitchers remained cool, fresh, refreshing and thirst-quenching in the sultry summer. Nonetheless, the womenfolk carry water from far off places in pitcher. These water carrying vessels are carried by keeping the base of the vessel on the hip and holding the high neck by bended arm. In this way, they can comfortably carry water from a longer distance.

In different provinces of India same vessels with a little modification have been need for the same purposes. Even the people of 'northern Yucatan peninsula of Mexico' carried water from distance places in the way as the Assamese people do.

The shapes and sizes of water carrying vessels plays a dominant role because these varies from place to place and so also its demand. Regarding the shapes and sizes of these vessels Arnold opined, "Motor habits in a culture are often congruent with particular vessel shapes and can create a demand for these shapes. This motor habit pattern is reflected in three requirements for the vessel shapes: (1) a sharp angle between the base of the vessel and the vessel walls so that the pot will not slip off the hip; (2) a long extended neck for placing the arm around it and holding it in place; and (3) a particular height of the body of the vessel in order for it to fit comfortably between the hip and the bent arm." (Arnold, 1989: 147)

In compliance with the above, another set of vessel could be referred. Hira produces frying pan (Pat charu) of varying shapes and sizes. These vessels are usually used for preparation of puff rice, parched rice, flat rice and fried flour cake. But occasionally these are also used for cooking rice. The puff rice and parched rice are the favourite food for the immigrants people living in
certain localities. For this, they demand a deep based, oval shape and large size frying pan. Hence, the Hiras of adjacent localities of these areas are fashioning the frying pan of above dimension, which are having great demand in those areas. The Hiras of Chamaria; Darisatra and Jharikuchi are supplying these vessels to their immigrant customers. On the otherhand, the Assamese people demand a flat-shape, shallow and medium size frying-pan for preparation of flat rice and rice cakes. Therefore, the potters of these adjacent areas manufacture frying pan in response to the demand of their clients.

(ii) The non-utilitarian factor that effect the demand of the potteries is in fact, a specific one in terms of the Hiras. The most of the product of Hiras are utilitarian and therefore, non-utilitarian are very few. However, some of the potteries of this category are used for ritualistic and social ceremonial purposes. In fact, the ritualistic potteries are not purchased by the client directly from the Hiras. For this middle men are the key seller. This is a well accepted fact that the ritualistic potteries once used cannot be reutilized and therefore, it has to be virtually rejected. For the second time a new type will be necessary. Often times these potteries has to be broken. This has increased the demand of the production of such potteries.

Hiras are also produced toys of various kinds. In South Kamrup, Hiras manufacture those toys at the time of fiestas like Raas, Bhattheli (Suari) etc. Those toys mostly represent the symbols of mythical beings or some religious activity. These however, have restricted demand as most of the products lack exquisiteness.

The musical instruments are kinds of vessels of this category which could be compared with kettledrums. In South Kamrup, a few Hira potters manufacture these ceramic drums. They have covered the upper portion with a hide which is
tied to the bottom with a number of strips of the same hide. The same type of instruments are used among the Tuareg of Sahara in north Africa. (Hambly, 1937: 450).

The demand of such potteries found to be increased before certain major domestic and community rituals and festivals. In South Kamrup, besides Raas and Suaril/Bhatheli, the Durga puja, Lakshmi puja, Diwali, Bihu and many other festivals people needs various kinds of vessels both in domestic as well as community sectors. During this occasions, there is a great demand for various kinds of potteries and accordingly potters manufacture potteries day and night. The same situation also has been observed by Nash in Amatenango, Chiapos (1961: 187) and Arnold in Yucatan peninsula (1989: 160)

Over and above, cheapness, durability in relation to the wheel turned potteries, and need based morphology could also be counted for their demand. The poor section of the society who cannot afford the costly metallic objects are always the most prominent client of Hira who produce the utilitarian pottery for day to day utility.

It has already been stated that the production balances the demand. The quantam of annual production of Hira potteries in South Kamrup is shown in Table-10 essentially justify the demand of the products which is explained below.

The potteries have been divided into two categories i.e. (i) conventional and (ii) special. However, the highest percentage of production has been found among the conventional category. Within these also Doibasan has a great demand with a percentage of 20.33. The frying pan (Pat charu) attains the second highest percentage 13.09. The third highest percentage (12.72) attains by wide mouthed vessel (Ghai) which is also used for curd preparation.
Among the special category the first highest percentage (3.62) is attained by the *Jap charu* and *Maloi* occupies it second highest position (3.38%) with in the category. *Dhupdani* — a incense burning stand whose utility is mostly religious occupies the third position with 2.15% among the special category.

Finally, the most important aspect which increases the demand of the Hira potteries is its superb characteristic features which are never found among the wheel turned potteries. The mechanism of manufacture has a great bearing with the demand. In fact, the beating exerts a tremendous force in the soil particles and repetition of this, fuses the mineral particles of the soil and plugged all porosities. Both beating and watering increased the plasticity of the clay and also gives a polish surface to the vessels. This is one of the unique characteristic feature of the Hira potteries which attract the clients. The persons who once used these vessels are basically attached to it and whenever need comes they go for these vessels only.

7.2 Marketing:

Marketing is an essential distributive mechanism which convert craft products into items needed for subsistence. It serves as a channel of interaction between consumers and manufacturers or sellers. Unless there is proper understanding and appreciation of what people want, the productivity of craft from manufacturing level to sales level cannot be improved. In fact, a well organized and co-ordinated marketing facility can increase the range of sale as well as income of the craftsmen.

Marketing of the ceramic products is not an essentiality for those potters who are manufacturing potteries only for their own consumption. In contrast pottery is the prime subsistence resource for those potters who are not cultivators but full-time potters. These full-time potters and the entire family are
busy with the pottery production and marketing. As a matter of fact, marketing of the product is the basic need for those potters.

Hiras of South Kamrup belong to the second category and in fact, marketing of their craft products control everything. But, it is a matter of great regret that the marketing facilities for the Hira potters of South Kamrup are not at all organized to create better advancement of the craft and concomitant economic welfare of the craftsmen. In the following pages discussion will be based primarily on the channel of marketing of the products. At the same time it will also visualise their income oriented resources.

Ceramic, though one of the oldest cottage industry of South Kamrup, is now in abysmal condition, as far as its economic status is concerned. This is mostly due to competition from the cheap, durable metallic, plastic and aluminium vessels and containers. These become the greatest impediment for the potters and Hiras in particular, because the later's production lack exquisitiness. This may be due to their low tenacity and inferiority complex and in fact, this disposition or temperament is exploited by the middleman and traders. Hence, they are compelled to sell their products at paltry price as they do not have command over this. Besides, the mahajans pressurised the potters to sell the products at throw away prices which often times below the cost of their production. Sometimes, they took money from the mahajans in advance and thereby they are forced to sale the pottery at the rate whatever has been given or fix by the mahajans. Nevertheless, there are considerable numbers of channels through which the finished products are disposed by the potters. These are described below:

(i) Direct sale at residence: In this system the buyers came to the potters, residences and the potters directly sell their products to them. As the vendee
came to their residence, they are unable to claim high price and often times, they are to sale their potteries at the rate below their cost of production. Therefore, this system of sell is not a profitable one for the Hiras.

(ii) **Peripatetic sale**: In this process of sell, potters have to carry their products from village to village and sell these directly to the customers. Usually, these villages are located within their walkable distance, which they could cover in a day.

(iii) **Local market**: This is the common channel of marketing most of the potteries in South Kamrup. Potters transported their products to the respective local weekly and bi-weekly hats/bazars/markets by pull-cart, bullock cart or by **bhar**. There they arranged a temporary stall by displaying the vessels and sell their products. The customers purchased their required potteries from them usually at some bargaining.

(iv) **Mutual contract or order basis**: Potters often disposed their articles on contract or order basis. For this, they enter into mutual agreement or mutually acceptable terms with the dealers, traders, contractor/mahajan for the supply and sale of pottery products according to the later's specifications. It is observed that often times some potters received some amount of money in advance from for purchasing the raw material or for some other purposes.

(v) **Paikari system**: Paikari or whole sale system is another mode of marketing through the middleman. The potters make potteries in accordance with the order of specifications of the buyers or middleman. These traders collect the potteries from the potter's house or the potters themselves carried the products to the traders. In fact, it is considered an easy outlet for the disposal of their products. Usually, the potters received competitively lower price but it has an advantage of selling the whole lot at a time and thereby getting a reasonable amount at close hand.
(vi) Barter system: Barter system or direct exchange system is also an accepted form of marketing of potteries in South Kamrup. Sometimes potters exchange their potteries with food grains, cloth, pulses and other household requirements. But it is difficult to assess the criterion of exchanges among them as there are no yardstick or standard of exchanges of potteries. Besides, it depends upon the potters requirements and demand. However, habitually, they have done it by resolving the market price of different commodities. The womenfolk often exchange the potteries with rice, vegetables and other edible items. Above this, potters procured some required raw material like husk, firewood, stover etc. for firing/burning the potteries.

(vii) Jaota system: This is a contractual and long term practice of barter extended over a year known as Jaota system. In this practice, potters supply the requirement of all kinds of potteries for the whole year to the peasents and in turn, they acquire sizeable quantity of crops soon after the harvesting without maintaining any strict accounts from both sides. This is in fact, a beneficial practice for potters because he receives his requirements of rice for consumption for the whole year. Besides, he also procured straw/stover and other kinds of firing materials by this system. Now, this system almost absent among the Assamese potters.

However, in order to get an idea about the marketing of Hira potteries in South Kamrup, it is considered appropriate to throw light on the weekly market of the respective villages. The Table-11 reflects the weekly market and trading of Hira potteries. Moreover, it also visualised the names of the markets/hats, distances, items/vessels along with their numbers carried to markets, total income, transportation cost, total expenditures and saving thereby. It is discernible from the table that average income of a potter from pottery selling
in the weekly market does not exceed rupees three hundred. The income of pottery in certain villages like Azara (Hirapara) and Dhupguri of Rani block stands a little high. The reason behind this is the demand for the potteries. It is reported that the potters of Azara (Hirapara) supplied the potteries to the tea stall and restaurants of different areas in and around the Guwahati. On the otherhand, the potters of Dhupguri village is surrounded by the tribals who preferred the Hira potteries for their day to day use. Nevertheless, their earning is not sufficient for their livelihood.

Furthermore, the potteries of Amranga and Menapara villages have a lowest earning from the weekly markets. Therefore, they use to manufacture only a limited numbers of potteries due to their limited demand.
### TABLE-11

#### MARKETING (WEEKLY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Village(s)</th>
<th>Market/Hat</th>
<th>Distance (In Km)</th>
<th>Items carried to market</th>
<th>Total number of items</th>
<th>Cost of Transportation (In Rs.)</th>
<th>Total earning (In Rs.)</th>
<th>Expenditure (In Rs.)</th>
<th>Saving (In Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boko</td>
<td>Darisatra</td>
<td>Boko</td>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>K,T,Pc, Ka,H,D</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>20 Pull cart</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamaria</td>
<td>Chamaria</td>
<td>Chamaria</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-do- Kb</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10 Pull cart</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chayani</td>
<td>Amranga</td>
<td>Barihat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Self carrying</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Menapara</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Self carrying</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ozapara</td>
<td>Loharghat</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Self carrying</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhaygaon</td>
<td>Tarigaon</td>
<td>Chhaygaon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Self carrying</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domoria</td>
<td>Jharikuchi</td>
<td>Sonapur</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M, -do-</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50 Pull cart</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malolari</td>
<td>Kalangpar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jc, -do-</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>30 Pull cart</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampur</td>
<td>Bortezpur</td>
<td>Chhaygaon</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30 Pull cart</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dhantola</td>
<td>Bijoy Nagar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>L, -do-</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20 Pull cart</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satpakhali</td>
<td>Bijoy Nagar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50 Pull cart</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rani</td>
<td>Azara (Hilapara)</td>
<td>***Guwahati</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>D, L, -do-</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>60 Truck</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Azara (Noapara)</td>
<td>Gadhiuli Bazar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>10 Pull cart</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Borbari</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>D, -do-</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Self carrying</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dhupguri</td>
<td>Bagan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40 Pull cart</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gargara</td>
<td>Rani</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25 Pull cart</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lankeswar</td>
<td>Dharapur chariali</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20 Pull cart</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sikanhati</td>
<td>Rani</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>J, -do-</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30 Pull cart</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandrapur</td>
<td>Tintukura</td>
<td>Satgaon</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>J, D, -do-</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>40 Pull cart</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

**K** - Kalah, **T** - Tekeli, **Pc** - Pat charu, **Jc** - Jap charu, **Ka** - Kata, **H** - Hari, **M** - Maloi, **J- Jonga**, **Kb** - Khuli Baira, **D** - Doi Basan

*For collection of these data one weekly market of the respective village areas has been studied.

***They are supplying the potteries to the stalls and restaurants etc. In and around Guwahati.*

Source: Survey Data