

SHIFTING CLAY POTTERY OF PRAJAPATIS TOWARDS INDIGENOUS
ENTREPRENEURSHIP: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN MADHYAPUR
THIMI, NEPAL

Biraj Shrestha

A Dissertation

Submitted to
School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Development Studies

Kathmandu University
Dhulikhel, Nepal

January 2026

AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Biraj Shrestha* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in Education (Development Studies)* presented on 14 January 2026, entitled *Shifting Clay Pottery of Prajapatis towards Indigenous Entrepreneurship: An Ethnographic Study in Madhyapur Thimi, Nepal*

APPROVED BY

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Hom Prasad Rai

Dissertation Supervisor

Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi have been practicing their clay pottery for a long time. However, with the changed situation, there is a shift in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. The purpose of this study was to explore the shifting of clay pottery and the indigenous entrepreneurship of the Prajapatis of Madhyapur Thimi. To enrich the study, I have discussed the relevant literature from various journals and other empirical studies. I have conducted an ethnographic study of 9 research participants to examine their existing practices, perceptions, challenges, needs, and shifts in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. To understand these, data and information were collected through participant observation, diary making, in-depth interviews, and informal talks. The collected data were then processed and analysed through data gathering and compiling, transcribing and codification, categorization, and interpretation, linking with the theories.

Prajapatis in wards 5 and 6 of Madhyapur Thimi have been using indigenous knowledge and skills to produce various types of clay items, inherited from their parents and seniors. Collection of clay, kneading it, producing various types of clay items on a motor-driven wheel, drying them in the sunlight, baking them in the kiln, and finally selling them in the market are some of the processes involved in their clay pottery.

The Prajapatis are pessimistic about transferring their indigenous knowledge and skills for producing clay pottery to their new generation because they consider clay work as tough and socially less dignified, and expect their children to engage in easy table work. Lack of clay, indifference of the new generation, lack of understanding of the need for modern education, lack of business plans and ideas, as well as reluctance to try new things, introduction of plastic and metal wares, and increased competition from imported items are the major challenges to Prajapatis' clay pottery. Above all, they want their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship to be promoted by the concerned local bodies and the government.

With the changing times, Prajapatis have observed and realized many shifts in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Ranging from the fetching of clay, kneading of clay, producing clay items, baking them, and selling them in the market, they have observed massive changes. At present, the number of Prajapatis practicing clay pottery is declining. Collectively, the signs and symptoms indicate the degradation of clay pottery, leading towards the extinction of indigenous knowledge, skill, and entrepreneurship among the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi.

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14 January 2026

Biraj Shrestha

Degree Candidate

शोध सार

विकास अध्ययन दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि बिराज श्रेष्ठको शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक “प्रजापतिहरूको माटोको भाँडा बनाउने पेशा आदिवासी उद्यमशीलता उन्मुख: नेपालको मध्यपुर थिमीमा गरिएको इथ्नोग्राफिक अध्ययन” ३० पुष २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

.....
होम प्रसाद राई
शोध निर्देशक

मध्यपुर थिमीका प्रजापतिहरूले लामो समयदेखि माटोका भाँडाकुँडा बनाउने पेशा अँगाल्दै आएका छन्। यद्यपि, समय परिस्थितिसँगै उनीहरूको पेशा र उद्यमशीलतामा परिवर्तन आएको छ। यस अध्ययनको उद्देश्य मध्यपुर थिमीका प्रजापतिहरूको पेशा र आदिवासी उद्यमशीलताको परिवर्तनको अन्वेषण गर्नु थियो। अध्ययनलाई समृद्ध र थप मजबुत बनाउन मैले विभिन्न जर्नलहरू र अन्य अध्ययनहरूसँग सम्बन्धित साहित्यहरूको बारेमा छलफल गरेको छु। मैले प्रजापतिहरूको पेशा र आदिवासी उद्यमशीलतामा विद्यमान अभ्यास, धारणा, चुनौती, आवश्यकता र परिवर्तनहरूको जाँच गर्न सकियोस् भनेर नौ जना अनुसन्धान सहभागीहरूको एथ्नोग्राफिक अध्ययनको बारेमा विस्तृत रूपमा व्याख्या गरेको छु । अध्ययनको सिलसिलामा सहभागीको अवलोकन, डायरी टिपोट, गहन अन्तर्वार्ता र अनौपचारिक कुराकानी मार्फत तथ्याङ्क र जानकारी सङ्कलन गरिएको थियो। त्यसपछि सङ्कलन गरिएका तथ्याङ्कहरूलाई ट्रान्सक्राइबिङ र कोडिफिकेशन, वर्गीकरण र सिद्धान्तहरूसँग जोडेर व्याख्या गरेर प्रशोधन र विश्लेषण गरिएको थियो।

मध्यपुर थिमीको वडा ५ र ६ का प्रजापतिहरूले आफ्ना पुर्खाहरूबाट विरासतका रूपमा प्राप्त आदिवासी ज्ञान र सीपको प्रयोग गर्दै विभिन्न प्रकारका माटोका भाडाकुँडाहरू उत्पादन गर्दै आएका छन्। माटो सङ्कलन गर्ने, मुछ्ने, बिद्युतबाट चल्ने चक्कामा विभिन्न प्रकारका माटोका भाडाकुँडाहरू उत्पादन गर्ने, घाममा सुकाउने, भट्टीमा पोल्ने र अन्तमा बजारमा बेच्ने उनीहरूको पेशाका केही प्रक्रियाहरू हुन्। प्रजापतिहरू माटोको भाँडा बनाउने आफ्नो आदिवासी ज्ञान र सीपलाई आफ्नो नयाँ पुस्तामा हस्तान्तरण गर्न निराशावादी छन् किनभने उनीहरू माटोको कामलाई कठिन, सामाजिक रूपमा कम सम्मानजनक ठान्छन् र आफ्ना छोराछोरीहरूलाई केही सजिलो टेबलमा बसेर गरिने काममा संलग्न गराउने अपेक्षा गर्छन्। माटोको अभाव, नयाँ पुस्ताको उदासीनता, आधुनिक शिक्षाको अभाव, व्यावसायिक योजना र विचारको अभाव साथै नविनतम प्रयासमा अनिच्छा, प्लास्टिक र धातुका सामानहरूको अधिक प्रयोग र आयातित वस्तुहरूसँग प्रतिस्पर्धामा वृद्धि उनीहरूका पेशाका लागि प्रमुख चुनौतीहरू हुन्। साथै उनीहरू

आफ्नो पेशा र आदिवासी उद्यमशीलतालाई सम्बन्धित स्थानीय निकाय र सरकारले प्रवद्र्धन गरोस् भन्ने चाहन्छन् ।

समय परिस्थितिसँगै प्रजापतिहरूले आफ्नो पेशा र उद्यमशीलतामा धेरै परिवर्तनहरू देखेका र महसुस गरेका छन्। माटो ल्याउने, माटो मुछ्ने, माटोका भाडाकुडाहरू उत्पादन गर्ने, पोल्ने देखि लिएर बजारमा बेच्नेसम्म उनीहरूले धेरै परिवर्तनहरू देखेका छन्। हाल, आफ्नो पेशा अंगाल्ने प्रजापतिहरूको संख्या घट्दै गएको छ। समग्रमा, मध्यपुर थिमीका प्रजापतिहरूमा आफ्नो ज्ञान, सीप र आदिवासी उद्यमशीलता लोप हुने दिशामा रहेको संकेतहरू देखा परेका छन्।

.....

बिराज श्रेष्ठ

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

३० पुष २०८२

This dissertation entitled *Shifting Clay Pottery of Prajapatis towards Indigenous Entrepreneurship: An Ethnographic Study in Madhyapur Thimi, Nepal* presented by *Biraj Shrestha* on *14 January 2026*.

APPROVED BY

..... 14 January 2026
Hom Prasad Rai
Dissertation Supervisor

..... 14 January 2026
Suresh Kumar Tamang, PhD
External Examiner

..... 14 January 2026
Asst. Prof. Suresh Gautam, PhD
Head of the Department, Development Studies

..... 14 January 2026
Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD
Dean/Chair of Research Committee

I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

..... 14 January 2026
Biraj Shrestha
Degree Candidate

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

14 January 2026

Biraj Shrestha

Degree Candidate

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Prajapatis of Madhyapur Thimi including my family members: mother Sun Kumari Sahu Shrestha, better half Sabita Shrestha, elder daughter Sulakshana Shrestha, younger daughter Namami Shrestha, twin brother Dr. Bijay Shrestha, younger brother Sundar Shrestha, sisters Ram Shova Shrestha, Pabitra Shrestha, Sarita Shrestha and Shanti Shrestha who always believed on me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Hom Prasad Rai, my dissertation supervisor, for his continuous support, constructive feedback, encouragement, and guidance, which enabled me to complete this study. I am very grateful to Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD, Dean of the School of Education, and Prof. Mahesh Nath Parajuli, PhD, for their continuous encouragement, support, and guidance in completing the dissertation. I am grateful to Prof. Prakash Chandra Bhattarai, PhD, for reminding me continuously of the completion of the dissertation. Similarly, my sincere appreciation goes to Associate Prof. Indra Mani Rai, PhD, for his encouragement, guidance, and support in completing the dissertation. My sincere gratitude goes to Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi, PhD, for editing language in the dissertation.

Lastly, thanks are also due to all the research participants and informants who generously gave their time and provided important information despite their busy schedules. I appreciate their time, patience, and hospitality.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my mother Sun Kumari Sahu Shrestha, my better half Sabita Shrestha, and beloved daughters Sulakshana Shrestha and Namami Shrestha for their love, encouragement, cooperation, and moral support in completing the dissertation.

Biraj Shrestha

Degree Candidate

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
ILO	International Labor Organization
MSE	Micro and Small Enterprises
NEA	Nepal Electricity Authority
RME	Rural Micro Enterprises
SEE	Secondary Education Examination
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SOS	Save Our Soul
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The chapter begins with a background to the study, in which I discuss Prajapatis, their situation, and occupation. After this, I have stated the problem statement, which discusses the main problem of the study. It is followed by the study's main purpose and the research questions. The research questions have guided me to the study's main focus. Along with them, I have mentioned the rationale and significance of the study that shows us the reason and importance of the study. Lastly, I have mentioned the delimitation and the organization of the study before concluding this chapter.

Pottery is one of the indigenous arts that have been practiced for ages and remain relevant in modern society due to the widespread use of pots in traditional settings (Petters et al., 2023). It is defined as 'clay that has been fashioned into a desired shape and then dried to reduce its water content before being fired or baked to fix its form. It was introduced from different civilizations and was accepted, developed, changed, and adapted. A few traditional communities worldwide still maintain this tradition as their occupation (Panda et al., 2019).

Madhyapur Thimi is one of the oldest cities in the Bhaktapur district, located at an elevation of 1326 meters above sea level. It lies at the center of the municipalities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. It is situated 8 kilometers east of Kathmandu and 4 kilometers west of Bhaktapur. The total area of Madhyapur Thimi municipality is 11.47 sq. km. Madhyapur Thimi municipality was established in 2053 B., initially divided into 17 wards. After the restructuring of Nepal into a three-tier government, in 2073 B.S., certain wards were merged and existing wards were minimized into nine wards. It is a traditional city with the mixed group of people mostly Newar people residing in different places within it. Prajapatis are mostly distributed in wards no. 5 and 6 of the main cities. They are the indigenous people who have lived in Madhyapur Thimi for a long time.

Indigenous Livelihoods

Indigenous peoples sustain their economic, social, and spiritual lives through the indigenous livelihood. The livelihood systems are not merely economic activities; they are deeply intertwined with indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems, and

social relations (Chambers & Conway, 1992). They prioritize community well-being, social harmony, and intergenerational continuity. Livelihood activities are guided by Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), which include local and traditional knowledge developed over generations (Berkes, 2012). However, they are significantly disrupted by forced assimilation, extractive development, and the imposition of market-oriented economies that undermine their traditional means of subsistence (Mignolo, 2011). As a result, there is persistence of poverty and loss of cultural identity among the indigenous communities.

Escobar (1995) argues that contemporary development interventions frequently view indigenous livelihoods as “backward” or “unproductive,” promoting modernization strategies that replace traditional practices with wage labor or commercial agriculture. However, many scholars advocate for livelihood diversification that respects indigenous autonomy, cultural values, and knowledge systems rather than erasing them (Scoones, 2009). Even the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognizes Indigenous peoples’ rights to land, resources, and traditional economic activities (United Nations [UN], 2007).

Pottery as an Indigenous Livelihood in Nepal

In the past 30 years, ceramics in the historic pottery town of Thimi have changed drastically from an essential craft and the only occupation for Prajapatis to a struggling population of aging potters (Silver, 2014). With the changing times and entrepreneurial activities, some have already quit their jobs and started a new way of life, whereas others are barely continuing their jobs. The rich craft is currently at a crossroads between extinction and innovation (Foley, 2013). However, in the meantime, some are able to adjust their entrepreneurial activities over time and in response to changing contexts. Though they face the threat of globalization and the introduction of modern utensils and appliances, they are able to refine their skills and shift their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship in line with market demand and local requirements. On the one hand, there is a loss of traditional and indigenous knowledge and identity among the Prajapatis, whereas on the other hand, some are able to adapt their occupation, keep it alive, and face new challenges to their livelihood. Thus, the shifting of clay pottery and the indigenous entrepreneurship of Prajapatis have become crucial empirical subjects. Therefore, this study has attempted to explore how clay pottery is shifting and what factors are responsible for this shift.

Foley (2013) stated that Pottery in the Kathmandu Valley is an ancient tradition dating back to 400 AD. She argues that the Prajapatis are potters by caste. All Prajapatis from ancient times worked with clay. Their main job is to make clay potteries and other clay items. They have a special skill of making clay potteries without having formal training. They learn the skills required for their jobs through the apprenticeship system, from their parents and elders on the job. They are still practicing their indigenous knowledge and techniques for making clay pottery (Mushyan, 2006).

Madhyapur Thimi is one of the cities in Bhaktapur district. The Prajapatis have been residing in different parts of the city for a long time. Mostly, they live in the wards no. 5 and 6 of the city. They have been practicing the traditional pottery-making activities for a long time. They have been exploring their own entrepreneurship in their own way. However, with the changed situation, their entrepreneurship has changed. Some of them have already changed their occupation, whereas some have modified their skills and training to sustain their livelihood. Actually, the changes are evident. Changes in entrepreneurship have produced both positive and negative outcomes. On the one hand, there is a loss of identity among Prajapatis due to changing entrepreneurship, and on the other hand, people are able to sharpen their skills, enhance their economic status, and cope with the changed situation.

Prajapatis have been involved in making clay pots and other clay items for a long time. They have been practicing their clay pottery in their own way for a long time. This same occupation is supporting them in income generation and in their daily livelihood. This has helped them fulfill their daily requirements and engage in other social, religious, cultural, and economic activities. Most of them have been continuing the skill of observing and learning by doing from the seniors in the family. Actually, there is no distinct way of transferring the skill to the younger generation in their community. Nowadays, the younger generation in the Prajapati community is educated and able to cope with the changes taking place in the city due to urbanization and modernization. They can adopt modern technologies to enhance their capabilities and increase production. However, some of them still practice entrepreneurial activities in the same way their parents did in the past. With the changing time, there has been a significant impact on traditional clay-making

practices and on shifts in their entrepreneurial activities. There have been many ups and downs in their entrepreneurial activities since then.

Statement of the Problem

Bushell (2008) has discussed the women entrepreneurship and its challenges in the context of Nepal and suggested potential ways to empower women entrepreneurs and create leadership opportunities in the hopes of bringing women into the mainstream business sector in Nepal. Euba (2025) has explored the potential of SMEs (Small and Micro Enterprises) and entrepreneurship in studio pottery practice as a means to curb unemployment in Nigeria, in which he has found that leveraging creative innovation and sustainable practices, studio-based ceramic enterprises can drive the country's economic growth, reduce unemployment, and contribute to the global ceramics commerce. (Rai et al., 2025) explored shifting yak herding practices in Gatlang, a Tamang village in Rasuwa district, Nepal, in which they have argued that the customary, community-based agro-pastoral system, known as the *Choko* system of the Tamangs, is shifting from community-regulated toward market-driven practices, resulting in negative socioecological consequences, especially due to sociopolitical shifts, climate change, and market pressures. However, the existing literatures pay less attention to how the traditional occupation of Indigenous peoples that sustained their livelihoods for centuries has been shifting towards Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Prajapatis have been practising the traditional occupation of producing clay items for a long time. Nevertheless, over time, their traditional occupation and clay pottery are declining. Due to changing conditions, their occupation has come into shadow (Mushyan, 2006). Because of a number of problems inherent in their occupation, people are gradually shifting into another occupation. In 1981, 32.2% of the population in Thimi were Prajapatis, and among them, 500-600 pottery workshops were operating (Muller, 1981). However, only 237 households were involved in their occupation in 2006 (Mushyan, 2006).

The decline in their occupation has posed some serious concerns. There is a subsequent decrease in traditional skills, a change in livelihood patterns, and an increase in poverty. Why are these changes taking place? Who or what is responsible for it? Is it due to modernization? Is it because of the society? Is that due to a lack of raw materials? Are they not capable of competing in the changed situation? Is cultural

erosion the reason? Is it because they want change? Is it their failure to search the market?

On the one hand, there is a decrease in the traditional occupation and production of pottery items. On the other hand, some of the Prajapatis are successful in changing their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Many of them have modified their traditional skills and started producing other forms of clay items rather than the traditional ones. They can use modern technologies and methods to sharpen their clay pottery. This has supported them in economic activities as well as preserving their skills, though they have threats and challenges from modern utensils and appliances.

It is crucial to understand the true state of clay pottery among the Prajapatis. It is also necessary to address the reasons for the shifting of clay pottery towards indigenous entrepreneurship. What are the factors responsible for the decline in occupation? How are they coping with the other forms of entrepreneurship? It is necessary to determine whether the change is evident or has nothing to do with their life-sustenance. Moreover, it is necessary to address what can be done to improve the situation of Prajapatis. To address these concerns empirically, the following objectives were formulated.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the shifting of entrepreneurship of the Prajapatis of Madhyapur Thimi. The specific objectives of the study were to analyze the current state of clay pottery among Prajapatis, to examine their perceptions of clay pottery, to identify their challenges, and to examine the shift in clay pottery towards indigenous entrepreneurship.

Research Questions

During the research work, I have dealt with the following research questions:

- a) How do Prajapatis understand the existing practices of clay pottery?
- b) How do Prajapatis explain the challenges in traditional clay pottery?
- c) In what ways is Prajapati's clay pottery shifting towards entrepreneurship?

Rationale of the Study

The Prajapatis of Madhyapur Thimi have been making clay items for a long time. Generations have been involved in the traditional method of producing pottery. The entrepreneurial skills and approach to innovating new methods did not remain the same across generations. They have been using their entrepreneurial skills to produce

a variety of clay items. However, the entrepreneurial skill and activities of the Prajapatis are in danger of extinction in this modern stage.

With modernization and globalization, several items have been introduced into daily life. Nowadays, the clay items made by them are replaced by modern plastic and metal items, which are supposed to be more durable and cheaper. Even so, there is a wide import of Indian and Chinese clay items with good finishing and appearance. This has made it difficult for them to compete in the market. The prime requirement for their occupation: clay is currently supplied in limited amounts. As a result, they are leaving their traditional occupation and shifting to other occupations. This has posed threats to entrepreneurial skills and to the loss of innovative ideas. Hence, it is quite important to study the situation of their occupation, their entrepreneurial skills, and the factors affecting the shift in their clay pottery.

Significance of the Study

I have already mentioned that the introduction of cheap, modern utensils and the lack of raw materials are the major causes of the Prajapatis shifting their occupation and engaging in indigenous entrepreneurship. The study explored the current situation of Prajapatis and the changing patterns of their entrepreneurship. The study further analyzed their perceptions and the challenges they faced in their clay pottery. Hence, this study would be useful to the educationists, teachers, concerned organizations, education policy makers, and government authorities to make proper planning for the development of entrepreneurship and ultimately improve the economic condition of people. Apart from that, the concerned Prajapati community can learn about their entrepreneurial situation and gain practical knowledge and implications for their entrepreneurial development and socio-economic improvement.

Delimitation of the Study

Entrepreneurship is a broad term. Regarding the Prajapatis' entrepreneurial practice, I have explained the general processes of clay pottery rather than delving into the specific processes they use. I have delimited my study on understanding their perceptions in their entrepreneurial activities. Concerning the change in their entrepreneurship, some of them have shifted into shop keeping, which was not considered as shift in their entrepreneurship.

Organization of the Dissertation

I have included seven chapters in the dissertation. It begins with chapter one, which discusses the introduction and background of the study, followed by a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Furthermore, it consists of delimitation, organization of the dissertation, and conclusion of the chapter. Chapter I follows Chapter II, which reviews related theories, research papers, entrepreneurship policies, and other empirical studies. Including them, I have identified the research gap, designed a conceptual framework, and concluded the chapter. In Chapter III, there is a discussion on research design and method. Along with that, it illustrates research participants, fieldwork, narratives, meaning-making processes, data analysis and interpretation, quality standards, and ethical considerations before concluding the chapter.

In Chapter IV, I have explained the practice of clay pottery among the Prajaptis. In the chapter, I have elaborated on the processes of producing various types clay items: fetching clay, kneading it, producing various types of clay items in the motor-driven electric wheels, drying the clay items in the sunlight, baking them in the kilns, and finally selling them from home in a chronological order with narratives from the informants. Including them, I have illustrated how Prajapatis practice clay pottery at present.

In chapter V, I have explained how the Prajapatis perceive their clay pottery and the challenges they face in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. I have elaborated on how the pessimism and feelings of Prajapatis are derailing them in transferring their indigenous knowledge and skills of clay pottery to their new generation. Similarly, I have analyzed about various challenges that have caused possibilities of extinction of clay pottery and lastly mentioned about what they want and expect in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

In chapter VI, I have analyzed the shift of Prajapatis towards entrepreneurship and sustaining it. I have elaborated on the changes they observe now and then, and presented the stories of some of them who practice terracotta and ceramics and adopt mechanization for the production of various clay items.

In Chapter VII, I have presented my reflections on the study's findings, starting with my reflections on the journey of dissertation writing and concluding with some implications.

Summary

This chapter has presented the introduction and background for the study, followed by the statement of the problem. It showed where the problem lies and why research is necessary. Before discussing the rationale and significance of the study, it was necessary to state its purpose, which ultimately guided the research questions. Based on the research questions, the chapters in the dissertations were designed. In every research work, some delimitations are clearly stated, including the study's organization. Finally, the chapter is summarized.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study has been enriched with the support of related literature and study works. In this chapter, I have discussed related literature from different journals and other empirical studies. Initially, I mentioned the concept of entrepreneurship, which is followed by entrepreneurial policies in Nepal and other empirical studies. To support the study's title and theme, I have considered social learning theory, modernization theory, and postcolonial theory. Finally, the conceptual/theoretical framework and research gap are mentioned in this chapter.

Conceptualizing Entrepreneurship

The term 'entrepreneur' is defined as anyone who undertakes the organization and management of an enterprise involving innovativeness, independence, and risk, as well as the opportunity for profit (Timmons & Spinelli as cited in Bushell, 2008). Douglas and Shepherd (2002) accept entrepreneurs as people with a strong belief in themselves and who find opportunities in the market by accepting various kinds of risk. Therefore, they believe entrepreneurs modify existing products or ideas and/or create new products, services, or ideas to raise capital. In doing so, innovation enables an entrepreneur to venture into new technologies, products, and markets, while independence and risk-taking are required at every stage of the business, from startup to expansion (Ming-Yen as cited in Bushell, 2008). Hence, an entrepreneur is a confident and innovative person who seeks to convert risk into capital to achieve success (Neupane, 2017). Baron (2000) strongly emphasizes structure and stresses that a competent entrepreneur develops high social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which can be converted into economic capital.

Raposo and do Paco (2010) state that entrepreneurship is a phenomenon that entrepreneurs engage in. From the perspective of linking entrepreneurship with innovation, it can be seen as a process of innovation in which people choose entrepreneurship as a career. Further, emphasizing the benefits of entrepreneurship, it involves bringing about change to achieve tangible or intangible benefits. Direct benefits may be financial or derived from other resources, whereas non-tangible benefits may include an entrepreneur's social network (Shaver et al., 2001).

Entrepreneurship is the ability to take the factors of producing land, labor, and capital and use them to produce new goods and services (Say, as cited in Ganesan & Duraipandian, 2000). Development economists are concerned with, among others, the study of human resources in general and entrepreneurship in particular.

Entrepreneurship is a form of human resource, and it is as much influenced by the socio-cultural factors as any other. George and Zahra (2002) have emphasized culture as a determining factor in shaping the individual's entrepreneurial attitude. They further state that innovative problem-solving, a risk-taking attitude, and capacity are strongly influenced by a person's cultural background (Mungnai & Ogot, 2009). It has also been articulated that culture is important in all dimensions of entrepreneurship, as it shapes individuals' attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is crucial for rapid economic development (Rao, 2000). It is very useful to the country and has high value for innovation and structural change (Apatha, 2015). Despite significant efforts and the required facilities, there is a high risk of failure in entrepreneurship. New entrepreneurs face a variety of problems during the promotion, financing, and day-to-day operations of their units. Restrictive policies of financial and development institutions, and sometimes the entrepreneur himself, create problems; some are also due to factors beyond the control of entrepreneurs and institutional agencies (Moharana, 2000).

To an economist, an entrepreneur is one who brings resources, labor, materials, and other assets into combinations that make their value greater than before, and one who introduces changes, innovations, and a new order. To one businessman, an entrepreneur appears as a threat, an aggressive competitor, whereas to another businessman, the same entrepreneur may be an ally, a source of supply, a customer, or someone who creates wealth for others, as well as finds better ways to utilize resources, reduces waste, and produce jobs others are glad to get (Hisrich et al., 2006).

Hisrich et al. (2006) have defined entrepreneurship as the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence. It is presently the most effective method for bridging the gap between science and the marketplace, creating new enterprises, and bringing new products and services to the market. Thus, entrepreneurship contributes to economic growth by acting as a conduit through

which knowledge created by incumbent firms' spills over to agents who endogenously create new firms. Opportunities arise when incumbent firms invest in but do not commercialize new knowledge (Acs et al., 2008). They have suggested that, *ceteris paribus*, entrepreneurial activity will be greater where investments in new knowledge are relatively high, since start-ups will exploit spillovers from the source of knowledge production (the incumbents). They have even noted that in an environment with relatively low investment in new knowledge, there will be fewer entrepreneurial opportunities driven by potential spillovers.

Indigenous Entrepreneurships

Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2000) defined indigenous people as descendants of population groups present in a given area, most often before modern states or territories were created and before modern borders were defined, and having maintenance of cultural and social identities, and social, economic, cultural, and political institutions separate from mainstream or dominant societies and cultures.

Social organization among indigenous peoples is often based on kinship ties, not necessarily created in response to market needs. In contrast to Western-style capitalism, some indigenous economies display elements of egalitarianism, sharing, and communal activity (Dana, 2015). The enterprise-related activities of indigenous people in pursuit of their social/cultural and economic goals exemplify a distinctive form of entrepreneurship that can be called 'indigenous entrepreneurship' (Anderson & Paredo, 2006).

Indigenous entrepreneurship refers to any entrepreneurial activity or self-employment based on indigenous knowledge undertaken by indigenous people. It is the ability of indigenous communities to use the resources available in their environment to achieve self-sufficiency and self-determination (April & Itenge 2020 as cited in Padilla et al., 2022). It is often associated with community-based economic development (Peredo et al., 2004), which relies on readily available resources, and consequently, work in indigenous communities may be less regular than in mainstream societies. Much entrepreneurial activity among indigenous people involves internal economic activity with no transaction, while transactions often take place in the bazaar and in the informal sector, where enterprises often have limited inventory (Dana, 2015).

Traditional Occupation in Nepal

The caste system and ethnic specialization have historically shaped traditional occupations in Nepal. Many occupational roles among many ethnic people were transmitted intergenerational, forming part of a household's identity and social status. For example, metalworking among the *Kami (Dalit or low-caste people)*, tailoring among the *Damai (Dalit or low-caste people)*, and leatherwork among the *Sarki (Dalit or low-caste people)* communities were historically tied to the caste-based division of labor (Cameron, 2007). Similarly, Newars have developed advanced crafts and trade-based occupations influenced by their urban settlement patterns and long-standing mercantile traditions (Gellner, 1995). Nepal has a strong tradition of artisanal craftsmanship, including pottery, woodcarving, metal casting, and textile weaving. Newar potters (*Kumhal* or *Prajapati*) in the Kathmandu Valley, for instance, continue age-old pottery traditions using locally sourced clay and traditional firing methods (Levy, 1990). However, modernization, globalization, and migration have significantly transformed traditional occupations. Mechanization, market competition, changing social norms, and declining intergenerational transmission threaten many craft-based livelihoods. For example, young potters and blacksmiths are increasingly shifting toward wage labor or foreign employment due to economic pressures and social change (Shrestha & Baniya, 2018).

Entrepreneurial Policies in Nepal

Industrial development is the backbone of any country. Without industrial development, no country can have economic progress and prosperity. Industries and other micro and small-scale enterprises can serve as the foundation for a country's overall development. They provide employment opportunities as well as opportunities for technological and skill development.

According to the Industrial Development Act, cottage industries can be defined as, "The traditional industries utilizing specific skill or local raw materials and resources, and labor-intensive and related to national tradition, art, and culture shall be named as cottage industries" (Industrial dev. Act, 1981). However, the studies suggest that it is difficult to determine the exact number of cottage industries and microenterprises in Nepal. Due to a lack of comprehensive data on the MSEs in Nepal, it is only possible to estimate their size by drawing from a few isolated sources. A 1999/2000 survey found 87,342 small manufacturing establishments in Nepal. Each year, some 6,000 new cottage and small industries (i.e., a narrowly

defined subset of manufacturing) registered with the Department of Cottage and Small Industries (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2005).

Nepal has introduced several policies on small and micro enterprises in different periods. Nepal introduced Foreign Investment in 1992 to generate income and employment by encouraging broader private-sector participation and improving productivity in domestic markets. The Policy is also designed to encourage the import of foreign capital, modern technology, management, and technical skills to increase the competitiveness of Nepalese industries in international markets. To implement the Policy, the Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act of 1992 was also introduced. It contains specific provisions aimed at attracting foreign investment in the form of equity participation, direct investment in domestic production, reinvestment of earnings derived from these investments, and technology transfer. The Foreign Investment Policy and accompanying legislation do not provide for opening the agricultural sector to foreign direct investment. However, they have provided an important framework to encourage agricultural growth. Notably, by encouraging foreign participation in the banking sector, Nepal increased the potential to expand the supply of agricultural credit to farmers. Nonetheless, net foreign direct investment in Nepal has remained negligible due to poor infrastructure, rigid labor markets and a weak business climate. The Policy adopted in 1992 by the Nepalese government aimed to support the private business sector and contribute to the national economy. For example, cottage industries were to receive tax exemptions to diversify and update equipment and technology, as well as tax breaks on export earnings (Bushell, 2008).

Over the last ten years, a significant shift in policy direction has occurred. Before the 1990s, Nepal pursued inward-looking policies primarily focused on import substitution. The introduction of structural reform programs in 1992 liberalized trade and foreign exchange regimes, removed trade barriers, relaxed industrial licensing systems, and introduced financial sector reforms and privatization programs. These reforms opened the economy and made the domestic market more competitive. Up to the Ninth Plan, cottage and small industries were given priority and emphasis. In the Tenth Plan, there is a conspicuous emphasis on micro-enterprise development and promotion. Furthermore, the draft Industrial Policy (prepared in 2002) contains a specific definition and policy directions for micro-enterprises. This shift may be attributed to the growing recognition within the Government of the need to develop

MSEs (Micro and Small Enterprises). This draft policy and the Tenth Plan of the Government have special allocations for the promotion of micro-enterprises. They recognize the sector's broad role in expanding employment, utilizing local resources, producing indigenous products and services, empowering women and disadvantaged social groups, and contributing to the national economy (ILO, 2005).

The Constitution of Nepal, provides various fundamental rights to citizens of Nepal. Article 17.2 (f) states that people have the freedom to choose any kind of employment or entrepreneurial activities. Thus, the constitution does not restrict people from choosing any type of entrepreneurship as a career. Similarly, the article regarding the right to equality ensures equality and prohibits discrimination based on occupation, ethnicity, social groups, or gender. It means everyone can choose his or her desired occupation. Further, Article 42 has ensured positive discrimination for minorities. Therefore, the state can provide certain reservations to promote entrepreneurial activities among minorities as well (Neupane, 2017).

Empirical Review

Walker et al. (2008), in an article titled "Women and work-life balance: is home-based business ownership the solution?", explored self-employment through home-based business ownership as a potential solution to the inter-role conflict experienced by women attempting to balance dual work and family roles in Australia. They adopted the quantitative method, and data were collected through the questionnaires. They used basic frequencies for descriptive analyses and multivariate techniques, and mean scores were used for comparisons of variables. The study found that the appeal of home-based business ownership was driven predominantly by the flexibility to balance work and family. They expected that self-employment, particularly through home-based business ownership, might well help some women balance work and family. However, it might not be a viable solution for all women, particularly those seeking high financial and career rewards.

In the article, 'Women entrepreneurs in Nepal: what prevents them from leading the sector?' Bushell (2008) has discussed women's entrepreneurship in Nepal. She has explained well the women's entrepreneurship, its challenges, and some suggestions for better entrepreneurship based on interviews with 15 women entrepreneurs aged 23 to 62 in Kathmandu. The primary purpose of the study was to bring urban women's perspectives into the dialogue on economic development in Nepal, and to identify how urban women entrepreneurs can be supported to

participate on an equal basis with men in the economic forum. Apart from that, the article suggests policy measures, business and management training, and the promotion of entrepreneurial networking systems as potential ways to empower women entrepreneurs and create leadership opportunities, in the hopes of bringing women into the mainstream business sector in Nepal. However, interviews conducted with only 15 entrepreneurs seem inadequate to generalize about the real situation of women entrepreneurship in Nepal, as they do not capture the voices of all women in Nepal.

Euba (2025), in an article, “Curbing Unemployment: Encouraging SMEs (Small and Micro Enterprises) and Entrepreneurs in Studio Pottery Practice,” has explored the potential of SMEs and entrepreneurship in studio pottery practice as a means to curb unemployment in Nigeria. He has assessed requirements upon which studio-based pottery/ceramic (unlike its industrial counterpart) enterprise thrives for sustainability. The article examines the challenges faced by small-scale potters/ceramicists/ceramic artists, including limited access to standard equipment and facilities, scarcity of high-quality raw materials, lack of funding, and market competition. Apart from that, it highlights strategies for fostering entrepreneurship in pottery/ceramics, such as vocational training, government incentives, financial support, and integrating digital marketing. Finally, he has wrapped up that leveraging creative innovation and sustainable practices, studio-based ceramic enterprises can drive the country’s economic growth, reduce unemployment, and contribute to the global ceramics commerce. This paper provides actionable insights for policymakers, business owners, and researchers interested in the intersection of entrepreneurship, ceramics production, and employment generation.

In the article, “Micro Entrepreneurs’ Adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for Rural Development: Evidence from Small Scale Pottery Business of Kuala Kangsar, Malaysia,” (Shaari et al., 2024), has discussed about the role and impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on human behavior, revolutionizing various aspects of life, including business operations in Malaysia. For the study, he adopted a quantitative approach, i.e., questionnaire-guided interviews, and conducted a series of field studies from March to April 2023, focusing on seven main rural pottery businesses from five villages in the Kuala Kangsar district, Perak. The study highlights that the majority of participants acknowledged the importance of ICT that allows flexibility to conduct

business alongside time and cost savings. He has concluded that by embracing ICT, RMEs (Rural Micro Enterprises) in the study area not only improve their business efficiency, but also contribute to the overall local economic development. The findings of this study highlighted opportunities to enhance ICT adoption among RMEs for local economic development.

Theoretical Review

In this study, I have considered “Theory of Modernization” and “Postcolonial theory”.

Atlas says, “Modernization is a process by which modern scientific knowledge is introduced in the society with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better and a more satisfactory life in the broadest sense of the term as accepted by the society concerned.” Modernization theory is a theory of a comprehensive process of social change. It is a form of societal development (Bhattarai & Bhattarai, 2005a). They further state that it is understood as a process that indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life and values.

According to Moore, “The process of modernization is most commonly approached in terms of economic development.” Bhattarai and Bhattarai have mentioned that they have given much emphasis on economic transformation, occupational differences, specialization, role differentially, etc. Actually, economists see modernization primarily as man’s application of technology to control nature’s resources, with the aim of increasing output per head of population (Bhattarai & Bhattarai, 2005b).

Modernization has definitely brought many changes among people. Hence, Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi can also not be far from this either. With modernization, various modern appliances and electric machinery have been introduced, increasing the efficiency and production of several items. Moreover, people are exposed to other parts of the world, know about the exigencies of their business, the demands and requirements, and the possibilities to extend their business in the national and international markets. Actually, modernization has helped the Prajapatis a lot in bringing about changes in their entrepreneurship.

Post-Colonial theory signifies a closure with colonialism. It allows for a wide-ranging investigation, such as post-colonial history, economy, science, culture, and marginalized. It is also an attempt of development and recovery of identity (Ramrao, 2012). According to Ashcroft et al. (2007), it explores how colonial power has been

exercised and the continuing effects of colonial domination even after political independence.

Some of the major thinkers in postcolonial theory include Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and others. Their works interrogate how colonial power relations continue to shape social identities, epistemologies, and institutions in the post-independence era. The theory thus challenges the hierarchies of knowledge that privilege Western worldviews and marginalize indigenous perspectives (Smith, 2012).

Said (1978) has introduced the concept of Orientalism, which describes how the West constructed the East as exotic, backward, and inferior to justify domination. (Bhabha, 1994) highlighted notions such as hybridity, mimicry, and the third space, showing how colonized people subvert and reshape colonial power relations.

We can link Bhabha's work to the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship of the Prajapatis. His notion of hybridity is particularly relevant for explaining how traditional clay pottery practices coexist with modern/globalized influences. They have been practicing their clay pottery for a long time despite significant competition from imported items produced by industrial mass production. However, some of them are able to export the clay items, sustaining and finding new spaces in tourism and global markets. As a result, the intersection of local traditions and global forces has created hybrid identities that neither fully reject nor wholly embrace Western modernity. Practices such as traditional clay pottery embody this hybridity-while rooted in indigenous skill and symbolism, they are increasingly adapted for modern markets and tourism (Liechty, 2003).

Bhabha (1994) argues that cultures are continuously produced through interaction, negotiation, and exchange between different social and historical forces, which he calls a "*third space*," where new meanings and identities emerge. As there is modernization and globalization, clay pottery, practiced by the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi clearly demonstrates the hybrid cultural process. They have realized many changes in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship now and then. There is blending of traditional skills with modern innovations that reflects hybridity. Hence, clay pottery practiced by the Prajapatis is neither entirely traditional nor completely modern but a negotiated cultural form shaped by both influences.

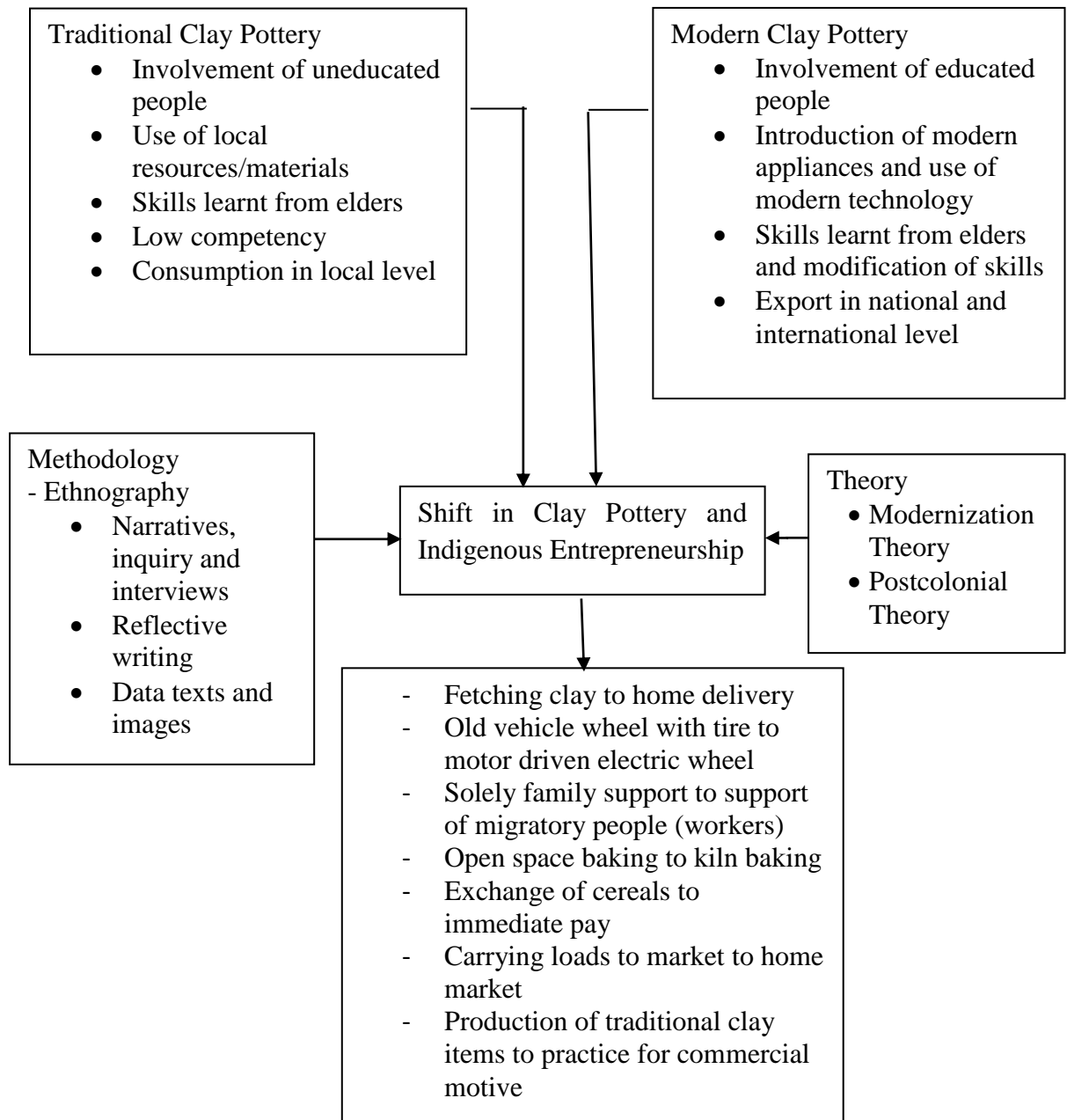
Clay pottery signifies a local identity for the Prajapatis and they have introduced global modernity in it resulting into transformation. Bhabha emphasizes that

transformations illustrate hybridity because traditional techniques increasingly coexist with modern technologies and global aesthetics. For instance, Prajapatis have concentrated more on the production of demandable clay items as per demand of urban consumers. They have adapted production styles to survive economically while attempting to preserve cultural identity. In one way, there is use of their indigenous knowledge and skills of producing clay items and preservation of their cultural identity. In other way, they are successful in generating income and sustain their livelihood.

The changes in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship among the Prajapatis are not immediate results. It has been observed for a long time. However, it has become prominent since the impact of modernization and globalization. Actually, the changes among them are seen in different stages. Several factors are responsible for the changes among them.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

I have conducted the research among the Prajapatis who have been involved in the entrepreneurial activity for a long time, as well as the ones who have tried to modify and change the entrepreneurship. Hence, I have proposed the theoretical and conceptual framework for considering their shift in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Figure 1*Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

This conceptual framework discusses the traditional and modern clay pottery practiced by the Prajapatis. Previously, mostly the illiterate practised traditional clay pottery, utilising local resources and knowledge inherited from their parents. At present, people continue their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship using modern tools and equipment; for instance, they have acquired the skill of clay pottery from their parents and seniors. They have modified their skills to some extent to compete with the imported items in the market. As a result, some of them can export clay items abroad. Today, the clay pottery entrepreneurship has shifted a lot, ranging

from fetching clay to producing clay and selling it in the market. To achieve the desired outcomes of the research product, the framework outlined above provides a foundation.

Research Gap

In the book *“People of Nepal”*, Bista (1967) has explored the vast array of Nepalese cultures, castes, and ethnic groups, with descriptions of their unique customs. In the book, he briefly explains the Newars, but Prajapatis among the Newars and their occupation are not included. In 1981, Muller published a book, *“Social and economic studies on a Newar settlement in the Kathmandu valley”*, in which he explained the socio-economic conditions of various castes among the Newars residing in Thimi. In the book, he mentions pottery among the Crafts and Trades of people in Thimi. He has briefly mentioned the process of clay pottery, pottery goods, and their trade in only three pages in that section of the book, but there is nothing elaborated on the entrepreneurship of the Prajapatis.

In an unpublished dissertation, *“A study on indigenous occupation of prajapati (kumha) community of thimi”* by Mushyan (2006), he has used a quantitative method for the study and elaborated on the pottery and the problems faced by Prajapatis in their pottery business. However, nothing has been mentioned about the changing nature of entrepreneurship among the Prajapatis. In an unpublished dissertation, *“Impact of modernization on occupational caste group: A case study of the prajapatis (The potters) of Madhyapur Thimi Municipality, Bhaktapur,”* by Regmi (2000), she used a quantitative method and elaborated on the socio-economic aspects of Prajapatis in Thimi. Hence, the study's topic does not align with the elaborations in the dissertation. Moreover, she has not mentioned the entrepreneurship and changes in entrepreneurship among the Prajapatis, though some of their problems and attitudes were mentioned in her dissertation.

Researchers have conducted a study on the Prajapatis and their occupation in Thimi. However, until now, there has been no research on the shifting of clay pottery and the indigenous entrepreneurship of the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi. I hope the study has highlighted the perception of Prajapatis toward their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, identified important factors responsible for the shift in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, and offered suggestions for the Prajapatis to cope with changing entrepreneurship.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the related literature for the study. The chapter began with the concept of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. It was followed by indigenous entrepreneurship, traditional occupation in Nepal, and entrepreneurial policies in Nepal. For the research, I have reviewed two theories, on which the interpretation and analysis of the findings in the following chapters were based. To understand the study, a conceptual framework was developed, and selected books and dissertations were reviewed to identify the research gap.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter has focused on the research methodologies used to conduct the study as a whole. The study is qualitative and adopts an ethnographic approach to the changing entrepreneurship of the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi. The chapter has discussed about ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study. Furthermore, it has highlighted the data collection method, data processing, and analysis along with the ethical considerations and credibility of the study.

Methodology

Methodology is the assumptions, postulates, rules, and methods- the blueprint or roadmap- that help to analyze, criticize, replicate, repeat, and/or adapt and to choose research methods (Given, 2008, p. 516). This study uses a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative approach incorporates interpretative, chronological sequencing, and exploratory research design. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) said that every research begins with a paradigm, which is the basic set of beliefs that guides action. The study is based on the philosophical foundation of ethnographic study.

Ontological Assumption

“Ontology is a formal specification of a perspective” (Smith, 2004, p.2 as cited in Thami, 2025), which means it concerns the nature of being. It is the philosophical study of the nature of being, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations. It concerns questions about which entities exist or are said to exist, and how such entities are grouped, related within a hierarchy, and subdivided according to similarities and differences. I have addressed my research problem that the traditional occupation of Prajapatis is declining and has been modified. People are changing their entrepreneurship. As individuals differ, everyone has their own perceptions and feelings. People are changing their entrepreneurship for several reasons, and there are certain realities about it. Hence, my ontological position of the study is based on multiple realities and subjectivities.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge. It attempts to answer the basic question of what distinguishes true (adequate) knowledge from false (inadequate) knowledge. It investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of

human knowledge. It is said that knowledge is created, recreated, perceived, and interpreted by people themselves, and again by the researcher (Brewer, 2000). People gain knowledge from their surroundings, culture, social norms, and values, as well as from their ancestors and seniors. However, their knowledge is heavily influenced by external factors and by knowledge gained from other resources. People tend to sharpen and update their knowledge as situations change and adapt to the new scenario. My study has taken into account the practice and perception of entrepreneurship among the Prajapatis, as well as how they are adapting their entrepreneurial skills to cope with changing scenarios.

Ethnographic Study

Ethnography is a research strategy that allows researchers to explore and examine the cultures and societies that are a fundamental part of the human experience. Unlike many other scientific research strategies, the ethnographer-as-researcher is not typically a detached or uninvolved observer. The ethnographer collects data and gains insight through firsthand involvement with research subjects or informants. With few exceptions, the ethnographer conducts research by interacting with other human beings that are part of the study; this interaction takes many forms, from conversations and interviews to shared ritual and emotional experiences (Murchison, 2010). Parks (2007) also explains that ethnography is a detailed study of the life and activities of a group of people by researchers who may live with that group over a period of years, whereas the ethnographic method is to capture the real voice of people, as if their culture were manifest.

According to Hammersley (2007), in more detail, ethnographic work usually involves studying people's actions and accounts in everyday contexts rather than under conditions created by the researcher, such as in experimental setups or highly structured interview situations. Data are gathered from a range of sources, including documentary evidence of various kinds, but participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones. Data collection is, for the most part, relatively 'unstructured' and the focus is usually on a few cases, generally fairly small-scale, perhaps a single setting or group of people. That is to facilitate an in-depth study. He furthermore stated that data analysis involves interpreting the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices.

As Hammersley explains, I conducted fieldwork for several days. I closely observed the way Prajapatis knead clay, use skill to produce clay items, dry them in

the sunlight, smooth and level the bases of clay items, and bake the clay items while remaining in the field. Side by side, I had formal and informal conversations with them about their practice and perceptions of entrepreneurship. I listened carefully to what they said and perceived what they did. I marked the problems and needs they emphasized. Then, I followed Creswell's guidance to describe and interpret participants' shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and understanding that develop over time. When I started my fieldwork, I was an outsider, but after several days in the field, collecting and generating data, I gradually became an insider, bringing a localized perspective. As an ethnographer, I explained how the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi practice their skill of producing various clay items, what they perceive about the things they perform, the problems and needs they realize in their entrepreneurship, and the changes in their entrepreneurship over time and the scenarios.

Study Area

Madhyapur Thimi was purposively selected as the study area. Madhyapur Thimi consists of 237 households engaged in the traditional craft of pottery and clayware (Mushyan, 2006). My study areas were in wards 5 and 6 of Madhyapur Thimi Municipality, where most of the Prajapatis live. The Prajapatis in these areas have been making pottery items for a long time, and they have been practicing their own clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. These are the areas where we can find variations in the entrepreneurial activities among the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi.

Selection Criteria of Participants

People of different age groups, from the old to the new generation, are involved in making clay items. Given the nature of the study, it would be difficult to include more participants. Therefore, I established a criterion and included old people who used the traditional method, people adopting new methods over time, and the new, educated generation involved in the occupation as the research participants.

Research Participants

I knew one of the people involved in clay entrepreneurship. After planning the fieldwork for the study, I met him and explained my study's purpose. He was quite positive after I briefly mentioned the nature of the study and gave me a word to support me in conducting the study. My initial plan was to visit the study areas and select participants at random. However, I had to stick to the criteria for selecting the

participants. A convincing number of cases are selected in ethnography to understand the process and meanings better (Schensul & Le Comble, 2013). Qualitative research does not have a fixed rule regarding the number of participants, as the purpose is to describe, not to generalize (Leung, 2015, as cited in Ghimire, 2023). Hence, I selected the participants purposively. In fact, some participants were selected purposively using the snowball method and the suggestions of participants themselves, in accordance with the study's criteria. To fulfil the criteria, I selected the following nine participants for the study.

Participant 1: Krishna (Pseudonym) is 51 years old and has been involved in clay entrepreneurship for more than 30 years. His father and elder brothers had the skill of producing various types of traditional clay items. However, they did not pass the skill to him, nor had he shown interest in learning it from them. Now, he produces only various-sized flower vases and other demandable clay items.

Participant 2: Ratna (Pseudonym) is 65 years old. Since his childhood, he is in the clay pottery. He practices traditional clay items. He learnt the skill of producing various types of traditional clay items from his father and continuing it. He has seen and faced many changes in the clay entrepreneurship. The clay items he produces are less in demand in the Kathmandu valley. However, they are still in demand in Nepal's rural areas. He regularly delivers the traditional clay items outside the Kathmandu valley.

Participant 3: Gopal (Pseudonym) is 62 years old and practices traditional clay work. He, too, has been in the clay pottery since childhood and has acquired the skill of producing various types of clay items from his father and seniors. He does not produce more clay items due to back pain.

Participant 4: Rama (Pseudonym) is 30 years old. She was involved in farming and used to help her parents tend the vegetables before she got married. She was quite confused and awkward at first when she started playing with clay. She wished not to be involved in clay pottery. However, she had no other option than supporting her husband in clay pottery. Now, she thinks it is an easy job.

Participant 5: Maya (Pseudonym) is 35 years old. She has been playing with clay since childhood, as her parents were involved in the clay industry. Hence, playing with clay was not new for her after marriage. She profoundly supports her husband. She does not leave any stone unturned in completing the task of producing various clay items. She is a very hard-working person who is taking care of children,

handling the family chores, and supporting clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship diligently.

Participant 6: Hari (Pseudonym) is 42 years old. His father used to make various traditional clay items. His father died in his childhood, and he could not learn the skill of clay pottery from him. However, he learnt the skill of producing a few clay items from his maternal uncle. He prepares various creative clay items, even watching YouTube videos. Nevertheless, he is frustrated with the lower demand for such creative clay items. Hence, he, too, focuses more on marketable clay items. He has no skill in producing the traditional clay items.

Participant 7: Binay (Pseudonym) is 34 years old and involved in ceramic production. Though he had a background in traditional clay pottery, he was drawn to ceramics and trained for 2 years at SOS (Save our Soul) Ceramics. He is happy with the production of various types of ceramic items in his workshop, where 12 people, including his wife, brother, and sister-in-law are employed. The ceramics items produced in his workshop are utilized in Nepal and exported abroad.

Participant 8: Kumar (Pseudonym) is 55 years old and involved in terracotta production. He had a background in traditional clay pottery. His father and uncles were involved in the production of various types of clay items. However, he was more attracted to terracotta and learnt it through self-practice and a keen interest. Initially, he started producing animal terracotta, and now he focuses on producing statues of God/Goddess. He has a reputation for producing fine terracotta items in the locality.

Participant 9: Purna (Pseudonym) is 46 years old and involved in terracotta production. His destitution led him to search for a job at a young age, which connected him to one of the terracotta-producing workshops. As he continued working, he developed a passion for it. He has skills in producing small and large-sized terracotta items, especially related to Buddhism. His idols and statues are utilized at the Gumbas (Religious shrines in Buddhism) in different parts of Nepal. The customer approached him, searching for his home address. Hence, he has fame not only locally but also nationally.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

Qualitative research takes place in natural settings and uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic (Creswell, 2003). Ethnography is not a particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field'

or setting, and an approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in this setting (Brewer, 2000). To access social meaning, observe behavior and work closely with informants, several methods of data collection are relevant, including observation, in-depth interviewing, the use of personal documents, and discourse analysis of natural language. I observed the participants' day-to-day activities and interacted with them. Further, I recorded their interviews on the tape recorder, made notes in the diary, and taken their photographs.

Observation

"Participant observation is a form of observation in which the observer must be somewhat socialized into the social setting in which the observation is being done" (Baker, 1999, p. 246 as cited in Gosai, 2022). Hence, I tried to establish a good rapport with the Prajapatis working in their workshops. I established trusting relationships by making frequent visits to families, engaging in casual conversations, spending time with them, and presenting myself in a casual, accessible manner appropriate for meaningful engagement (Hamal, 2020 as cited in Ghimire, 2023).

During my visit to their workshops, I was cautious that my presence would interfere with their work; I told them not to divert their attention and to focus on their work, though I would remain at their side, observing what they did and how they used their skills. I used to stay in their workshop for several hours, watching their work, which helped me learn about their entrepreneurship.

Diary Making

Diaries can be used for both research and intervention simultaneously, making a change and informing theory (Giorgi, 1975, Hussari, 1983, Spiegelberg, 1975 as cited in Hyers, 2018). In diary studies, people provide frequent reports on the events and experiences of their daily lives. These reports capture the particulars of experience in a way that is not possible using traditional designs (Bolger et al., 2003). Once fieldwork began, I spent time in the study areas observing the Prajapatis play with clay and sharpen their skills in producing clay items. As I observed them working, I kept a diary recording their daily activities and other related information about their entrepreneurship. In fact, keeping a record of the information in the diary was quite advantageous for the study. I went through the diary repeatedly after completing the fieldwork before deriving themes from all the information I collected in the study areas. During the elaboration of the data and information in the chapters,

the diary information was extensively used. It helped me to generate stories and meanings for the interpretation based on the themes in the chapters.

In-depth Interviews

Every time I visited the workshops of the Prajapatis in the study areas, I initially had an informal conversation with them. It built up good rapport with them and I as well as Prajapatis felt easy to initiate conversation. As I had set the criteria for participant selection, I did not conduct formal interviews with them, though we had informal discussions. Once I finalized the participants based on the criteria developed, I conducted in-depth interviews with the participants. During the interviews, I asked open-ended questions and gave them time to think and respond (Legard et al., 2003). I talked to them casually about their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship: what they used to do and what they do now, what they think about it, what challenges they face, and what changes they have realized in a flexible way in the natural setting. Ultimately, the participants could express their experiences, views, and perceptions without hesitation. During the interviews, I simply listened to them rather than judging them or telling them their ideas were good or bad, right or wrong.

I recorded all the interviews in a recorder and clicked photographs related to their entrepreneurship with their permission after the interviews. During the interviews, I was not asking them only questions; I also paid attention to their facial expressions, stress, tone, body language, and the emotions they expressed. I noted down about such changes I realized in the particular situation of the conversation. When I interviewed the next participant, I crosschecked the information provided by the previous participant. It provided me with opportunities to verify the information and its coherence provided by the participants themselves.

Informal Talk

Along with the formal interviews, I collected information from various other people through informal conversations. I visited many workshops of Prajapatis, but not all could be interviewed per the study's criteria. Hence, I talked informally with many of the Prajapatis while wandering in the study areas (Garcia, 2013). Such informal conversations also provided various insights into their perceptions and entrepreneurship. Sometimes we cannot approach informants, or we may not get real information if we use a formal approach. The informal talk was vital to bridge the distance between the participant and the researcher. People do not hesitate to express their feelings and perspectives in informal settings (Gosai, 2022).

Data Processing and Analysis

According to Brewer (2000), ethnographic data are autobiographical: the observation of a single individual or several individuals, selectively recorded, provides a portrait from one person's vantage point. Ethnographers can collect and make use of numerate data; ethnographic data take the form of extracts of natural language, such as long quotations from in-depth interviews, entries from diaries and other personal documents, extracts from observation field notes, and transcripts of conversations. Efforts were made to use only useful data.

Data processing, interpretation, and analysis are crucial for research work. The data collected through the above-mentioned tools from different participants and sources were processed in different steps. During the field visit, necessary data and information were collected from participants, transcribed and translated, and then codified, edited, processed, and categorized (Creswell, 2009). Finally, themes were generated, and the data were linked to theories to analyze and interpret them.

Data Gathering and Compilation

Data gathering is very important during the fieldwork (Murchison, 2026). I collected extensive information and data from the participants, both formally and informally. Not all the collected data may be important; hence, only the useful data needs to be utilized, and I compiled the necessary and related data. Actually, data compilation at the beginning was not systematic because I could not finalize the information to be incorporated into the analysis. I compiled extensive data, which were later sorted during analysis and interpretation based on the themes.

Transcribing and Codification

After conducting in-depth interviews with all the research participants, I collected substantial information and data related to the research questions. Then, I stopped the fieldwork. Once data collection was completed, I first reviewed the field notes and transcribed the interviews recorded on the tape recorder in Nepali into a notebook, then translated them into English later. During transcribing, I focused on reflecting, elaborating, and discussing the issues of practice, perception, and challenges, as well as the shifting clay pottery Practices observed, connecting my fieldwork observations and reflections. The text data- the sentences and paragraphs from transcripts of different participants were coded with the specific terms (Edwards & Lampert, 2014).

Categorization

Further, these coded sentences and paragraphs that express similar meanings were segmented into common categories. Once the categories were formed, they supported me in meaning-making of the data. Finally, after revising those categories, smaller, specific themes aligned with the research questions were generated and further analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

Data Interpretation Linking with Theory

Data analysis is the crucial part of the research work (Wickham, 2016). Once the themes were generated from field data collection, I tried to interpret the data in relation to the relevant theories. However, I initially struggled to link the theories to the data interpretation. I reviewed the dissertations submitted by past students and tried to get some ideas from them. Finally, I considered three theories to interpret the data and examined the connection between the findings from the field visit.

Credibility of Study

Denzin and Linchon (2005) present credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as the criteria for maintaining the quality of research. The study was intended to understand the perceptions on the shifting of clay pottery among the Prajapatis. Hence, I was conscious about data collection and interpretation. In this respect, I believe the findings of my study will yield valid results because I applied appropriate tools and techniques with great care (Patton, 1999). I spent enough time in the field, built up rapport with the participants, and engaged in interaction until in-depth information was achieved. Moreover, I conducted my study in a natural setting. I provided due respect for the views expressed by the participants. I maintained field notes and diaries, used a tape recorder, and collected as much useful data as possible. Similarly, I started my documentation process as soon as possible. To gain credibility, I specified the theoretical relationships and substantiated the facts with data or literature.

Ethical Consideration

There are certain considerations the researcher must abide by in the field and during the research process. Codes of ethics are formulated to regulate the relations of the researchers to the people and fields they want to study (Flick, 2009). During the interview, I obtained verbal consent from the participant before beginning. I did not interfere in their work during the participant observation. I tried to get their interviews whenever possible during their leisure time. Even during the interviews, I paused the

recorder and waited patiently in case they were distracted in their work. I did not ask them any questions that would have affected their emotional or personal feelings. I was always amiable and courteous during interviews and while observing their work. I have taken the photographs related to their work and entrepreneurship only with prior consent. I have used pseudonyms to hide the participants' original names. Further, I have not shared any information about the participants with any other individuals involved in the research. Moreover, I have made a sincere effort and an honest interpretation of the collected data.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the research methodology employed in the study. I have discussed my ontological assumption, based on multiple realities and subjectivities, whereas my epistemological assumption is based on various sources highly influenced by external factors. I have elaborated on an ethnographic study of nine research participants, using data collection tools such as participant observation, diary keeping, in-depth interviews, and informal conversations. The collected data were then processed and analysed through data gathering and compiling, transcribing and codification, categorization, and interpretation, linking with the theories. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's credibility and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER IV

EXISTING PRACTICE OF CLAY POTTERY

Prajapatis of Madhyapur Thimi have been practicing clay pottery using their indigenous knowledge and skills to produce various types of clay items for generations. In this chapter, I have explained the processes of producing various types of clay items and how they practice clay pottery at present, through the research question: *How do Prajapatis understand the existing practices of clay pottery?*

Anecdote 1: Traditional Skill of Clay Pot Making

Today, almost the end of May, it is the rainy season. When I wake up, it is raining. I have many questions in my mind. Actually, I plan to go into the field to conduct interviews with several people. However, it is raining! For a while, I'm satisfied with myself and have a plan to start up, and then, within a few minutes, I have new ideas. In fact, I am a bit confused and eager to work in the field.

The area is an open area. The houses are joined to one another and are made so compactly. People are busy with their own work. Some are working in the open area, some are rushing to their destination, and some children are running, shouting, and playing. After entering from a long alley, I reach an open space. Many clay items, especially various-sized flower vases, are arranged in rows and columns to dry in the sunlight. It is a sunny day, though it rained in the morning. I see a middle-aged person playing with clay. I think he will be one of my participants.

"Hello dai (brother), working!" I say to him like that and fulfill the formality of meeting him. I make a brief explanation about my visit to the locality and my purpose of study to build rapport with him. He seems confused at first, but later is ready to support me. He said he would help me take interviews of others as well. By the way, I was quite happy to meet him.

"When did you start your career of making clay pot items (earthen wares)?" I am curious to know about him. An SLC (School Leaving Certificate) passed person pulls his shirt with all clay on hand and replies, "I have not got any formal education in clay pot making. Playing with clay is our own traditional occupation. It has been practiced since our ancestors. I have been working continuously since childhood. During my childhood, I used to watch my father and elder brothers play with clay and make various items. I used to help them level and knead clay in the early days. I had

to knead clay, carry clay, dry clay items in the sun, take them away in chhidi (ground floor) to store in the evening.”

“I wished to try to produce clay items, but my brothers would scold me for wasting time on unproductive work. They used to scold me for wasting clay because I could not give it the proper shape. Despite their scolding, I kept practicing after they finished their work in the evening. Gradually, I could give shape to the clay after continuous practice. I learnt to make clay items by observing my father and elder brothers and practicing it. I was just ten years old when I started to make clay items.” To continue the conversation, I ask him, *“Do you make several types of clay items?”* *“No, not at all. I make only flower vase. But, my father and elder brothers used to make various traditional clay items like tepa¹, potshi², koncha³, soama⁴, moali⁵, haansh⁶i, bhajan⁷, kapan⁸, atha⁹, dhampa¹⁰, aga¹¹, dwaali¹², bhyaga¹³, gopa¹⁴, and many more. I don’t have any skill to make them.”* The man expresses his sadness.

During the field visit, I met many of the Prajapatis at various localities, practicing their traditional skill of clay pot making in their own way. Those I interviewed and had an informal discussion with mentioned that they did not have formal education in the skill they have been practicing. They learned the skill from their parents or elders and sharpened it through continuous practice and devotion over a long period. Such traditional and indigenous knowledge has been transferred from generation to generation. Kothari (2007) has also acknowledged that, in many cases, traditional knowledge and skills have been orally passed down from generation to generation, mostly in an undocumented form. Some forms of traditional knowledge are expressed through stories, legends, folklore, rituals, songs, art, and even laws. (Armstrong, 1997 as cited in Leik, 1992, p. 24) too states that traditional education was largely an informal process in which skills were taught as part of everyday life.

¹ A big pot used to put water or cereals

² A big pot with holes at the bottom especially used to steam rice for making rice beer (jaand)

³ A big pot used to prepare rice beer

⁴ A small sized pot used to put rice beer

⁵ A middle sized pot used to put rice beer

⁶ A big pot used to prepare alcohol

⁷ A small sized item used to parch cereals (rice, maize, wheat etc.)

⁸ A small or big sized item used to cover metal ware while preparing pulses roti (baara), chatamari etc.

⁹ A middle sized item used to put water during washing clothes

¹⁰ A middle sized pot used to put drinking water

¹¹ A big pot used to put water

¹² A small sized clay item used to keep alcohol during its preparation

¹³ A small and big sized clay items used to put curd or jamara during dashain festival

¹⁴ A small or medium sized clay item used to put water or rice beer during feasts and festivals

Leik (1992) further states that learning in an indigenous worldview is a trans-generational process of experiencing, absorbing, and sharing. According to (Cajete, 1994 as cited in Leik, 1992), traditional knowledge is learned through hands-on experience rather than in abstract contexts. In this sense, "Indigenous knowledge is both empirical (that is, based on experience) and normative (that is, based on social values)" (Leik, 1992, p. 25).

The participants stated that their parents were involved in traditional clay pottery, and that they had been accustomed to playing with clay since childhood. They could see people in their community playing with clay and preparing various types of clay items from morning until evening. Knowingly and unknowingly, all of those scenarios attracted them to engage in the learning of indigenous knowledge and incorporate it into the entrepreneurship they have been practicing for sustaining their life. Actually, Prajapatis are able to do so as a matter of socialization within their society. Giddens, like many other sociologists, sees socialization as a fundamental process in societies and as one of the main means by which societies endure, as their culture is passed down from generation to generation (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008, p 65). Vygotsky (1986) also believed that human development and learning are solely possible through socio-cultural interaction, through which people learn social norms, values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies.

The participants were unanimous about the time required to learn the knowledge and skills they possess. They were unable to prepare different types of clay items in a short time. Actually, it required passion, interest, and devotion for a long period. In this regard, one of the participants, Gopal, mentioned,

All of us have not miraculously acquired the skill of producing various clay items. In fact, people need several years of regular practice and devotion to learn the skill of producing clay items. People might require decades to become experts and bring uniformity to the shapes of clay items. Initially, people need interest, passion, and time to learn the skill of producing clay items.

Initially, all beginners have close observation of the demonstration by the parents or other elders. Then, gradually, they start trying the clay. As expected, the initial attempts are failures because the beginners cannot hold the clay properly, and the proper size is still distant. Gopal said that this conveys awkwardness, humiliation, frustration, scolding, and the temptation not to repeat it. Despite all of these, if

beginners show consistency and interest, they can achieve success in a few months of trying. Otherwise, people cannot even give a shape in clay. According to Vygotsky, as referred to by Mangal & Mangal (2019), knowledge building or acquisition on the part of an individual is helped much if it involves his interaction with two or more people, his elders or peers, by making use of the social interaction tools like language, discourse, and social context.

Prajapatis stated that playing with clay is like doing meditation. People can feel relaxed and refreshed while playing with clay. On top of that, people feel happy and satisfied when they can give the clay they play with the appropriate shape and size. In fact, people can become experts in clay pottery only when they have proper concentration and hand-eye coordination, which require continuous practice.

Initial Preparation to Start Work

The prime requirement for Prajapati's clay pottery is clay, which is essential to them. In fact, they prepare various types of clay items. Hence, Prajapatis in clay pottery tend to collect clay as much as possible. They were happy with the availability of clay whenever they wanted. Simply, they need to call a person (a trader) to supply the desired amount of clay for that day or time. They explained that some local traders have enrolled in the clay-fetching business, which has really relieved their tension over the accumulation of clay for their daily use. Those traders supply clay in a vehicle, either a Nissan or a tractor, for which Prajapatis need to pay Rs 5000 for a trip in a Nissan vehicle and Rs 4000 per trip in a tractor. In this regard, Krishna put his statement in a quite happy tone as,

Nowadays, we don't need to worry about fetching clay. Some local traders are involved in supplying clay. We simply call them whenever we need clay, and they deliver the required amount in a vehicle to our locality. Even it is not necessary to pay immediately at the time of unloading of clay. We can pay only half of the required amount for the delivery of clay, or we can pay the trader after a week of delivery. Actually, it depends on the availability of money and mutual consensus among us. Isn't it the best idea? It's a great relief for all of us.

Prajapatis mentioned that the traders have a network with people at the clay mines. Hence, they supply clay from various places, such as Sankhu¹⁵, Duwakot¹⁶,

¹⁵ A city about 15 km far away from Thimi

etc. They bring clay for them. Prajapatis at various localities in Thimi call them whenever they need clay. Often, they supply clay more than 10 times a day in various localities. Sometimes, they supply clay in the same locality several times. However, the frequency of clay supply is slow during the rainy season. Actually, there is a problem with clay extraction from the mines during the rainy season. So, many of them order more clay than required and store it in a cold, dark place, wrapped in plastic, before the rainy season. As a result, they do not need to worry about producing various clay items for at least a few months.

The Prajapatis seemed relaxed once they were supplied with clay. They would remain happy to be able to work and produce various types of clay items with the supplied clay. Therefore, they were thankful to the clay traders and stated that some local people had obtained job opportunities through their clay entrepreneurship. Normally, the clay they were supplied with at a time can suffice for preparing clay items for a month or more. In this regard, Ratnaman tried to justify it with his statement as,

We are supplied with a certain amount of clay at a time, which is utilized for the production of various types of clay items. However, it depends on the quantity and the types of clay items we produce. I produce various types of traditional clay items like dhampa (A middle-sized pot used to put drinking water), potashi (A big pot with holes at the bottom, especially used to steam rice for making rice beer (jaand), duwali (A small-sized clay item used to keep alcohol during its preparation), koncha (A big pot used to prepare rice beer etc. for which I need more amount of clay. However, those who produce different-sized flower vases require somewhat less clay, and those who produce small-sized clay items require less clay than we use. Based on what we produce, the supplied clay can suffice us for a month to a few months.

Once the clay is delivered in the locality, it is stored in the working place or at *chhidi* (ground floor) in the home. Some people, especially those with sufficient space for storing clay or a separate working place, order more clay so they can work relentlessly for long periods. In contrast, those who do not have enough space in their home simply dump clay in the open spaces in their locality by covering the clay with plastics to save it from sunlight and rain.

¹⁶ A small area in Bhaktapur about 5 km far away from Thimi

Figure 2
Collection of Clay



(Field Study, 2025)

Normally, Prajapatis are supplied with clay by the local traders, but those who practice ceramics have a different option for the supply of clay for them. They stated that the clay supplied to others is normally not of good quality for ceramic preparation. They need very fine clay for the ceramics. Hence, they are supplied with fine clay from Dang district, for which they have to pay Rs 10 per kg of clay and Rs 70,000 in transportation costs. In this regard, one of the participants, Binay, lamented that with such investment in the clay, they will have a great problem with the production of clay items. They cannot produce flower vases and other normal clay items from such clay. Similarly, Kumar, who is involved in the preparation of terracotta items, expressed dissatisfaction with the payment he has to make, even though the clay is supplied by the same local traders to others in the community involved in the production of flower vases and other clay items. He argued that people can produce normal clay items with other clay, but he needs good-quality clay for the preparation of terracotta items. Furthermore, he stated that he has to pay Rs 10000 per trip for the vehicle, double the normal clay production rate.

Kumar argued that the clay supplied nowadays is black, of poor quality, and very different from the clay they used some years back. Hence, they have to mix the black clay with other *khara cha*¹⁷, which they need to order separately from local traders. The local traders supply *khara cha* in a tractor for Rs (4000-4500) in their

¹⁷ Yellow clay with good quality and elasticity

locality. Mixing the *khara cha* with black clay and water, it is left at the workplace or on the ground floor of their home.

Figure 3

Kneading of Clay in an Electricity Driven Machine



(Field Study, 2025)

Clay dug out of the ground is full of rocks, shells, and other useless items that must be removed by *levigation*¹⁸ and repeated as needed to produce smooth clay (Sinopoli, 1991). Prajapatis also mix water into the clay dumped at *chhidi* (ground floor) or at the workplace and leave it for (2-3) days for smooth elasticity and proper adjustment. Then, the clay is kneaded. None of the Prajapatis kneads clay manually at present. They also agreed that clay kneading is done by an electrically driven machine. They showed a sense of satisfaction with it, as the kneading process is quite fast and there is no physical labor in it.

As shown in the picture, Prajapatis put raw clay into the hollow part of the machine, adding wood ash from the kiln regularly, and the rotating equipment inside the machine kneaded the clay. Finally, kneaded soft clay is discharged through the front part of the machine, as shown in the picture. The kneading process is repeated as required. Gopal stated to repeat kneading process for (3-4) times for production of flower vase and other clay items, Kumar mentioned to knead clay at least for (4-5) times for terracotta preparation whereas Ratnaman focused to repeat kneading of clay for (5-6) times because he needs very soft and elastic clay to prepare various types of traditional clay items. Actually, kneading repeatedly removes air bubbles and ensures a uniform consistency. Properly prepared clay will have the right moisture content and texture for shaping, helping prevent cracking and warping¹⁹ during firing (Sinopoli, 1991). When I asked the participants for the reasons for repeating the kneading of clay, they simply said to make it soft. However, knowingly or unknowingly, they are following the scientific reason of kneading the clay. It is true that kneading clay in a machine reduces manual labor, and the process is rapid. However, in fact, Prajapatis are losing their indigenous knowledge of the elasticity of

¹⁸ mixing with water and allowing impurities to settle

¹⁹ make or become bent or twisted out of shape, typically as a result of the effects of heat.

clay needed for the preparation of various types of clay items due to mechanical procedures.

In one way, Prajapatis themselves knead clay in a machine and in another way; Kumar stated that they are supplied with the readymade kneaded clay. He said some of the ceramics in Bhaktapur, some of the migratory people, and others (Newars, but not Prajapatis) have made kneading clay their occupation. This has been economically beneficial and less time-consuming for them. In this regard, he opined,

Nowadays, people have used new ideas for the supply of clay for the clay entrepreneurship. The readymade kneaded clay is available in the market. Many people in various places in the Kathmandu valley have made a living by supplying kneaded clay. In fact, there is competition among those people to supply the clay at lower prices than the others. As a result, we are supplied with such clay at Rs 10 per kg nowadays. We had to pay Rs 20 for such clay some time before. The competition among those suppliers has resulted in cheaper clay.

The participants stated that they did not use the readymade kneaded clay, even though it was available. They argued that they were not very sure of the proper kneading of clay when they purchase the ready-made clay. Kumar stated that people might not knead clay well for commercial motives. Hence, he did not prefer kneaded clay, though he could easily and cheaply get readymade clay.

Anecdote 2: Use of Electric Wheel – Boost up Quality and Quantity

In the last week of May, I wandered in Thimi observing Prajapatis playing with clay. In the meantime, I observe a middle-aged person sitting at the door of his house. I see a large wheel from a vehicle on its side. I think he might be my participant, and I greet him with “Namaste!” he also greets me with astonishing eyes, “Namaste.” I tell him about my purpose of visit there and expect him to be the next participant.

As I see an electric wheel and a big vehicle wheel in the house, I want him to say something about them. “Do you use both of them for making clay items?” I am interested in learning more about that. “No, I don’t. I use an electric wheel and used a big wheel during the load shedding hours in the past.” He gives a short answer.

“Can you please tell me some more about them?” I request him to shed some more light on it. “Actually, we used to make clay items, especially flower vases, in the shape of a vehicle wheel. We can spin the wheel, keeping a big stick in one end

manually, and put clay on the spinning wheel. Then we give it shape. This work is quite slow, and we can hardly make two items in one attempt. Nevertheless, nowadays, there is a motor-driven electric wheel to make clay items. The use of electric wheelchairs has changed our work. We can easily make different clay items in it for a long time. It has significantly reduced manual labor and improved the quality and quantity of products. It has increased our work several times.” The man gasps.

Modernization has definitely brought many changes among people.

Modernization, characterized by technological advancement, has significantly influenced traditional crafts, including clay pottery. Hence, Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi can also not be far from this either. With modernization, various modern appliances and electric machinery have been introduced, increasing the efficiency and production of several items. According to Arora & Mehta (2016), pottery traditions can be sustained by integrating modern tools and platforms, creating new forms of cultural expression and economic opportunity (p. 134).

Counting Numbers vs Production of Traditional Clay Items

All participants mentioned that they use a motor-driven electric wheel to produce various clay items. Even Ratman, who produces the traditional clay items too, uses an electric wheel to make clay items that he reshapes later. Mostly, the males start their work early in the morning. Once they stay in front of the electric wheel, normally, they work continuously for a few hours. To start the work, the electric wheel is run, and a kneaded clay dough is placed on the rotating wheel. Then, pottery of desired shapes is obtained by shaping the clay dough on the wheel and turning it with the hand to the desired shape. Finally, the pottery is removed from the heap of clay on the wheel using a small thread (Regmi, 2000). Prajapatis produce flower vases of different sizes. Once the desired size of flower vase or any other pottery is extracted from the wheel, it is kept in the sunlight to dry. As they work in a motor-driven wheel, they produce flower vases quite rapidly, and soon the number of flower vases increases. They reported to work for economic motives and hence tried to work continuously, setting a target for the day. In this regard, one of the participants, Hari, expressed his intention of working continuously as,

There is more demand for flower vases of different sizes. Therefore, I start my work early in the morning, aiming to complete 200 flower vases in a day. It is hard to accomplish that target. However, I know that the more I complete, the more I deliver and earn. For this, I work continuously without taking much

rest. I extract the flower vase from the wheel, keep it in sunlight, and start another one. I keep on counting the numbers repeatedly to ensure and achieve the set target. Once the target is achieved, I have great relaxation and satisfaction.

Figure 4

Production of Clay Items in a Motor-Driven Electric Wheel



(Field Study, 2025)

Prajapatis normally prepare plain flower vases of different sizes (8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18 inches). Flower vases are prepared on the electric wheel. They said they could prepare the flower vase up to 12 inches directly from the wheel, whereas such a vase is beaten and mostly clay is added to turn it into 14, 16, and 18 inches. Initially, when they are prepared, they have a thick base and are kept in the sunlight to dry. Normally, the clay items are dried in the open areas for a few hours in their own locality. The clay items are turned around regularly to let them dry properly in the sunlight. During the rainy season, people cover the clay items with plastic to protect them from rain. It might take more days to dry the clay items during the rainy season by covering them under plastic.

Figure 5

Drying of Clay Items in Sunlight



(Field Study, 2025)

Though the normal flower vases and other clay items are dried in the sunlight, Kumar mentioned that the process of preparing clay terracotta differs from that of the normal clay items. He said terracotta items need to be dried in the shade, not in the sunlight. In this regard, he tried to justify his statement as,

We need to take care of many things while preparing terracotta items. Normal clay items are produced from a machine and then left to dry in the sunlight. But terracotta items are handmade and need shade and airflow to dry. They should not be dried in the sunlight. There is a visible appearance of cracks when kept in sunlight. Finally, such cracks damage the entire terracotta during the baking process. Once they are slightly dried, then they need to be covered with a plastic. Mostly, the normal clay items can be prepared even outdoors, but terracotta must be prepared inside rooms with better ventilation.

The case is different for the preparation of traditional clay items. They agreed that its preparation is too tough and requires more expertise, skill, and time. Hence, they did not take the initiative to acquire the skill. Even parents and elders show indifference toward the transfer of such skills due to their toughness and time-consuming nature. As a result, they lamented that only a few middle-aged people or the elderly in different localities prepare traditional clay items at present.

Figure 6
Athaws Used for Preparing Various Types of Traditional Clay Items



(Field Study, 2025)

For Ratnaman, who has been practicing the skill of producing traditional clay items since childhood, it is a normal process and daily activity. He further elaborated and shared his experience of producing various types of clay items like *dhampa* (A middle-sized pot used to put drinking water), *koncha* (A big pot used to prepare rice beer), *duwali* (A small-sized clay item used to keep alcohol during its preparation), *haanshi* (A big pot used to prepare alcohol), *potashi* (A big pot with holes at the bottom especially used to steam rice for making rice beer (jaand), *foshi*²⁰, etc.

People need a lot of time to prepare other traditional clay items. To prepare different types of traditional clay items, people first need to shape them into a flower vase. Then, they are dried in the sun for a few hours. Once they are slightly dried, they are kept in different-sized *athaw*²¹. People need to add extra clay to achieve a specific size and structure. Then, gradually, a skilled person starts beating it, placing a hard object, especially a stone piece, inside the clay item with a *faala* (a wooden structure to beat clay during preparation of traditional clay items), and giving it a shape. Actually, it is too tough to convert it into a desirable size and structure. People need continuous practice and devotion to become experts in preparing such traditional clay items. There is availability of different-sized *athaw* (wooden structures placed beneath clay items to beat and provide a specific shape) for preparing various types of clay items. For example, wooden *athaw* for preparing *dhampa* (A middle sized pot used to put drinking water) is different than for preparing *duwali* (a small sized clay

²⁰ A big sized clay pot used to boil kat (liquid) for preparing alcohol

²¹ wooden structure placed beneath the clay items to beat and provide a particular structure

item used to keep alcohol during its preparation) or *fosi* (a big sized clay pot used to boil *kat* (liquid) for preparing alcohol) or *koncha* (A big pot used to prepare rice beer) etc. However, only a few people in the locality have preserved such *athaws* (wooden structures placed beneath clay items to beat and give them a particular shape). Even those that have been preserved are very old and severely decayed. As many people have stopped preparing traditional clay items, the wooden *athaws* (wooden structures placed beneath the clay items to beat and provide a particular structure) are either dumped or burnt.

Anecdote 3: Life Sustaining

Today, the first day of June, it has been raining since morning. The sky is overcast, and it is a bit cold today. I plan to visit the second participant and go to his house. He is working and playing with clay, as he did in the previous meeting.

“Namaste, uncle!” I greet him, and he replies, “Namaste, babu!” He gives me a stool to sit near him. “You are always busy, hai uncle.” I say to him, and he replies with a smile, “What to say, Babu, it’s our daily routine.” Today, I plan to ask him about the sustainability of life through his entrepreneurship in clay items.

“Can you sell all the items you make?” I try to focus on my plan. “Yes, I sell all the items (some traditional ones and mostly flower vases) quite easily. Actually, I get a good price for them. I can easily sustain my life with this. I do not have an economic problem in meeting my daily needs to date. In fact, I can afford the education of my children, the health of family members, and various other socio-cultural activities without any problems.” He is quite happy when he says that.

After he says that, I ask him with curiosity, “Do you work throughout the whole year?” With a sad face, he replies, “We don’t work throughout the whole year. Until the last few years, we had agricultural land and had to plant rice during the rainy season. But, we have sold the land and no troubles with the plantation nowadays.” He further adds, “Very often, I have to stop work for several days in festivals and occasions. Recently, due to Bhairabnaach²², I could not work for the whole month. I had a loss of Rs (30-40) thousand. Similarly, during these rainy days as well, my works are interrupted much.” At last, he says boastfully, “If I can work

²² Quite popular traditional dance in which god Bhairab and other deities dance together which is performed for 4 days in different toles or localities

for the whole year, I can make a lot of profit. Then, that would be sufficient for several other activities.”

Data shows urbanization rising from 17.1% to over 66%, driven in part by the reclassification of municipalities (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2022). This shows a massive increase in urbanization, leading to population growth in urban areas. Hence, the population density in Kathmandu city reached ~5,100 persons/km², placing a serious strain on resources in urban centers (CBS, 2022). The population growth scenario is not much different in the other two cities in the Kathmandu Valley, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, which are under huge population pressure. In recent years, the trend of urbanization has been rapidly expanding in Kathmandu valley, where agricultural lands are being converted into a concrete jungle.

Increased Demand and Rise of Income

With urbanization and increased construction of houses across many parts of the Kathmandu valley, there is a growing demand for standard and decorative flower vases of different sizes. Hence, Prajapatis are involved in producing flower vases and remain busy throughout the year, producing various types of normal and decorative vases of different sizes. In this regard, Krishna articulated,

The demand for flower vases will remain as long as human beings are here on Earth because people will plant plantation and keep flower vases for aesthetic values in their homes. Moreover, in Hindu culture, people conduct Pooja and offer flowers to the god and goddess. Even flowers are an inseparable part of many Hindu festivals and celebrations. Hence, the importance of flowers will not be diminished, nor will the flower vases in homes.

As there is a massive expansion of settlement areas with the extension of urbanization, there has been a flourishing of many sectors like hotels and restaurants, nurseries, colonies, apartments, etc., in the Kathmandu valley. The Prajapatis reported an increase in demand for both normal and decorative flower vases in those sectors. Hari shared his experience of the usage pattern of flower vases in hotels and restaurants during his visit there. In this regard, he expressed his exclamation as,

Once I was in a hotel. However, I was surprised to see the workers replacing the flower vases with new ones. The flower vases seemed to be normal. I think the algae started appearing slightly in the flower vases. As a result, the workers were removing the old ones. In one way, I was puzzled, but in another, I was quite happy with the usage pattern there in the hotel. Anyway,

our flower vases were used and regularly changed. It's a happy moment that there will be an increase in demand for flower vases.

Along with the normal and decorative flower vases, there is very good demand of interior designing materials, various sized decorated flower vase, vessel to pour water in water jar, *haalcha*²³, small teapots, *paalcha*²⁴, *lakh battipaala*²⁵, curd pots etc. In fact, a jar pot (a vessel for pouring water into a jar) is highly in demand in the market. Prajapatis were found to be contented with the increased demand for such items. In this regard, Gopal expressed his views as,

The majority of us in the locality prepare haalcha, jar pots, laakhbattipaala, flower vase plates, etc., along with flower vases of different sizes, as there is more demand for such items. Hence, I have focused more on marketable items to ensure continuous cash flow and to easily fulfill the family's needs. In fact, people do the business of such items that are more in demand and are easily sold out in the market.

Speaking about the increased demand and escalated earnings from them, he further articulated that they needed to focus on massive production of such items. However, they need to pay attention to their price because people feel awkward paying more for the clay items. In one way or another, there should be large-scale production at a reasonable price so that people can afford them and keep using the clay items. That is why there is still a strong demand for clay items in the market. It is not decreased, as per rumor, due to push factors created by plastic and other metal wares in the market. They do have their own value, and so do the clay items.

Just as Gopal expressed, Krishna reported an increase in cemented flower vases in the market, which somewhat decreased demand for clay flower vases. However, with a smile on his face, he mentioned why the clay items are far better than the cemented ones. In this regard, he put his argument as,

In clay items, there are unseen pores, and there is good aeration for the roots of flowers, and hence they thrive well, but in the cemented ones, there are no pores, resulting in yellowing of flowers. Therefore, people undoubtedly had a choice of clay items over other materials, especially for flowers and in nurseries. Ultimately, the demand for clay flower vases soon flourished again.

²³ small clay pot to keep biryani or curd

²⁴ Very small clay item in which oil dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or praying for god in temples

²⁵ A middle or big sized clay plates used to burn oil/ghee dipped cotton sticks in temple

Along with the demandable clay items, there is strong demand for other clay items such as *lassi*²⁶ glass, curd pots, *matka*²⁷ tea pots, etc. Krishna and Hari explained the changing trend toward using such clay items rather than other items and equipment in the market. In this regard, Hari tried to justify his statement as,

Previously, customers were provided with lassi in steel glasses, tea in paper cups or in glasses, and there was an increased trend of using plastic vessels for curds. At present, people prefer to use clay pots for lassi, tea, and curd. People actually compare the taste of tea, lassi, and curd in paper or plastic and clay pots. No doubt, the taste is quite different in clay items. In fact, people feel quite relaxed in drinking tea, lassi, or curd in clay pots. Therefore, people prefer clay pots over others. The price of clay pots may be slightly higher than that of the other items. But, I know some of the people who wish to pay a little more for the taste.

Unlike such demandable clay items, Purna too articulated that the importance and value of clay terracotta is not going to reduce in future as well, rather they are massively searched by the Gumbas (Buddhist religious shrines) in various parts of Nepal. He stated that there has been an import of fiber items in the market, but the importance of terracotta in Gumbas (Buddhist religious shrines) will never be diminished. In this regard, he tried to defend his statement with his view as

Clay terracotta is widely used in the Gumbas (Buddhist religious shrines in different parts of Nepal. Gumbas remain in the world as long as people do and religion remains. Hence, Gumbas will need clay terracotta in the coming generations and generations. However, there is availability of massive fiber items; they will not be suitable in Gumbas. There is establishment of idols by performing rituals and other functions. The concerned people state that mantras can be applied only to clay, terracotta, stone, and metal statues, not to fiber ones. Compared to stone and metal statues or idols, clay terracotta is cheaper. That is why clay terracotta is preferred over fiber items. Hence, people from various parts of Nepal (especially from Dolkha, Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga, and Gorkha) approach me for the clay terracotta.

Purna furthermore explained that three of them: he, his wife, and niece work together from morning until evening in a small workplace. He proclaimed that, with

²⁶ A sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana and some other sweets and resins

²⁷ clay

their hard work, they had satisfied the customers. As there are few, they occasionally cannot complete many tasks quickly. Despite that, they would generate a good income. With that income, they can afford health care, education, and other daily necessities without much difficulty. However, with a sad face, he lamented that they are not able to save much from the income they generate.

As there is increase in demand of flower vase and other clay items, Prajapatis gave an account of restarting of the entrepreneurship by some of them who had already left the occupation and switched on to another. However, they agreed that Prajapatis have focused mostly on the flower vase rather than the traditional clay items because they are less desirable in the market, whereas flower vases are highly desirable in the market. Hence, they clarified, as it is normal that people tend to focus more on such items that are easy to prepare, demand more, and are easy to sell in the market. Mostly, people have given priority to items that can help them earn more easily and achieve better income than those that offer lower earnings. Prajapatis involved in the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship are happy with their earnings. However, they are not very anxious about their future.

Support of Migratory People – Creation of Jobs

During the field visit, wherever I went and whomever I spoke with, I saw that husbands and wives in families were working across all localities in Thimi. The participants also agreed that Prajapatis in this occupation have been working almost exclusively with family members. In the past, people had many children and lived in joint family structures. As a result, the family members were enough to handle the occupation and sustain life. However, over time, people tend to live in nuclear families, and many have small families. As a result, people lack the workforce for various activities in this occupation. In fact, many of them have not expanded their entrepreneurship to the point that they require other workers. Even the reality is, there is not much of a problem with the availability of workforce for this occupation. Some of the people migrating from different parts of Nepal are currently supporting various activities. A lack of workforce is not a problem in the occupation; they simply need to be paid. They highly appreciated their support in their occupation and expressed their suspicion that their clay pottery would not continue without it. In this regard, Krishna put his argument for the creation of job opportunities for the migratory people and elaborated their support in their clay pottery as,

We have a small family nowadays, and we lack manpower. It is not only my problem; almost everyone in the locality has the same problem. However, we are not facing many problems or tensions that would affect the continuity of work. The trend of migration from different parts of Nepal has been supportive of our occupation. Some of the migratory people lay their hands on us in our occupation. In fact, we have created job opportunities for migrant communities through our entrepreneurship. Though we lack family labor, the migrant community supports us in various activities. If they were not supporting us, I guess many of us might have already left the occupation.

In recent years, an increasing trend of outmigration from rural areas to cities, especially the Kathmandu Valley, has led to a growing number of people seeking new jobs in different parts of the valley. In due course, many people (mostly female youths and some males) have become involved in supporting the clay pottery of the Prajapatis in Thimi. In a tone of boastfulness, they replied that they would start a new pay system for migratory people to support them in their occupation. They claimed that there might not be an hourly pay system in other occupations and sectors in Nepal, but they have started paying hourly to support the migrant people who serve them. Additionally, they are paid under a contract system.

Hari and Gopal furthermore explained about the involvement and support of the migrants/workers in their various activities. They support them in various activities related to their occupation. Once the vehicle unloads the clay, the workers help carry it to their home or workplace. Initially, they contact a person, and he/she manages or calls others. Mostly, carrying of clay is based on the contract. They pay Rs. 1700 for the completion of the task. It does not matter whether one person or ten people complete it in a few hours or the whole day. Often, a group of people (around 10) works and completes the task in a few hours. Hari gave an account that he has seen such a group completed the task of carrying clay at least for (2-3) places in a day, and they really earn a good living. Then, they divide the earnings among themselves. Mostly, they pay them in cash after the task is completed. They provide them with lunch during the day as well to support their work. Sometimes, they are given breakfast as required. Normally, they provide them with whatever they eat in the morning or during the day.

Prajapatis said that, actually, the workers are supposed to manage their own breakfast or lunch. Nevertheless, many of the Prajapatis are openhearted people who

provide breakfast and lunch for the workers, even if they work on a contract basis or on an hourly basis. Otherwise, Gopal replied who would provide breakfast or lunch for the ones who worked on a contract or hourly basis.

During the field visit, I saw some workers, especially women, supporting the Prajapatis in kneading clay. The migratory people (workers) support them in kneading the clay in a machine for which they are paid on an hourly basis. Apart from that, they support many of them in drying the clay items in the sun as well as rushing away the items into the storeroom during rainy weather. Similarly, they lay their hands on storing the firewood after unloading it from the vehicle at the kiln or storage home. Likewise, they pile up the dried clay items into the kiln, observe the burning process, and put firewood in the kiln, take out the baked clay items and store in home or load in the vehicle to transfer for selling. Along with that, they collect sand from the nearby area, for which they are paid Rs. 25 per sack. The workers are paid Rs. 1700 on a contract basis for the support in baking clay items, whereas Rs. 100 per hour for the other activities. Availability of such a workforce is a great support for the smooth running of clay pottery and entrepreneurship in the locality. They have been supporting Prajapatis for the last (6-7) years. People are getting jobs and earning well from the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship of Prajapatis.

The Prajapatis really appreciated the support the migratory people provided to them. They have regarded their support as crucial for their clay pottery. Their support is very important, especially during the rainy season. In this regard, Krishna commended their support as,

During the monsoon, we cannot predict the rain. Even on sunny days, it might rain in the afternoon. If it starts raining, the clay items need to be moved to a safe place. Hence, the migratory people help us transfer the clay items inside our home. Their support has somehow transformed our occupation. Without their support, only my wife and I cannot transfer all the clay items. If they were not there, then clay items would get destroyed by rain, and we would be in complete loss, as well as our hard labor and efforts would go in vain.

Anecdote 4: Lay Hand by Females/Wife

Today, the next day of June. Unlike the other days, I am wandering here and there in the field, observing the activities of the Prajapatis and taking their interviews. Today is a sunny day; there has been sunshine since morning. I am in the field after I have some food at home. As the day is sunny, Prajapatis are busy drying the clay

items in the sunlight. There is movement of people here and there in the surroundings. While walking through one of the alleys, I saw a woman sitting on a stool and levelling the base of a flower vase. As I have not spoken with any of the females since my visit to the field, I thought I would make her as one of the participants. After approaching near to her, I say, “Namaskar bahini! (Good afternoon!),” She seems to be younger than me. Therefore, I say her bahini (sister). She seems to be nervous as a stranger approaches her. With a bit of nervousness, she replies, “Namaste dai (brother!)” I introduce myself and briefly explain my approach to her. She does not say anything, simply nods her head.

“Can I know your name?” she replies, “Rama (pseudonym).” I start talking to her. “How long have you been working?” she replies, “Only after I came here after marriage.” With a surprising tone, I ask her, “How did you learn about clay pot making?” With a pause, she replies, “It’s a long story.” She starts explaining.

“I was a normal lady, and passing time with my parents in my home. My parents have an agricultural occupation; they farm various crops and seasonal vegetables on their farm. As a matter of which, visiting the field and working there was a normal routine for me. Every day, we collect the vegetables from the field. Plucking out the dried and unhealthy ones, tying them out, and making them ready for sale in the market was our daily routine. I was accustomed to them, and I could do all the activities quite skillfully. I used to think it was a normal task. I realized that the family roles and duties would not remain the same in another's house after marriage. But the circumstances and things changed after I got married.”

Putting some amount of machine-kneaded clay into thasa²⁸, she continues to explain more about her experiences, “Playing with clay! I never ever dreamed of that. I was astonished and puzzled by the situation I faced upon reaching my husband’s home after my marriage. It was really difficult to acclimate to the new job initially. I could not even hold the vase my husband made in a machine correctly. Shifting from the agricultural activities in my home to clay pottery in my husband’s home was a new experience for me.”

While expressing, she beats the clay with a stone so that it spreads equally into thasa and prepares a plate as if cast. She explains, “It was quite uneasy to accept the clay pottery in the early days. I was confused and remained in a dilemma for a

²⁸ A cemented cast developed to prepare flower vase plate/key or mould

certain period. I had never thought of getting involved in clay pottery. I used to think of starting any new job rather than continuing clay pottery. However, I had fewer options. Therefore, I started playing with clay quite awkwardly. As expected, and undoubtedly, my initial attempts did not satisfy my husband, which only intensified my desire to run away from clay pottery. However, my husband never scolded me and always kept on inspiring me for my success in making clay items without any hesitation.”

While talking, she cuts extra clay from the thasa, removes a beautiful plate, keeps it on the ground, decorates it manually, and continues, “Though the early attempts were not fruitful, my gradual improvements relieved the sense of humiliation, and soon I became used to it. I support my husband in preparing various types of clay items. Normally, I produce the plates for flower vases.”

The Newar society practiced gendered lines, which is known as patriarchy. The *Nāyo*, or the father, trains the son for the practical duties of a man, whereas the mother trains the daughter to become a good housekeeper, wife, and mother. As the boy grows older, he follows his father or grandfather in the fields, workplaces, and public places (Gosai, 2022). Traditionally, only the male members of the Prajapati family work on clay pottery (Muller, 1981). Nowadays, female members are also involved in making various clay items.

They also agreed that there was no involvement of females in clay entrepreneurship in the past. Ratnaman became nostalgic about the activities he and his family performed in the past. He explained that clay pottery was mostly the work of men in the past. There was a tradition of excluding females from clay pottery, as it was manual and required more physical labor. Ranging from clay fetching to kneading clay, producing clay items to baking them and selling in the market, all of these activities required physical labor. Therefore, females were not involved in the production of clay items. At that time, females were mostly involved in stretching strings for weaving clothes on a loom rather than producing various types of clay items, though they supported the males in a few works occasionally. At that time, females used to handle kitchen work, take care of children, and support the males in arranging clay items in *khamoo* (A round structured basket made of metal or bamboo) with *shiga* (A netted rope used for carrying clay pots/items) and *nol* (A bamboo stick used to fix shiga, yoke) to sell in the market or villages.

During the field visit, in all the localities in the study areas, I saw as many females as males working and producing various clay items. With a tone of embarrassment, Ratnaman said that many of them have left producing traditional clay items which need more physical labor and switched on to producing flower vases and few other items which don't need more physical labor. Gopal also added that in one way, traditional clay pottery is decreasing and in another way, females' involvement in weaving clothes is extinct due to imported clothes and the availability of readymade dresses. Hence, Maya replied that they would remain idle in the afternoon after completing all the household chores and sending the children to school. As a result, the females in the families have started supporting males in producing clay items. She furthermore put her statement as,

At present, the time has changed, and there is equal participation and support of females for males in clay pottery. The wives in each family are engaged in clay pottery entrepreneurship. Along with taking care of the children and handling the household chores, we support in completing the task of producing various clay items. Mostly, the females support males after completing the kitchen work and sending the children to school. Actually, males simply produce clay items on the wheel and dry them in the sunlight. Once the clay items are slightly dried, the females complete the task of the remaining work. The females support in smoothing and levelling the bases of flower vases and other clay items, decorating and coloring them with laancha²⁹. They give clay items their true shape and size and dry them in the sunlight. Apart from that, they turn the clay items regularly in the sunlight for proper drying as well as take them away when it starts raining, for which the males show reluctance and indifference.

Prajapatis highly appreciated the females for the hard work, devotion, and determination they have shown for the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. They openly praised the females for their very crucial role in the family's entrepreneurship and income generation. In this regard, Krishna showed his happiness for the females' involvement and tried to clarify as,

Along with the males, females also actively support the clay pottery entrepreneurship. They do hard work and try to complete the clay items as

²⁹ A colorful clay to color clay items

much as possible. Rather than working outside in any office or for someone, females work for the family. In many cases, females do more hard work than the males. Actually, males produce various clay items in a machine (wheel), but the females mostly complete the remaining work manually. As males work on machines, the production of clay items is faster. Females work manually, and their work becomes slow. Nevertheless, females are quite determined and try to complete the remaining work as soon as possible to keep up with the production work. So, it is very important to encourage and appreciate women for their entrepreneurial efforts.

During the interview with Rama, she seemed happy and said that their work is much easier at present. They do not need to put much labor into it. They normally prepare clay items at home. Even some of the migratory people (workers) support them in their occupation. Hence, despite her endurance in shifting to another job, she now feels happy with her current job. With a glow in her face and a sense of satisfaction, she gasps and puts her argument as,

Now, I feel the value of this job. I see some other people rushing to the office. They cannot say it is cold, too hot, or raining; they must go to the office or work. I have no such hurry and rush for the job. I simply work inside home. We have no impact of any weather conditions on our work. Very often, they complain of dissatisfaction, misbehavior, distraction, pressure, and anxiety from the office boss and other managers. I observe them in a tense mood despite their hard work and dedication to the office work. Very often, their family members show dissatisfaction with their lack of time for household chores. Here, in this job, I start working after completing all of the household chores and sending the children to school.

Rama and Maya both articulated that their involvement in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship is a very good job for them. They considered their job a pressure-free one, where they could work easily and comfortably. They argued about many advantages of their job over other jobs or occupations. They advocated working from home without hampering the fostering of children or the family's diligence. In this regard, Rama tried to clarify as,

People state that they cannot take leave in case of unhealthy or unwell of family members, but it's my wish whether to work or take rest or even not to work on a particular day. In my job, I am the owner, manager, worker, and

entrepreneur. There is no one to scold me or order me to work on that day. I have no pressure to complete the assignment in a tight time. However, I tend to complete the assignment as per the demand of the customers and local traders. I am taking care of the children, completing all the household chores, and above all, generating income for the family. This type of job is very good for women.

Both Rama and Maya demonstrated their devotion to their jobs and their duties. Though they had some burdens in accomplishing their clay pottery, they were found to enjoy and celebrate their festivals and ceremonies well. They tried to justify it as,

People who work in an office seldom have the appropriate time for cultural activities. Often, they cannot take leave during the festivals. In our job, we have no trouble. We tend to celebrate the festivals and other occasions smoothly. We get relaxed during such occasions. It does not matter much even if we do not work for a day. However, we are true and non-negligent in the job and conscious of the delivery of the assignment ordered by the customers.

Unlike in official jobs, the female participants stated that they did not have any fixed rules or obligations for completing assignments. They do not have a fixed duty schedule for starting and ending work each day. They can work as per their convenience. They can stop their work at their discretion. They were happy to continue their work after fulfilling all of their household chores and other responsibilities. Once they complete the levelling and smoothing process, the clay items are dried in sunlight, after which they are ready for baking in the kilns.

Use of a Kiln for Baking Clay Items

Rama and Maya explained their roles and the role of the migratory people (workers) in turning the flower vases, along with other clay items, in the sunlight to dry. They said that the clay items are dried in a day during the summer season/sunny days, whereas they need (2-3) days during the rainy season/ cloudy days. They were unanimous that once the clay items are dried well in the sunlight, they are ready for baking in the kiln. They mentioned that the practice of baking clay items in ash using straw and other materials is gone.

During the field visit, I saw a common kiln and individual kilns made in different localities within the study areas. They gave an account of the establishment of common as well as individual kilns in the locality. There are separate kilns built for

the people in different localities in Thimi. There are certain groups in certain localities that develop and run their own clay-baking facilities. Actually, the municipality supported people in the construction of kilns. However, the support was insufficient for constructing kilns, and the group collected funds from members to build a kiln in Digutole. In other localities as well, the municipality contributed a certain amount, and the remaining funds were collected from group members for the construction of kilns in their localities. Therefore, the traditional way of baking clay items is completely lost in the localities and in Thimi.

Krishna explained about the formation of groups and the rotation system for baking clay items in the common kilns. The groups are running the kilns and managing them as per their rules and understandings among the group members. He clarified about the management and necessity of constructing the individual kiln, as,

We have developed a schedule for each member of the group to bake clay items. People wait for their turn to bake the clay items in the kiln. We need to pay Rs. 1000 to bake in the common kiln, whereas Rs. 2000 in the individual kiln. Normally, the group members bake in the common kiln, but in emergencies or when required, people can also bake in individual kilns. In a common kiln, people need to wait for their turn, but in individual kilns, they can bake whenever they wish or need. Hence, some people are attracted to constructing individual kilns in various localities. People require approximately Rs. 5 lakhs to construct an individual kiln. There are more than 10 individual kilns in the Digutole area, as well as in other localities too.

Figure 7

Baking of Clay Items in a Kiln under the Rooftop



(Field Study, 2025)

They mentioned adjusting the temperature for baking clay items in a kiln. Based on the kiln's size, heat should be applied during the baking process. There should be a regular supply of firewood for continuous burning in the kiln. People bake in the kiln for (15-16) hours only. The baking process is fast and less time-consuming than in the past. Hari reported running the kiln somehow scientifically at the beginning. However, he lamented the carelessness and the mere use of human conscience for the baking of clay items at present. In this regard, he put his statement as,

Initially, we used a digital thermometer (imported from India) to measure the kiln's internal temperature. Normally, when the temperature reaches (500-550) degrees centigrade at the top and (650- 700) degrees centigrade at the bottom of the kiln, then it is considered to be properly baked. Unfortunately, the digital thermometer does not work at present. We have tried to repair it, but we could not. At present, people simply use their conscience to stop the baking process in the kiln. As a result, customers are reporting early breakage of clay items. None of the people uses equipment to measure temperature inside the kiln at any of the localities. They simply observe the flame color at the bottom through the holes in the middle of the kiln. Often, people misjudge the flame color, and there are chances of breakage of clay items they bake in the kiln.

Kumar also gave an account of baking the terracotta items after they are well dried in the shade. He explained that the process of baking terracotta items is similar to that of normal clay items, but requires more time in the kiln. In this regard, he tried to justify his statement as,

Once the terracotta items are completely dried, then they are ready for the baking process. Unlike the normal clay items, terracotta items are also piled up in the kiln and then put in the fire. However, they require a higher temperature than the normal clay items. As most of the terracotta items are kept outdoors, which are exposed to sun and rain, they are kept in the kiln for (5-6) days. In fact, the higher the temperature, the stronger they become.

Unlike Kumar, Purna, who has expertise in preparing large clay terracotta items, also suggested taking care of many details during their baking. He mentioned that in traditional clay pottery, people could simply pile the clay items in the kiln. Even some of the migratory people can lay their hands on it. Nevertheless, large

terracotta items need to be handled very carefully. In this regard, he explained the risks of baking large terracotta items, as

Baking of terracotta items is as tough as preparing them. Large terracotta items must be piled up slowly and carefully. Mishandling and carelessness may jeopardize the structure of the terracotta, which costs us a lot. In many cases, the hands and ornaments of idols break during baking. Moreover, firing in the kiln should be maintained properly. People can put fire into the oven when baking normal clay items, but we cannot do so for terracotta. We even need to bake terracotta for longer than we do for normal clay items.

Furthermore, he stated that they have also introduced electrification work for small terracotta items at present. Nevertheless, he realized that electric kilns are unreliable for large terracotta items that require high temperatures for proper baking.

Binay also agreed that he needed to bake terracotta items up to (750-800) degrees centigrade. However, the ceramics need to be baked somehow at high temperatures. He furthermore explained that ceramic items, such as earthenware, are baked to 1000 degrees Celsius, and stonewares are baked to 1200 degrees centigrade. However, many of the ceramics are baked in the electric kilns.

Gopal recalled the baking of clay items in the past, which caused ash to be sprayed into the surrounding areas and pollution from smoke. During the field visit, I observed many kilns operating, producing a lot of smoke in the surrounding area. Hence, they too agreed that, though clay items are baked in a kiln at present, the pollution and its impacts are not much reduced. There is a huge production of smoke that really deters vision as well as suffocates people in the surrounding areas. The kiln still poses a threat of air pollution and risk of airborne diseases to the community. Hence, the tendency for an increase in asthma and other COPDs (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases) is not reduced at present as well. It seems that people's life expectancy is diminished in the locality due to pollution and the spread of airborne diseases.

Though the kilns discharge smoke but the problem of ash and its impact is completely lost. However, Hari stated that due to pollution and the troubles caused by the kiln's smoke, community members face many challenges, and he very often had arguments and occasional confrontations with them. In this regard, he was quite anxious about it and put his statement in despair as,

Baking of clay items in kilns is a very important part of our entrepreneurship. We are aware that smoke from the kilns is causing problems in the locality. Some people complain about it and raise their voices to stop it or find other alternatives. But the fact is, if the kiln is obstructed, then our occupation can no longer run, and ultimately our clay pottery cannot sustain.

During the field visit, I observed continuous smoke emanating from the kilns in different localities within the study areas. They were aware of the smoke and the troubles it caused for the community. However, they were unable to respond appropriately to reduce its impacts. They were focused more on the continuity of clay pottery for their subsistence and indigenous entrepreneurship. They are determined to make their clay pottery and mitigate the pollution impacts in the surrounding area through the baking process.

Anecdote 5: Market in Own Home

I take a break for a few days after visiting the field for several days in a row. On the third day after I stopped visiting the field, I was walking down one of its alleys. I am thinking and keeping an eye on my surroundings. In the meantime, I see some workers transporting the flower vase and other clay items into the vehicle. In front of the vehicle, a local trader is talking with my second participant. Actually, they are bargaining over the price for clay items. I get attracted to know about them, and I march faster to approach him. I greet him, "Namaste, uncle!" though he is busy dealing with the traders. He says nothing to me and nods. I wait and listen to his dealings with him. I think it's good to know about the market. After some time, the local trader leaves and tells me to sit inside his house.

"Don't you visit nowadays in different places to sell your clay items?" I put a question. He replies somewhat in a satisfied manner, "No: Nowadays, I don't go anywhere. People themselves come to my house. Very often, shopkeepers come to my house with a vehicle and take away various clay items. Normally, a local trader comes to my house, places an order, and collects the clay items. Actually, it is quite easy nowadays. I do not need to search the market or call anyone to buy my clay items. They come to me themselves asking for various clay items. Whatever I make, either flower vases or other clay items, all are sold out. Sometimes, I cannot fulfill all the demands of local traders and shopkeepers, and very often, flower vases are taken away from the kiln as well. In fact, I do not need to worry about sales or crackdown of

my items, nor do I carry a long distance from place to place. This has saved me a lot of effort and time. Actually, I find a lot more change in the market now and then.”

During the field visit and while remaining in the field for several days, I have not seen anyone carrying clay items in a *khamoo* (a round, structured basket made of metal or bamboo) and selling them in the market. Rather, the Prajapatis held that things and time change. They agreed that they do not prepare the clay items before receiving orders from the market or a shopkeeper. They mentioned that each of them has contact with a particular shopkeeper in the Kathmandu Valley, and they tend to supply clay items only to them.

Krishna gave a brief account of the changes they face at present. He said that at present, rather than the shopkeepers calling them, the local traders have overcome such duties. He opined that they have created job opportunities for such local traders through their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. He explained the activities performed by the local trader as,

At present, some local traders (especially the drivers with vehicles) take the responsibility of transferring the clay items from different people to the concerned shopkeeper or locality. He personally contacts different shopkeepers and other businesspersons in and around the Kathmandu valley. He takes the order from them and later on requests us to prepare various types of clay items. Moreover, he sets a specific rate for a specific clay item. Then, we have a mutual consensus among each other to get the orders and prepare the clay items.

Hari also agreed that they mostly get orders from local traders nowadays. However, he did not deny supplying the clay items to the concerned shopkeeper; they have been in contact for a long time. He said that the supply chain and cooperation among them would break if they continued supplying only clay items to local traders. In fact, he stated they do not want to spoil their commercial relationship and want to maintain a space for business in case the local trader fails to supply or collect their clay items.

They stated that after receiving orders from a shopkeeper or a local trader, they work as per their convenience and try to complete the assignment as soon as possible. After all, the sooner they complete the assignment, the sooner they have money. With a tone of satisfaction, they replied that their clay pottery is credit less and has no loss. In this regard, Maya tried to justify it as,

After we complete the orders, we call the shopkeepers or the transporters. We do not need to transfer the clay items to the shopkeepers. They bring a vehicle to us, and we simply load the clay items. Moreover, we are paid immediately either in cash or by mobile transfer. Occasionally, we are given advance notice earlier before we start the work.

Rama also agreed that Prajapatis earn a good income from their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, which supports their subsistence. However, she showed her frustration as,

Due to regular orders and direct sales from home, we are generating more income than in the past. However, our income is not as profitable as in the other businesses. We can afford education, health care, and some other daily necessities. We do not need to borrow money from others to meet our family, cultural, or personal expenses. In fact, we are working, earning, and making profits from our entrepreneurship, but we cannot save a lot.

Despite support for their subsistence through clay pottery, Hari expressed dissatisfaction with the inability to add other properties to their clay pottery and with indigenous entrepreneurship. He tried to clarify it as,

In the past, there were few examples of people who could generate sufficient income to manage a house, land, and other properties. However, at present, it is impossible to arrange them with this clay entrepreneurship. Things have changed in a way that our earnings are sufficient to manage a few things in our lives. Purchasing land and a house with our earnings is simply a bad dream at present. The prices for land and housing have increased so much that we cannot imagine affording them with our earnings. It's not a thing that we are not earning, but in comparison to our earnings, the price of land and housing has dramatically changed.

As per the pre-consensus among the local traders, shopkeepers, and Prajapatis, different rates are maintained for various types of clay items. They charge them fixed rates for various clay items, but they do not care about how much local traders or shopkeepers make in profit after selling them. In fact, shopkeepers and local traders tend to make a profit with little effort. Considering this, Kumar expressed his dissatisfaction and frustration with the injustice inflicted. However, he stated that an individual cannot challenge the trend in the community, nor does he have any other way than to console himself. Hence, he lamented as,

I need to work for my occupation and the family. After all, my children are reared, and family requirements are met with the income from this occupation. Without work, we cannot earn income, and the family suffers greatly. If I break the supply chain, I might lose what I have now. Hence, I simply work and prepare various types of clay items. I need to get satisfied in spite of unfairness.

Muller (1981) has mentioned that the importance of the potter's workshops in Thimi is superregional and extends far beyond the Kathmandu Valley. The expansion of road networks in Nepal will likely expand the market for Thimi products. As speculated by Muller, the local traders transport the clay items, occasionally several times a day, throughout the Kathmandu valley as per order, and in the surrounding areas of the Kathmandu valley, like Banepa, Dhulikhel, Panauti, Dolalghat, etc.

In one way, demand for traditional clay items has decreased due to replacement by plastic and other metal wares. Despite that, the traditional clay items are not completely lost; there is still demand, though less, mostly in rural areas across Nepal. Muller (1981) has mentioned that merchants from outside Thimi come too, buy up the clay goods, and transport several lorry loads of them away every month during the peak production time. The market for pots from Thimi reaches as far as the Indian and Chinese border, and formerly, the attractive clay pipe bowls made in the settlements were even sold in Tibet. Ratnaman accepted the continued supply of various clay items as per orders from many shopkeepers and businesspersons outside the Kathmandu valley. He somehow boastfully said that he regularly transported the traditional clay items like *dhampa* (A middle-sized pot used to put drinking water), *haanshi* (A big pot used to prepare alcohol), *koncha* (A big pot used to prepare rice beer), *potash* (A big pot with holes at the bottom, especially used to steam rice for making rice beer (jaand), etc. in Pokhara, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Damauli, Barhabise, etc. Despite the massive availability of plastic and other metal wares in the market, Ratnaman put his argument for the choice of traditional clay items as,

Mostly, the indigenous people and some of the businessmen prepare alcohol and rice beer (jaand) in the traditional clay items. Even though they have multiple choices for plastic and metal wares, they prefer clay items. People say that the taste and quality of alcohol and rice beer are better when prepared in clayware than in plastic or metal wares. Hence, the clay items are massively used in the homes in urban as well as rural areas in Nepal.

They replied that various clay items offer many advantages for various purposes compared to other metal and plastic items. Especially, they argued that the taste of goods: either water, curd, alcohol, rice beer, tea, etc., remains good in clay items than in other items. Despite that, the clay items remain less preferable for people due to their durability, attractiveness, and lack of promotion, as well as domination by the globalization and commercialization of metal and plastic wares in the market.

Summary

Prajapatis of Madhyapur Thimi have been practicing their clay entrepreneurship through indigenous knowledge and skills of producing various types of clay items inherited from their parents and seniors. In their clay entrepreneurship, the collection of clay, kneading it, producing various types of clay items on a motor-driven wheel, drying them in the sunlight, baking them in the kiln, and finally selling them in the market are some of the processes. At present, Prajapatis produce various types of flower vases including some of the other demandable clay items like jar pot, *haalcha* (small clay pot to keep biryani or curd), *tihar paala* (very small clay tem in which oil dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or praying for god in temples), *laakh batti paala* (a middle or big sized clay plates used to burn oil/ghee dipped cotton sticks in temple), *lassi* (a sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana and some other sweets and resins) pots etc. though only limited number of Prajapatis produce traditional clay items like *dhampa* (a middle sized pot used to put drinking water), *gopa* (a small or medium sized clay item used to put water or rice beer during feasts and festivals), *koncha* (a big pot used to prepare rice beer) etc. At present, there is a division of work among many people, including the females (wives) of each family and some other migratory people (workers), which has actually made their entrepreneurship easier. Moreover, they have a market in their home.

CHAPTER V

CHALLENGES IN TRADITIONAL CLAY POTTERY

For many Prajapatis, clay pottery is not only a way of life; it is also an identity. However, the number of them practicing clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship has decreased due to many challenges they face. In this chapter, I have attempted to explore the challenges Prajapatis face in their traditional clay pottery by asking the following research question: *How do Prajapatis explain these challenges?* Furthermore, I have explained how they perceive their clay pottery and what they need for it.

Perception of the Clay Pottery

For many artisans, pottery is an embodiment of identity and heritage rather than just a livelihood (Jain, 2010). They were emotional when asked about their perception of their entrepreneurship. Many of them were nostalgic about the occupation and the legacy they have achieved and portrayed for the generations and generations. They have been practicing their indigenous knowledge, skills, and creativity in pottery and sustaining their life through entrepreneurship. It is continuing, though they face some ups and downs.

They agreed that, actually, they do not need much investment for their entrepreneurship. They can start with a limited budget and investment. That is why they believe those involved in this occupation can continue their business. Even, they have their background already prepared by their parents and other seniors. Many of them simply need to walk on the way others have already paved for them. They state that people can easily sustain their lives with limited investment and continuous training for months. They argue that, normally, people are involved in certain jobs to generate income, and they can do so by engaging in a clay occupation as well. In fact, people do not need to depend on others for their jobs or to earn from this entrepreneurship. Despite that, the parents are pessimistic about passing on their indigenous knowledge and skills for producing clay pottery to their new generation. In another way, parents and elders are less desirable for transferring skills and knowledge to the new generation. They have not forced or motivated the new generation to learn the skill, and are unable to effectively guide the expansion of

entrepreneurship in a new way. Moreover, the new generation is also indifferent to learning the skill from seniors.

They were univocal about the uncertainties surrounding the future of clay pottery, considering that they will soon lack clay. Hence, Hari and Binay presented their logic as,

The future of this occupation is quite uncertain. We are not sure when we will get clay. Even though there is strong competition from imported clay items. In no time, we may lose our jobs and be left without income. Considering all this, we do not want to indulge our new generation in something uncertain. In fact, we do not want to see our children face challenges and troubles in the future. Given the uncertainties, we want our children to settle into a secure job rather than simply roam in the traditional clay pottery. We want our children not to walk the thorny journey, but rather wish them an easy, comfortable life in the future. Due to all of these, Prajapatis involved in this occupation have not encouraged their new generation to take over in their occupation.

In one way, it is true that the lack of raw material (clay) means their occupation is finished. However, in another way, it is wrong that they have not shown an intention to explore the possibilities in uncertainties, and many of them have not tried to modify the business. In fact, some of them can set an example by trying something different. However, it is true that none of them can generate income as well as other entrepreneurs and businesspersons in the country.

Krishna too confessed that neither has he encouraged his children to support and work in clay pottery, nor have they shown any interest in it. He furthermore elaborated that it is not only his case. Almost all of the new generation in the locality are diverted into other occupations than into the clay pottery. Rarely have a few people tried to share their knowledge and skills with their young children in their locality. Observing the scenarios and circumstances, he felt bad for it, but at the same time, he tried to console himself and showed optimism for the new way of living by the new generation, as

I am assured that they have some other alternatives. I am sure they will search for certain options for income generation and sustain their life. I do not feel guilty about not passing on our skills and knowledge to the next generation. After all, people will cope with the circumstances and the changes in the world. The new generation will be able to find a new way of living in the

changed context. However, we would feel proud and acknowledged with the preservation of the traditional skill of clay pottery entrepreneurship by our young generation.

By observing and analyzing the conditions and speculating on the future of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, I have realized that Prajapatis have not insisted that their new generation acquire their indigenous knowledge and skills in clay pottery. Rather, they have left their children to decide for themselves. Even some of them have expressed the view that it is not necessary to transfer indigenous knowledge and skills to the younger generation. However, many of them are deeply stressed about transferring indigenous knowledge and skills to the new generation. Moreover, many of them are willing to transfer their knowledge to the desirable ones. They have proclaimed their support for anyone willing to learn from them, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or race.

Despite the statements and persistence of the Prajapatis, I have realized that they are pessimistic about transferring their knowledge to the new generation and about preserving their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. They are at the stage of accepting changes and adapting to the conditions in the new context. They believe their children are educated and want to focus more on education. Many of them have acquired technical education as well as management and humanities. Some of them have also gone abroad. They are trying their best to explore as much as they can, given their education. They dream of doing other jobs besides their occupation. Hence, they feel and realize that there is a threat to indigenous entrepreneurship and to the traditional skill of clay pottery. In this regard, Hari showed his state of moral and ethical confusion as,

I know my children will not continue our occupation. I understand that I could not persuade my children to maintain the continuity and preservation of our indigenous knowledge and skills. I do not want to show despair about it. We know we need to transfer our indigenous knowledge and skills to our new generation. However, we cannot do so unless they follow us. As many of the new generations are diverted into other occupations, we think our entrepreneurship will continue as long as we work. Hence, the trend of clay entrepreneurship in our home will diminish with our age and inability to make an effort for it.

They accepted that their children showed interest in clay and tried to support them during their childhood. However, in the end, they realized that their children were diverted and inclined towards other fields. Kumar, too, believes his lack of motivation and trustworthiness with children on terracotta, and his disorientation about the business's expansion, have messed up the situation. In one way, he thinks it is too late to encompass the children in terracotta or clay entrepreneurship, and in another way, he still believes they can ratify for it. In this regard, he showed fear of loss of knowledge and lamented in despair as,

Actually, enrollment of my children in terracotta would be a good support for me. All of us can complete the assignment quite soon. However, I must say I could not nurture and groom them well enough for their inclination towards terracotta. The children, too, have not understood the value of clay work. In fact, we are unable to instill a sense of solidarity and to perform activities unitedly for the sake of family empowerment. Now, I am afraid that my dexterity and knowledge of terracotta might vanish after my demise or once I stop working on it with my age.

Purna had a somewhat different perception of his practice of terracotta and entrepreneurship. He was quite satisfied with the accomplishments he had achieved. He was proud to gain an identity and recognition with his clay work, not only at the local level, but also at the national level. He expressed his happiness with a glow in his face as,

My destitute craved me in terracotta. The early death of my father forced me to find a way to support my family, which led me to terracotta. After gaining confidence from several years of work experience, I realize that my work is very different from that of most people practicing clay entrepreneurship. I think it has created a distinct identity for me and my work. I simply try to represent myself uniquely. This notion has boosted my morale and confidence to continue working in terracotta. People recognize me more with my work than my name. It's a matter of pride and commemoration for terracotta and clay entrepreneurship.

Binay suspected that the number of people involved in clay pottery would decrease over time. In the coming few decades, home clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship will be limited, with wheels and other equipment being turned into home-based studios. However, demand for various clay items will not decrease much.

In that situation, some of them, by adopting mechanization, will practice clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, producing clay items swiftly. There will be no manual work; rather, most in-demand clay items, such as flower vases, jar pots, etc., will be made by *zigar*³⁰. He further stated that, though the number of people involved in clay entrepreneurship will be fewer, they will meet market demand. Ultimately, they can have better income, and their business will flourish.

Challenges in Clay Pottery

During the field visit and interviews with participants, they revealed many challenges in their clay pottery and in their indigenous entrepreneurship. However, they are producing various types of clay items and practicing their clay pottery. Until now, there has been demand for various types of flower vases and other clay items, enabling them to generate good income through their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, challenges with their clay pottery hinder their income and entrepreneurship.

Anecdote 6: Introduction of Plastic Wares and Metal Appliances and Increased Competition with the Imported Items

Today, a partly sunny day. I am walking and observing here and there in an open space. I see my third participant keeping the flower vase in sunlight. I decided to talk with him, especially about the problems he faces in his entrepreneurship. As I approach him, we make eye contact. He smiles, and I say, "Namaste dai!" He also replies "Namaste". He is quite busy and initially ignores me. I keep standing outside his house, watching him go inside and come out with an improperly dried flower vase. After nearly 5-7 minutes, he gives me a small bamboo stool and sits on the next stool with a long gasp. I tell him that I am happy to meet him again. He makes no comment, just smiles.

*I tell him that today I want to know something about the impact of plastic wares and modern metal appliances. He says in a frustrating note, "Our traditional clay pot entrepreneurship is seriously affected by the introduction of plastic wares and metal appliances. Previously, people used various traditional clay pots for daily use. Nowadays, plastic wares and metal appliances replace them. Especially, items like *tepa* (a large pot used to put water or cereals), *atha*³¹, for which there are alternatives in plastic wares and metal appliances, are completely replaced. The*

³⁰ pressing machine that produces various items after putting clay in it

³¹ A round structured vessel used for washing clothes

items with fewer appropriate alternatives are also less used. Actually, metal and plastic wares are more durable than our clay items. Though there are some health risks in the use of plastic and metal wares, people neglect our clay items.”

He further says, “Though there is massive use of plastic wares, the flower vases are in increased demand. However, there is an alternative to a vase. At present, imported fiber and plastic flower vases are available with good finishing and appearance. However, the plants do not thrive well in plastic and metal wares, as well as in a clay flower vase. So, I have to limit myself to making a flower vase.” The man says softly.

Ratnaman seemed to be quite upset while elaborating on the importance of clay items in the past. They were an inseparable part of human life. He said that previously, people used clay pots for various activities, such as storing grains and water, cooking food, preparing beverages, washing clothes, and more. In fact, people had no other options and, no doubt, happily used them. Unfortunately, most of them are replaced by plastic, aluminum, and other metal wares.

Krishna was also quite frustrated by the rapid flow of plastic and metal wares in the market and by people’s preference for them over their clay items. At that time, he was in a dilemma and at the same time, quite anxious for the sustainability of his family. In this regard, he showed his frustration in despair as,

At one time, we had a complete threat of extinction of the occupation. Especially when plastic and metal wares were at an early stage in the market, people preferred clay items less. The market of clay items was completely obscure. Most of the people involved in traditional clay pottery were frustrated with that, and many had even changed their occupation. Some of the left ones also made up their mind to switch on to other options.

Even though clay pottery faced challenges from the introduction of plastic and metal wares, Prajapatis did not deny the durability of those items compared to their own clayware. They accepted that those plastic and metal wares have more advantages than the clay items. In this regard, Gopal expressed his views on people’s preference for those items over the clay items with an example, as,

People started using plastic and metal wares due to their durability. In the market, people may have to pay Rs. 500 for a dhampa (A middle-sized pot used to put drinking water) that can break even after the customer reaches home, or can hardly last for a few years, but they may have to pay Rs. 2000

for a brass vessel (a vessel used to store drinking water), and he/she is confident and assured to use it for decades. Then, why would the customers use clay items rather than the metal or even the plastic wares?

Nowadays, people understand that using clay items is organic and healthy for our body. Nevertheless, people are used to various plastic and metal wares that are easy to use and handle. Most plastic items are short-lived, while metal wares are long lasting and can be used for decades. In contrast, the clay items are brittle and unsuitable for long-term use. Hence, people find it quite difficult to adopt the clay items as before.

Along with the availability of plastic and metal wares, they argued for increased competition from imported fiber items and Indian glazed flower vases, which are somewhat more attractive than the common local flower vases. As a result, people are increasingly attracted to Indian flower vases, leading to a slight decline in demand for local vases. Unlike flower vases, Binay also explained the competition in the ceramics sector. He said there is a massive flow of Indian and Chinese ceramic items into the market, posing significant competition for them. In this regard, he expressed his views as,

Indian clay items, like tea cups, are cheaper, and we can buy them at Rs. 50 per piece, but the same type of Nepali item costs at least Rs. 150. Hence, there is strong competition, and we face a significant challenge to remain competitive in the market. Ultimately, people cannot stick to just Nepali items, and there is a greater chance they will opt for the cheaper ones available in the market. This type of situation is also posing a threat to them in clay entrepreneurship.

On the one hand, there is increased competition from imported items, and on the other hand, Prajapatis advocated that people have tested the suitability and other benefits of plastic and metal wares. People are more health-conscious about using clay items than about using other plastic and metal wares. As a result, there is a massive demand for clay items, especially flower vases, water filters, jar pots, tea pots, *haalcha* (small clay pot to keep biryani or curd), *lassi* (A sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana, and some other sweets and resins) pots, etc. People have difficulty fulfilling the demand for such items.

It is true that there is greater demand for a range of flower vases and garden pots, and the participants recognized increased competition. To compete with

imported clay items, Prajapatis engaged in clay pottery have developed various types to meet market demand. They were very contented and assured that, with the passage of time, there will be demand for various items, and that they will, no doubt, meet market requirements.

Unlike traditional clay items, as well as local flower vases and other clay items, Kumar and Purna have faced intense competition from imported fiber items. They have given an account of the production of various fiber items, ranging from flower vases to statues and other decorative items, through a machine. As a result, they are quickly prepared, with no wasted time on cutting and other decorative activities, no need to bake over the fire, no risk of breakage, light, easy to handle, and cheap. Moreover, they have fine finishing and an attractive outlook. Hence, they showed dissatisfaction that common people misunderstood it as clay terracotta. In this regard, Purna tried to clarify his statement as,

Nowadays, we are facing huge competition with the imported fiber items. Common customers simply observe the attractiveness and low cost of fiber items. Therefore, they prefer such fiber items to clay terracotta, which is costlier than they are. At present, small idols up to 2 feet are only supplied in limited quantities. The demand for such idols is marginalized by the massive flow of fiber items in the market. However, we have no competition for the bigger ones. Till now, I have not seen fiber-made bigger ones in the market.

Kumar also shared his experience of increased competition from imported fiber items. He further elaborated that there has been a change in the usage patterns of terracotta items. Previously, people acquired terracotta items for decorative purposes, especially for performing pujas and rituals. At present, terracotta items are mostly taken by people preparing statues. They are even widely used as gifts for someone special on birthdays or other special occasions. Nevertheless, the easy availability of Chinese ceramics and Indian fiber items in the market has slightly decreased the demand for clay terracotta items. Such items are attractive and of high quality. Due to their attractiveness, people prefer those items. However, he seemed to be determined and fearless about the demand and his entrepreneurship. In this regard, he put his argument as,

Our terracotta items need to compete with fiber items in the market. However, I am sure such imported items cannot replace our clay terracotta items, which are used in the temples and other religious performances. Moreover, only a

limited number of people are involved in preparing such terracotta items in Thimi. That is why, as far as the quality and dexterity matter, I am fully committed to maintaining it, and I feel less threatened by the reduction of demands and shrinking of my income.

Prajapatis opposed the easy flow of imported goods into the market. They actually blamed that; the concerned authorities are not very serious about promoting domestic products and discourage the import of items. Due to favorable policies on the import of various items, imported items have made a significant presence in the market, sidelining domestic products. Moreover, local businesspersons are also supporting the promotion of imported items in their local markets. They are working only for the profits. In most shops, local clay items are seen dumped in the corners, while imported items are highlighted. In many situations, shopkeepers are found to prescribe imported items rather than promote local clay items. As a result, the customers rarely choose the local clay items. As a result, they mentioned that there has been a slight decrease in the sale of clay items in the market at present.

Understanding of Lack of Formal Education as a Challenge

Except for one of them, the others were either semi-literate or had completed class 10 education. One of them has completed an intermediate level of education. They felt very bad about their formal educational level and were frustrated by their limitations in entrepreneurship and personal development, stemming from a lack of education. They commented that they could make many changes in their entrepreneurship if they had achieved a higher level of education. They even surmounted and brought about changes in their own lives. In this regard, Hari expressed his depressive feeling as,

I wish we could explore far better with clay-related education, either abroad or in our country. Due to my low educational level, I did not receive any education in clay. I suppose, clay-related education will expand our horizon for the betterment of our entrepreneurship. I think the clay education will definitely enhance our skills to find a way to uplift the situation, whatever we are at present. We might also collaborate with certain organizations on the investment. We do not have any opportunities for clay-related education. In fact, no one has given such opportunities except for some ceramic training at a few institutions. Even many of the young generation or we do not have such training. Except that, we have not received any training or orientation

regarding our entrepreneurship. That is why we lack a new vision and a new way of doing business. As a result, we are unable to bring as many changes in our entrepreneurship as we expected.

Pruna advocated that people needed to do smart work in a smart world. However, he admitted that, despite his expectations, he has not yet considered expanding the business on a large scale, hiring more workers, or introducing machines. He gave an account of the introduction of 3D modelling abroad, where there is no manual work; all processes and activities are automated. He commented that a lack of education has prevented him from accessing and using such technology in his clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Binay also explained the importance of education for them. He said that educated and learned people are accustomed to digitalization and modern technology. There is a chance they will introduce some innovation to the clay items and try new items, including terracotta and ceramics. However, he said that Prajapatis involved in clay entrepreneurship have limited their occupation only within the family. They are running the business as a family business. They are less educated and lack the knowledge needed to expand the business. In this regard, he tried to clarify the importance of education as,

Education plays a vital role in entrepreneurship. Educated people are more likely to adopt technologies and enhance their business with appropriate plans. They can have better command over many languages and lead the business well. They are more likely to take risks and even solve problems with ease. Educated people are more likely to create better interpersonal relationships, which matters a lot in business. They can explore more for the extension of business not only in the local areas, but also abroad.

Unlike Binay's statement, Purna missed his opportunity to export abroad due to a lack of education and an inability to command a foreign language. In this regard, he expressed his views in frustration as,

We had a contact with one of the Nepalese in Paris working in a shop. He would manage all the processes and activities for the export of terracotta items in Paris. With his support, we exported various terracotta items a few times. Unfortunately, he developed spinal stiffness and left the job there. He gave us a word to use to correspond with the previous boss at the shop, but we have not received any response from the boss yet. We can contact the boss

directly, but the language barrier is an obstacle. It is bad luck for us. We could have better opportunities for the export of many other terracotta items and generate more income from there.

Kumar linked education with the advertisement and promotion of their clay pottery. He stated that the lack of formal education deactivated his skill of personal relations and contacts, eloquence, and interpersonal skills, which caused him to be backward despite his dexterity. While expressing this, he was emotional, and his tone of expression changed, and he lamented as,

My wife always complains about the lack of advertisement for the work I do. People say it is easy nowadays to advertise. People use digital platforms and social media to advertise any new work. However, sad to say, I am not accustomed to such technological usage and digital platforms. People who are inferior to me are highlighted, but my works are not expanded as expected. The one whose skills on terracotta are not as sophisticated as mine, but he regularly gets opportunities. I am not given the chance to display my skills well. Sometimes, I feel that my personality and some other shortcomings have overshadowed my achievements. Remembering all of that and such a situation, I feel like bursting.

During the interview, Kumar seemed frustrated and expressed significant dissatisfaction with his failure to promote himself and his terracotta skills. He pointed out the main reason for his backwardness as his lack of modern education, through which he expected to excel more than he has at present. During the interviews, I have realized that they have adequate knowledge of clay pottery. However, they do not appreciate their traditional and indigenous knowledge; rather, they consider that modern education can improve their overall situation. In fact, globalization and modern entrepreneurship have overshadowed their traditional clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Anecdote 7: Reluctance to Try New Things

During one of my encounters with my first participant, I asked him about any plans to enhance his entrepreneurial activities. Whenever I visit him, I see him playing with clay to make a vase for a flower. I ask him, “Haven’t you tried to make some other items like ceramics or terracotta to generate more income?” An SLC³²

³² School Leaving certificate now SEE (Secondary Education Examination)

passed man replied in an uneasy manner, “No, not at all. I do not have any training or education for any of them. I do not have much interest in them. I do not like to practice anything that requires more skilled labor, modern machines, and many more. Actually, I do not want to take more risk of failure. In fact, starting ceramics is quite difficult. Moreover, we cannot compete with Chinese ceramics, which are 10 times cheaper than ours are. On top of all, I do not want to think much about uncertainties. Whatever I make, it sells out. I have not faced any economic problems until now. Unless and until my flower vases are sold out, I don’t want to think about any other things.”

After I listened to his dissatisfaction with other entrepreneurs, I asked him, “Haven’t you ever thought of making your entrepreneurship on a large scale?” “Yes, I thought about ceramics. But it needs more investment and equipment.” He stresses. Then I suggested to him that he take loans from commercial banks and cooperatives. With a rising tone, he adds, “It’s not a big matter. What matters is the market, personal contact, expensive raw materials, managerial skills, etc. It’s quite difficult for us to manage them.”

Baron (2000) believes that society and the existing structure are both molding factors that shape people's perceptions in one way or another, whereas a person's entrepreneurial attitude, decision-making capacity, innovation, and risk-taking competence are social and cultural influences that shape people's decision to become entrepreneurs (Parson, 2005 as cited in Neupane, 2017). In line with Parsons, Neupane (2017) argues that risk-taking behavior and innovation are effects of the physical, societal, and cultural worlds on a person.

During the field visit, while roaming the study areas, I saw that the Prajapatis were producing various-sized flower vases and other clay items. While visiting the areas, I could see mostly the drying of the flower vases and some other clay items in the open spaces. They too clarified that the Prajapatis in their locality focus solely on the production of flower vases and a few other items in demand. Until now, there has been demand for them, and they are generating income well. Nevertheless, they admitted that they have not tried to modify the business. Rama was fully devoted to producing a flower vase plate when I interviewed her. She stressed producing only highly demanded products to avoid stress from unsold clay items. Hence, she tried to justify her statement as,

We have been producing the flower vase for a long time. It is highly demandable in the market. Therefore, we have not tried any other options and have not sought innovation in it. In fact, we are producing clay items, and they are sold out. Actually, we do not need to worry much about it, and we have not opted for something new. If the clay items were not sold out, we might search for something new. But we don't need to do that.

Since the entire vase was sold out, they were quite happy with it and not motivated to try something new. Regarding the new try, Gopal had a bad experience. Once, he tried a new way to decorate the vase and sent it to a shopkeeper. Nevertheless, sadly, the shopkeeper returned it, stating it was too costly. He further elaborated that the shopkeeper said the customers are unlikely to pay more for the decorative flower vase. Gopal himself also stated that, in general, people believe that flower vases are used for planting flowers. It does not matter whether they plant in the decorative ones or the normal ones. That is why many people do not want to take the risk of unsold and being dumped in the storehouse. Rather, they will work for the demandable ones in the market so that there is a steady cash flow and no worries about the family's survival and subsistence.

Actually, Gopal was not only alone in trying new ideas and creativity in clay entrepreneurship; Hari also admired creative work, but he, too, felt discouraged. His discouragement stemmed from duplicating such items, leading to humiliation and wasted time and labor. He had to dump some creatively prepared clay items in the storeroom as showpieces that the shopkeepers refused to sell, citing their costliness. In this regard, he showed depressive feelings as,

I can use my creativity for the innovation of clay items. I can produce a variety of clay items simply by observing them for a few minutes. I have such capacity to do that. I watch the YouTube videos regularly and try to learn some skills. Nevertheless, the problem I face after it goes on the market is the duplication of such items by others. Mostly, people copy the creatively prepared clay items that are not as good as the creatively prepared. More often, such copied items are cheaper than the creatively prepared ones, and customers in the market prefer the cheaper ones. In many cases, customers simply compare price to quality when choosing clay items. As a result, I am unable to sell such items in the market. Hence, my intention for innovation and creativity diminishes, and I tend to follow the trend of demands in the market.

Though Gopal discussed the discouragement of innovation and creativity in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, Hari advocated branding such items. However, he confessed that they were unable to create a brand for the creatively prepared clay items. Regarding the inability to brand such clay items, he realized they lack the finishing and appeal of other imported clay items. Even the creatively prepared clay items are somehow costly. He said it is time-consuming and manually prepared. Despite the need to brand the clay items, Hari was reluctant to do so because he sees education as a major challenge in the occupation. Due to a lack of formal education, they are unable to develop ideas and knowledge to explore issues or acquire the necessary training to address them.

Prajapatis admitted that they are continuing the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship in the traditional way. They have not changed their ideas on the occupation. Hence, they are undesirable to clarify the importance of this entrepreneurship, inculcate the habit of innovation, and link it with the new perspective for their children.

During the field visit, I have come to know that Prajapatis involved in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship lack a clear roadmap for entrepreneurship, innovation, and business expansion. They are uncertain about how they will continue the occupation in the future. They are reluctant to expand the business, citing a lack of investment and ideas. In fact, they are afraid of taking risks and want to remain in their comfort zone. I have realized that they have creativity but hesitate to try innovation or bring change to their occupation. They are afraid of losing whatever they possess at present. Actually, they have a high failure rate, which prevents them from trying new things in their entrepreneurship.

It has been observed that Prajapatis learn and practice the clay pottery by observing their parents and seniors. They have sharpened their skills with continuous practice. They argued that, though there are some changes over time, there have not been many changes in how they are taught or in the practices, they follow. They said they lack knowledge and that no one has told them to change it. No one has taught them to change the way they are adopting.

Although no one has told them to change the way they adopt, Hari realized they should mechanize the production of clay items. However, he is reluctant to do so. In this regard, he put his argument as,

Many of us have small families, and our children do not show interest in clay pottery. Simply, we two, husband and wife, cannot extend the business and start an industry. In such circumstances, there are many issues related to personal relations, marketing, production, transport, etc. that cannot be handled simply by my wife or me. If we start an industry with some workers, it might be possible. However, due to a lack of education, ideas, and knowledge, we cannot explore further for business expansion or search for other opportunities. As a result, we cannot manage the investment required for the mechanization of the production of clay items.

In the context of adopting technology and realizing clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, Kumar had a different understanding of it. In one way, he is tempted by technology, but on the other hand, he does not realize that his reluctance to expand the business was an opportunity for others. In this regard, he expressed his views as,

Occasionally, I think of using technology with digitalization, but I'm scared of myself for the possibility of difficulty in embracing the orders. I think there will be an increase in orders, but I insist on refining the work, which cannot be achieved solely with my involvement. I do not want to complete the task with others' involvement. I would like to maintain my brand so others can support it. I work with the notion that I produce fewer items, but the best and finest ones. Actually, I lack the appropriate knowledge of business and business plans. Hence, others have taken master pieces from me and copied them and started their own business.

They agreed that, in one sense, the number of people involved in this clay pottery is shrinking, and in another, the new generation has not appreciated the work. They have realized that eventually, the clay pottery will be in crisis. However, they have not considered bringing change to clay pottery. They are simply working and are not worried about the future. They have shown no interest in expanding the business. They said that people are mostly self-centered and concentrate more on self-earning. People do not think to start in a new way. In fact, people lack the knowledge and leadership qualities to explore clay pottery further. Hence, they are, knowingly or unknowingly, reluctant to try new things in clay pottery.

Anecdote 8: Lack of Raw Material

Today, it is a Saturday and a holiday. Nevertheless, the day is quite dull and cloudy. I check in mobile wifi, which suggests the day will be mostly cloudy. I hope it might rain during the day. I plan to meet with one of the participants to discuss the problems they have observed with clay pottery. I visit the locality where I first met my participant. As soon as I reach an open space after crossing a narrow, long alley, I see a man hitting a clay pot with a faala (a wooden structure used to beat clay during the preparation of traditional clay items) and a lhon (stone).

I greet him with “Namaste uncle!” and he replies, “Namaste,” with a smile. I wait and observe him until he finishes his work. I tell him to tell me about the problems he observes in his work. Then he tells, “Actually, we need only clay, sand, laancha (A colorful clay to color clay items), and salanchun³³. We do not need it much. However, nowadays, we lack the basic raw material, clay. Previously, we used to get clay from Sinchitar³⁴, a nearby place. There has been urbanization and land development to extend the settlement area in Sinchitar. Nowadays, we cannot get clay from there. So, we have to bring clay from Harisiddhi³⁵, Jhaukhel³⁶ etc. paying a lot of money.” He expresses his despair.

He further laments, “We get sand from a nearby place, Siddhikali³⁷ hillock. However, there is a tree plantation, and we are not allowed to get sand from there. Nowadays, I bring sand from Kameratar³⁸ about 1 km away. There is land planning and plotting in Kameretar as well. I am not sure how long we should get sand from there.”

Prajapatis were univocal about the scarcity of clay. Clay was their major concern, whoever I talked with or interviewed. They have mentioned that the primary requirement for their business is clay, but they currently lack it. There has been planning and construction of settlement areas from where clay was mined. The places where they used to get clay have turned into concrete jungles at present. Hence, they have a threat of good-quality clay.

Krishna was sad while expressing that they are facing a problem with clay nowadays than in the past. As there is no local clay available, some local traders

³³ Powder of magnesite used in flower vase

³⁴ A locality outside Bode which is 1 km far from Thimi

³⁵ A small city in Lalitpur that lies on the way to Godawari

³⁶ A small village in Bhaktapur

³⁷ A small hillock about (600-700)m from Araniko Highway

³⁸ An area about (200-300) m from Araniko Highway

supply clay from mines in other areas. They supply clay in a tractor or Nissan vehicle from Sankhu and other areas. Until now, there has been a continuous supply of clay, but it is limited compared to before. In correspondence with the local traders, Gopal showed his anxiety that the places from where they are supplied with clay are now said to be vulnerable. He has heard that the government is planning to take action to stop the extraction of clay from some of the mines that supply it.

They lamented that, until now, they have been supplied with clay from various places, but the future is uncertain. Hence, Krishna pointed out the scarcity of clay as a threat to the entire clay entrepreneurship. In this regard, he expressed his views as,

The great threat to this occupation and the continuity of our work completely depends on the continuous and regular supply of clay. I am afraid people might stop working soon due to the scarcity of clay. Without clay, no one can do anything. I am quite anxious that our work is finished when we stop getting clay.

As the clay is not supplied in sufficient amounts, Hari speculated that they would have a problem in the near future. He said that at present, they get clay (fine clay) mostly for ceramics from Dang with the transportation cost of Rs 70000, which is quite costly. With such investment in the clay, Hari argued that they would face significant problems in producing clay items and in competing with imported items. In this regard, he put his argument as,

We cannot produce flower vases and other normal clay items from fine clay. It is not only a matter of production; we also need to factor in the cost of clay items, and we need to compete with imported ones. With such investment, our clay items will be expensive, and we cannot sell them in the market. I understand people will keep flower vases as long as they are here on Earth. However, due to the dearth of flower vases, people will prefer Indian flower vases. When they have to pay more for the flower vases, then they will opt to choose the attractive Indian flower vases over our normal ones.

Krishna too had similar views to Hari and articulated as,

Bringing clay from far areas increases its cost, which in turn affects the price of clay items. It is common that higher clay prices increase production costs. Nevertheless, we have to compete with the cheaper Indian and Chinese clay items. As a result, we are more likely to be unable to compete with them because of the high cost of the clay items we produce. Ultimately, people may

have to leave the occupation willingly or unwillingly. Therefore, I demand and recognize the need for any concerned authority or organization responsible for supplying the clay uninterrupted. We are more concerned about it.

Clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship have been passed down from generation to generation. It has been running as a cottage industry. Binay explained that those involved in clay pottery are conducting their business in their own way. However, they are not registered in the municipality or any other government institutions. Hence, they are unable to insist on or pressure the concerned body to address their problem, take initiatives to conserve clay mines, or provide them with certain facilities that would ease their entrepreneurship. Even the concerned body has not shown any interest in the transfer and preservation of traditional indigenous knowledge and ideas from them to the new generation. He expected a high chance that the municipality would support them if included in its tax system. In one sense, Prajapatis involved in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship are unwilling to pay tax, and in another, the municipality has not given much priority to integrating them into its tax system.

Despite the limited supply of clay and the somewhat difficult problems they face, Krishna offered some hope for the future. He was quite optimistic that the problem with clay would be addressed and that they would continue their work and their clay pottery. In this regard, he put his statement as,

People bring clay from different places. Though there are only a few places from which clay is brought, new locations will be searched for. Moreover, people order more clay than they require and stock it for future use. More often, people stockpile clay for at least a year. By the time of consumption of all the stock clay, there will be some new alternatives managed for the supply of clay for the entire community.

Anecdote 9: Lack of Interest in the New Generation

It has been several days since I wandered here and there in the field. During my visit, I observed only a few youngsters playing with clay. Actually, I am quite astonished to see that. Hence, I plan to learn about the issue from my participants. I have no definite plan for that. I am just thinking that whomever I meet, I will talk about the issue with them. Fortunately, I met my third participant and greeted him "Namaste dai (brother)!" He replies "Namaste" to me. Today, I observe him remaining idle. After all, it is easy to talk with him.

“Do you see interest of the younger generation in traditional clay pot entrepreneurship?” I ask him. He showed his despair, “No, not at all. The younger generation is not interested in this. I have requested my children to learn it many times. However, I do not see any interest in them. They say they do not like to do it. They do not pay attention, though we call on them to support us. Instead, they keep on watching television or playing computer games, stating that they are studying.”

He further expressed his agony, “They say it is a difficult task as well as a dirty job. People have no status in this job. I do not see devotion and passion from the younger generation. Actually, traditional clay making is a difficult task. People need passion and more devotion. One needs to be skillful and practice a lot. People can become efficient in making clay items only after several years of practice. In fact, people are not secure about their future. They can sustain life until they work. When they cannot work, then what next?”

During the field visit, even after spending several days in the study areas, I did not see any young people under 30 working or producing clay items. They also agreed that young people, especially those under 30, are not involved in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. During the interviews, I found that participants held dual perceptions regarding the involvement of their young generation in their clay pottery. In one way, they expect their children to support them in their work, whereas in another way, they are completely pessimistic about their involvement in their occupation. Hence, they have not even transferred their indigenous knowledge and skills to their children. As a result, there is a high chance that the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship will be lost from the locality.

On one hand, Prajapatis themselves are pessimistic, and on the other hand, Gopal expressed about the complete indifference of the young generation towards clay pottery. He said that the new generation has achieved formal education. Understanding the value of formal education, they have sent their children to school. It is not only the school education; many of the younger generation have graduated from the university. Some have acquired a technical education. With a frustrating tone, he explained the perception of children and the parents towards clay entrepreneurship as,

The educated children consider the clay work as very dirty work and perceive the entire occupation as valueless. They have no interest in the occupation, and the parents do not encourage the younger ones to get involved. I consider

that the parents have not forced their children into the occupation, considering the difficulties they faced in the past. Even the children wish to get involved in some table work or other businesses rather than continuing the family occupation.

Actually, the Prajapatis have been practicing clay pottery for generations. However, they do not wish their children to follow their path. Rather, they expect their children to adopt some easy table work. Subedi (2015) noted that despite its rich cultural value, societal perceptions often relegate pottery to a low-status occupation, thereby discouraging younger generations from pursuing it as a career. Hence, the preference for easy jobs is one of the reasons for discouraging the young generation from clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Gosai (2022) stated that white color is meant for going to the office in a neat and clean dress, and that people are respected everywhere, whereas working people are not. People show respect to those who tend to work in an office, but ignore those who work physically hard, dirty, and heavy. Hence, such feelings are dominant among the Prajapatis and their young generation as well. In this regard, Maya put her views as,

The new generation is not attracted to our entrepreneurship. They are unwilling to continue our job. They have no desire to work in clay. They prefer working in an office or doing other work rather than clay pottery. Nowadays, the new generation is educated and wishes to get a job related to their field of study. In fact, I have not said anything to the new generation to continue our occupation.

The new generation resists for the continuity of clay pottery stating it as value less job. They have not shown any interest in learning skills or their clay pottery. They showed sadness for their indifference towards their clay pottery. They expected the new generation to bring many changes to their entrepreneurship. In this regard, Binay expressed his views as,

The educated new generation can explore more about the occupation. In fact, the new generation accustoms with technology, language and modern education who can relentlessly expand the business with new vision and ideas. However, sadly, they do not have any interest in the occupation. Even we too lack education and knowledge to guide them properly about the benefits and requirements to expand our entrepreneurship.

Hari also expressed views similar to Binay's. He opined as, *Actually, the new generation who are educated, have knowledge of language, cope with digitalization, can enhance the technologies and bring changes in clay entrepreneurship. There can be the creation of more job opportunities, increased income, business expansion, and accelerated exports. But they have no inclination for the clay occupation and entrepreneurship.*

They have accepted that, due to the toughness and time-consuming nature, they have not transferred their skills and knowledge to the younger generation. Therefore, it is not only the young generation to blame for their passiveness towards clay pottery. However, Purna has stressed that people need passion and zeal to work in terracotta, which he said is lacking among young people. In this regard, he tried to clarify as,

Skill in terracotta cannot be easily learnt. People need passion and learn by doing. Normally, young people want to generate more income with less effort and in a short period, which is not possible with terracotta. As a result, the new generation is not attracted to terracotta. Even if they tend to start it, they are more likely to shift to any other occupation soon.

Prajapatis agreed that their children lack interest in their clay entrepreneurship and even admitted that there is no provision for formal training in producing flower vases and other common clay items. Binay advocated that the ceramic cooperative provide ceramic training for those who desire it. However, he mentioned that training is mostly carried out by Chhetris and Newars (excluding the new generation involved in the occupation), from various backgrounds and localities.

Binay further explained that they regularly submit proposals for ceramics training in the municipality. After accepting their proposal, they enroll trainees and provide training at no cost. Sometimes, they receive aid from foreign organizations to conduct ceramic training. Such training is also free. The desiring ones can receive ceramics training at any time by paying Rs 10,000 per month. Training is conducted for (2-3) months. In such training, there is an increasing tendency for enrollment of females. Occasionally, graduate students from the university are also enrolled for the training. Most people receive basic ceramics training in their programs. People need more training to master it. He accepted that after the training, none of the trainees had started their own business, except for the *tihaarpaala* (a small round clay item in which oil is placed to burn a cotton stick during the Tihar festival). Mostly, the

trainees produce it after training programs. There is strong year-round demand for it. Some of the trainees have started their own businesses after receiving training at the ceramics cooperative, and they are earning a good income from them.

Purna also mentioned a few sculpting training sessions over the 3 months. Nevertheless, he argued that people could not learn well in 3 months; they normally would not have the time to pass within that period. In fact, people need regular training for years before they can build confidence in it. He emphasized the training of a new generation and said that training can simply support them, but people themselves should delve into the occupation from the heart. Regarding the training, he doubted that the new generation starts with enthusiasm but later tends to divert from it. In this regard, he argued as,

Normally, it is seen that the new generation has acquired training for the sake of their hobbies. Mostly, they are educated, and they have their own dreams and aspirations. Therefore, they consider and undertake it as a part-time or side job. As a result, they cannot remain consistent in their occupation and eventually walk away, mostly due to their education. Mostly, people do not convert their hobbies into their interests. Without interest, the skills in terracotta or ceramics or even clay pottery cannot be learnt, and people cannot excel in it.

Purna gave an account of some of the trainees in terracotta. He explained that people join the training with enthusiasm, but after some time, they are more likely to leave the training, considering it tough and time-consuming. He stated that when trainees cannot maintain appropriate shape and structure in terracotta, they tend to get frustrated and ultimately move on to their own interests or to a field related to their formal education.

Challenges to Export

Prajapatis have been producing various types of clay items for a long time. Whatever they produce, they are handicrafts that are prepared with the skill and expertise of their hand. Hence, they are a matter of attraction for tourists and an export abroad. However, the Prajapatis in Thimi are unable to export their clay items abroad. Binay expressed the view that handicrafts and other handmade items have great value abroad. People are ready to pay more for such handicrafts there. However, people do not prioritize it, and there is less value placed on handicrafts in Nepal.

A few years back, Purna exported various types of terracotta items to Paris through a Nepalese contact in Paris. He even exported to the USA (United States of America). However, he soon realized that exporting such clay terracotta items is difficult and requires specialized expertise. He even recognized the inadequacies of business ideas and plans, as well as language as a barrier to the smooth, uninterrupted export of clay terracotta items. In this regard, he shared his experience of failure to export terracotta items, as,

The most challenging thing for export is safe transport, for which packaging needs to be done diligently. We had complaints and occasional confrontations about the breakage of terracotta items' body parts. Sadly, we had to discontinue exports due to such complaints and our inability to provide better packaging. Additionally, we could not connect businesspeople due to a lack of business ideas and plans. Hence, I consider lack of education, knowledge, and expertise to be the hindrances for the export of terracotta items.

Thimi is a cultural city, and foreigners occasionally visit the locality. Sometimes, they show interest in taking away terracotta items. Purna realized that supplying clay items to tourists is just as difficult as exporting them abroad. Muller (1981) has also mentioned that clay goods are in low demand among tourists due to the considerable challenges of transporting them. Purna admitted that, despite conversations and other formalities, some foreigners were still unable to take away the terracotta items. In fact, the airfare to transport such items is costly. Prajapatis involved in the production of flower vases and other clay items showed ignorance and no interest in exporting the items they produce.

Binay stated that exporting clay items is difficult. Several steps and processes must be completed to export clay items. He said that Prajapatis lack appropriate formal education, a business plan, and ideas for exporting clay items. Hence, they do not think about it. In this regard, he tried to clarify as,

Prajapatis do not have ideas of export. People need special training for the steps of export, ranging from registration to packaging to departure. Normally, they do not know all the processes. Moreover, it is not feasible to hire an expert for the entire export process. Hence, only a limited people are involved in the export of clay items.

Needs in Clay Pottery

With the changed time and circumstances, use of many traditional clay items like *dhampa* (A middle-sized pot used to put drinking water), *gopa* (A small or medium-sized clay item used to put water or rice beer during feasts and festivals), and other items has dramatically decreased with the introduction of plastic, aluminum, and other wares. Despite the health benefits, many clay items are highly neglected by people. Krishna stated that the unpopularity of the clay items is not only related to their durability, but also to the lack of publicity and promotion for their use. In this regard, he opined,

I agree on the decreased use of the clay items. We lack publicity for the use of the clay items. We see many advertisements and publicity about the use of metal and plastic wares across different media, but our clay items and works are never publicized. Neither we nor others motivate us for that. I am sure if there is publicity for the use of clay items about their health benefits, there will be massive use and increased demand, as well as increased attraction of the clay items than at present.

Krishna emphasized that the local government (municipality), the government, or any governmental body should take the initiative and link clay pottery to tourism development in Thimi. He further explained that promoting clay pottery is beneficial not only to the Prajapatis but also to the concerned body. In this regard, he showed his optimism as,

Our occupation is our identity, and it is a matter of glory for the local body as well. It can promote it for tourism development. Many tourists visit and occasionally take our photographs and our works. However, if the local body publicizes our occupation and works, it's sure to lead to tourism promotion and improved economic conditions in our locality. When the tourists start visiting our localities, there can be an enhancement of economic activities and more and more people can get job opportunities, leading to an increase in tax collection for the municipality and financial betterment of the local people themselves.

Hari lamented that there is no promotion and support for the occupation and clay pottery in Nepal. He shared his experience of how promoting clay pottery revitalized the local economy and helped people excel at exporting their products, using an example. He said that in India, the government has massively supported the

clay pottery. The state has allocated the clay mine especially for the clay pottery, and there is a supply of clay in the packets. Therefore, people have no tension over raw materials, and they can produce in large quantities. The state itself supports and promotes the production of clay pottery in India. As a result, there is a massive export of the clay items from India to Nepal. Hence, the trend of using various Indian clay items has been increasing in Nepal too.

They were serious about promoting their clay pottery but expressed frustration with the lack of activities by the organizations supposed to help them. With a tone of frustration, Krishna put his views in despair as,

We do have Prajapati samaj (society), the organization that is supposed to work for the benefits of Prajapatis and their identity but it does nothing for the clay pottery occupation. Similarly, there is a ceramic cooperative in our locality. It has also done little to promote and support the occupation, beyond distributing some chemicals and conducting a few training sessions on ceramics. I have not known anything about any works done by the cooperative for the availability of clay, the most important raw material for the occupation.

Despite some benefits of the kiln over the traditional baking process, it is not completely harmless to the people and the community. They were unanimous that there is still an accumulation of dust and garbage in the surroundings. Hence, they stated that there is growing support for the introduction of an electric kiln in the community. Regarding this, they expect support from the municipality. With due consideration for the pollution caused by the kilns in the community, Hari realized they needed to think about green energy and the benefits it offers. In this regard, he shared his views with a suggestion as,

Gradually, we will need to turn our kiln into electric mode. However, it is said to be costly, and people fear they cannot afford it. We can work out the installation of an electric kiln with half the investment from the municipality and half by the group. The whole group will agree on the proposal. With this, the problem of pollution can be solved. We do not even need to buy wood for burning in the kiln. Nevertheless, it will increase the production cost for us, which can ultimately affect the price of clay items.

Prajapatis, too, realize that the baking process of clay items has caused trouble in the community, and they wish to solve it. However, they argued that only they

could not solve the problems created in the community. They are ready to opt for kiln electrification but expect support or collaboration with the municipality or other concerned organizations.

Summary

The Prajapatis are pessimistic about passing on their indigenous knowledge and skills for producing clay pottery to the next generation. Many of them speculate about uncertainties in their clay pottery. They consider clay work as tough and expect their children to get involved in some easy table work. Despite the ease of entrepreneurship, they are facing several challenges in their clay pottery business. At present, the prime requirement for their clay pottery, clay, is limitedly supplied. The new generation is indifferent to their clay pottery. Prajapatis in clay pottery consider themselves less educated, lack business plans and ideas, and are reluctant to try new things. Moreover, there is an introduction of plastic and metal wares, and an increase in competition from imported items. Above all, they want their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship to be promoted by the concerned local bodies and the government.

CHAPTER VI

SHIFT FROM TRADITIONAL CLAY POTTERY TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In this chapter, I have addressed the research question: *In what ways do Prajapatis see clay pottery as shifting towards entrepreneurship?* Moreover, I have analyzed the changes Prajapatis have observed and realized in their clay pottery and in their entrepreneurship over time. With changes in conditions and circumstances, I have further analyzed how they have shifted their traditional clay pottery into entrepreneurship through mechanization and the practice of terracotta and ceramics to compete with imported items and sustain their business.

Change Observed in Clay Pottery

They have been practicing clay pottery for a long time. They were unanimous that, with the changed circumstances and time, they had observed and realized many changes in their clay pottery. They gave an account of how they practiced clay pottery in the past and continue to do so today. They have observed both positive and negative changes in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. In one sense, they say their clay pottery has become easier, whereas in another, the problems they have faced threaten their entrepreneurship.

Fetching Clay to Home Delivery

The prime need for Prajapatis for their clay pottery is clay. They emphasized for the requirement of clay for the smooth running of their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Ratnaman and Gopal mentioned the community's past practice of fetching clay. They gave an account of fetching clay from nearby localities such as *Sinchitar*, *Kameretar*, etc., which are not far from Thimi. Muller (1981) has also mentioned that the clay, which is preferably taken from the fields on the high terrace plateaus, and the 'tars' in the nearby areas are collected after the wheat or rice harvest, whilst the fields are lying fallow for a short time. Firstly, the top layer of soil is removed. Amongst the various layers of clay which are found underneath, only the relatively rich 'gyna chha'³⁹ and below this 'haku chha'⁴⁰ are suitable for pottery. They are allowed to gather clay not only from their own fields but also from other farmers' fields without payment.

³⁹ Good quality yellow clay

⁴⁰ Black clay

Ratnaman said that he, along with the other family members, used to carry clay for the production of various types of clay items. He mentioned that carrying clay was a tough job that needed a lot of physical labor. In this regard, he expressed his views as,

Clay is the most essential part of our entrepreneurship. Actually, we had no problem fetching clay for us. We used to collect clay from Warcha (a nearby locality in Kameretar) and Sinchitar. People used to cultivate various crops there, and after harvesting, we collected clay there. Clay found there is of quite good quality. Hence, all the male members in the family used to collect clay for us. As we had to dig the field, take out clay, and even carry it to home in a khamoo (A round, structured basket made of metal or bamboo), it was really time-consuming, and we could hardly carry clay only (7-8) times a day.

Gopal remembered that family members normally fetched the clay. However, those with fewer family members, especially children, were too young to carry clay from far away; some friends and relatives would support them. Later on, people received support from laborers who arrived in Thimi from nearby areas to harvest rice and wheat at different seasons. In this way, Prajapatis collected clay for their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship and stored it in their houses for future use.

They were contended at present regarding the availability of clay for them. They agreed that the situation is now much easier than in the past. They do not need to fetch clay for them. They simply order clay when required. Some local traders have made a business of supplying the required clay whenever needed. Hence, they ordered more clay than was required to store for future use. They said that previously they collected clay free of cost, but now they have to pay for the clay they are supplied with. While analyzing the situation regarding the supply of clay for the Prajapatis, they seemed relaxed and satisfied with the availability of clay at their home, but in fact, they are losing their indigenous and traditional skill for identifying the good-quality clay they require.

Manual to Machine Kneading

Prajapatis were emotional as they elaborated on kneading clay to make it soft and pliant for the production of various clay items. They stated that kneading clay was as tough as fetching it, which was done entirely by hand. Krishna recalled his childhood reminiscence of fetching clay with his elder brothers and father in *Warcha* (a nearby locality in Kameretar). He stated that clay was stored on the ground floor

after it was fetched, as it is damp and cold. Regmi (2000) has elaborated that some water is poured onto the stored clay and allowed to soak for 2 to 3 days. Then the clay is cut with a spade and hammered with a wooden hammer to soften it. Stones, leaves, and twigs are separated and thrown. The clay is kneaded with the foot in large quantities, then divided into small portions and kneaded by hand for hours, and even hammered with a wooden hammer to make it very soft and sticky.

Prajapatis also mentioned kneading clay by hand and foot, which required significant physical labor. They said it was a great challenge during the winter season. In this regard, Krishna shared his experience of the pain and toughness of kneading clay with watery eyes as,

I was the youngest son in the family, and I could not support my father and elder brothers in producing the clay items. Therefore, my duty was to knead clay and make it ready for them to produce various types of clay items. My work starts in the morning. I used to hold a long stick and start kneading clay several times with my bare foot and hand. Until it was time to go to school, I had to knead clay continuously. Really, it was a too-tiresome and tough job. In the summer, it was all right, but the challenge was in the winter. I used to have cracks in my skin and bleeding, which made it difficult to eat, write, and wash my hands due to the cold and the kneading of clay. Now, when I remember that, I fear such a scary situation I went through.

Prajapatis stated that they had no other option but to knead clay manually for clay pottery until the introduction of an electricity-driven kneading machine in the community. Even after the availability of the kneading machine, until a few years ago, they had to knead clay either individually or with the support of family members and occasionally neighbors. Normally, they had to pay around Rs. 1000 in electricity bills to run the machine. At present, they get support from the migratory people (workers) for kneading clay, for which the workers are paid hourly. They expressed happiness at the tremendous reduction in physical labor required for kneading clay and at the ease of maintaining their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Old Vehicle Wheel with Tire to Motor-Driven Electric Wheel

They agreed that they used old vehicle (bus or truck) wheels to produce various types of clay items, though it is hardly seen in the houses or workshops of Prajapatis in Thimi at present. Muller (1981) has mentioned that clay is often placed upon an old tire and kept rotating upon a metal shaft fixed in the ground. Damaged

wheels of a bus or truck consist of the bale and bearings. Therefore, they are easier to rotate through (Regmi, 2000). Then, the disc is driven by a long stick. During the work, the potter stands bent over the wheel, which is near the ground. It is possible to work sitting down when the wheel is very small (Muller, 1981).

They said that working on the vehicle's wheel was quite tiresome and difficult. They had to repeatedly rotate the wheel, which required extra force. Even the production of clay items was slow. Moreover, bending down to produce clay items caused back pain. Hence, Krishna and Gopal said that they could not work well, mostly after fifty years of age, due to back pain and other health ailments.

They responded that during the 2010s, people in Nepal faced chronic electricity load shedding, which had severe impacts on them. A schedule of load-shedding hours was published by NEA (Nepal Electricity Authority). At that time, some of them began using a wheel from a vehicle to produce clay items. However, they were accustomed to electrically driven wheels and refused to use vehicle wheels. They said to work according to the load-shedding schedule, which meant working even at night or early in the morning.

They were unanimous that none of them, at present, uses a wheel for the production of clay items; rather, they use a motor-driven electric wheel that has boosted the quality and quantity of the production of clay items (explained in chapter 4). They seemed relaxed with the use of the electric wheel and quite happy with the increase in the production of clay items, which ultimately supports them in increasing their income and making life easier.

Solely Family Support to Support of Migratory People (Workers)

Prajapatis stated that clay pottery was very difficult in the past. From the fetching of clay to the selling of the clay items, it was tough. They have given an account of the role and importance of family members in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Ratnaman had a glow in his face as he explained the involvement of all the family members in the production of clay items. He said that the father and elder sons in the family would produce various types of clay items, whereas the younger ones would support them by fetching clay, kneading it, helping dry it, and putting away the dried clay items inside the home.

Gopal also elaborated that most people had joint families, and many family members were involved in the production of various types of clay items, resulting in rapid production and ultimately good income from them. However, he stated that the

conversion of the joint family into a nuclear family somehow caused problems for the clay pottery. Yet that was not much of a problem for many of them, as they had many children who could support their father in his clay pottery as much as possible. Father would produce various types of clay items, and the children would finish and decorate them. Similarly, all the family members would work together to bake the clay items. Gopal gasped with a sense of satisfaction while elaborating about the ease of clay pottery with the support of family members. In this regard, he expressed his views as,

Previously, we had a large family in which three brothers, including their children, lived in the same house. It was quite easy for us to produce clay items. We were doing well in our clay pottery with the support of all of the family members. Unfortunately, my brothers separated and started to work on their own. Yet, I did not face many problems because I had three sons and two daughters who relentlessly supported me in our entrepreneurship. My children used to support me until they went to school, and even during the holidays. Hence, with the support of all the family members, I was able to purchase a piece of land and a new house for the family. It was completely with the sole effort of the family and clay pottery.

They agreed on the sole effort of family members in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Hari and Krishna also gave examples of some Prajapatis who could sustain their lives and even add property to the family through their sole efforts and clay pottery. However, they accepted that at present, they have fewer family members with hardly (2-3) children who are pessimistic about the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Prajapatis did not deny that they do not get any support for their clay pottery from their children. Yet, they were not hopeless for it. At present, they receive support from some migrant workers from various parts of Nepal. Those workers lay their hands on Prajapatis for transportation of clay to their home or workshop, kneading of clay, drying of clay items, rushing inside the home during rain, baking of clay items, and delivering baked clay items in a vehicle to send to the market. They considered workers' support an important aspect of sustaining their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Open Space Baking to Kiln Baking

They elaborated on the baking of clay items in the courtyards and squares in their localities. For them, baking clay items in the open air has remained a way to

remember their tradition, one they have observed since childhood. They stated that the clay items were baked only after drying well in the sunlight.

According to Muller (1981), a kiln is constructed to bake the clay items. These kilns are usually set up in the long, square blocks typical of the Kuma quarter. First, a layer of the desired-sized straw is carefully spread out on the floor. A layer of larger clay vessels is spread upon this, surrounded by straw. Slowly, a pile of layered clay goods and straw as high as a man grows up, which is then surrounded by a coat of ashes, so that it is air-tight, like a charcoal kiln. A few air holes at regular intervals ensure a regulated supply of oxygen. They also serve to light the fire in several places. The kiln burns continuously for three to four days. After it has cooled down, it is carefully taken apart.

For Prajapatis, the baking of clay items is a skill and an art of tradition that they have practiced, as Muller noted. Ratnaman and Gopal stated that they needed to use their skills and experience to spread the clay items along with straw, hay, and pine leaves in a way that would ignite and burn continuously for days to properly bake the clay items. Krishna too agreed that mistake or improper arrangement of clay items would not bake the clay items properly leading towards difficulty to sell them in the market.

Krishna furthermore elaborated that baking of clay items was a challenge for them. They needed to monitor the baking process regularly and check the fire repeatedly through the holes made at regular intervals. He said that baking clay items would be more stressful during the rainy season and would pose other problems for the entire community. In this regard, he put his statement as,

During the baking of the clay items, we needed to be cautious and regularly monitor the fire. Hence, we were exposed to smoke continuously for several hours. As a result, many of us have problems with asthma and other airborne diseases. Moreover, continuous burning caused blowing away of ash in nearby localities, which also caused air pollution and health risks to other people as well.

Hari shared his bad experience of baking clay items during the rainy season. He expressed his views regarding the difficulties they had to face, as

We used to bake clay items in the open spaces without roofs. During the rainy season, we cannot predict when it will rain. Though it is sunny in the daytime, it might rain at night. As the fire burns for days, it should not be extinguished.

Due to rain, the fire might be extinguished, resulting in wasted labor and effort. Hence, we needed to cover it with plastic or tarpaulin. We have spent many nights awake and very often taken care of the fire with a wet body. As a result, I got sick with such incidents repeatedly.

They seemed quite relieved by the loss of traditional clay baking in open spaces, for which they had faced many troubles and had waited several days to remove the clay items from the kiln. At present, communal and rooftop individual kilns are being constructed at various localities in Thimi. They can even remove the baked clay items in a day, and the weather has no impact on the baking process. They mentioned that they had to complete all the tasks and processes of baking by themselves or with family members' support, but now the laborers support the baking of clay items. In one sense, the entire community might have lost the practice of ash spraying, but in another, Prajapatis have lost their traditional skill and art of baking with the introduction of new kilns.

Anecdote 10: Traditional Entrepreneurship: Exchange of Cereals for Immediate Pay

It is a sunny day. I am trying to find an appropriate participant to take an interview. I am moving around the locality. By the time I get a call from one of my friends, there is a person who practices traditional clay pottery. I am quite happy to know about it. I get general information about him and decide to make him the next participant.

I am quite eager to meet a person. After I pass through a narrow alley, I reach a small open area where different types of clay items are dried in the sunlight. As I enter a nearby house, I make eye contact with a man playing with a clay pot.

“Namaste, uncle!” I greet him, and with a smiling face, he replies, “Namaste babu!” “Can I disturb you?” I try to get an excuse. I told him the purpose of my visit, and he provided me with a stool quite happily.

I observe a heap of unbaked clay in one corner, clay pots, and a pile of already-baked clay items on the ground floor where he is working. “What clay items do you make?” I ask him, observing here and there. “I make different traditional clay items; dhampa (A middle sized pot used to put drinking water), bhajan (A small sized item used to parch cereals:rice, maize, wheat etc.), foshi (A big sized clay pot used to boil kat (liquid) for preparing alcohol), duwali (A small sized clay item used to keep alcohol during its preparation), gopa (A small or medium sized clay item used to put

water or rice beer during feasts and festivals), *soama* (A small sized pot used to put rice beer), *moali* (A middle sized pot used to put rice beer), *laakh bati pala* (A middle or big sized clay plates used to burn oil/ghee dipped cotton sticks in temple) etc.” A man replies in a happy note.

I put on my query, “How did you use to sell the clay items?” “I used to arrange certain clay items in a shiga (A netted rope used for carrying clay pots/items) fixed in a nol (A bamboo stick used to fix shiga, yoke) a day before. The next day, early in the morning, I carried shiga and visited various parts of Kathmandu and Lalitpur. I used to carry them while walking from Thimi and stop at Ghantagar for the first time. Then, I could stop at Balaju⁴¹ for the second time and visit the nearby village. I used to exchange cereals (rice, wheat, maize, etc.) with the clay items I carried away. Actually, one needs to be very strong enough to do that.” The man recalls his past.

He keeps on expressing boastfully, “I used to make 100 tepa (a big pot used to put water or cereals), 100 koncha within 2-3 months in winter for selling in the nearby village. Then, I used to visit Lubbhu⁴², Sanagaun⁴³, Harisiddhi⁴⁴, Nepaltar⁴⁵, Balaju, Dharmasthali⁴⁶, Futung⁴⁷, Okharpauwa⁴⁸, etc., and many more to exchange cereals with my clay pot items.” The man becomes nostalgic about his past.

Ratnaman stated that some community members, including him, used to make various types of clay items, such as *dhampa* (a middle sized pot used to put drinking water), *fosi* (a big sized clay pot used to boil kat (liquid) for preparing alcohol), *koncha* (a large pot used to prepare rice beer), *moali* (a middle sized pot used to put rice beer), and *duwali* (a small sized clay item used to keep alcohol during its preparation), as they wished, and bake them accordingly. Once the clay items were baked, they carried them in *shiga* (a netted rope used for carrying clay pots/items) and roamed around the Kathmandu valley to sell them. He somehow boasted that it was a tradition among the Prajapatis to produce clay items and sell them in cities and villages across the Kathmandu valley.

⁴¹ An area about 4 km away from ring road (Gongabu)

⁴² A small city about 5 km away from ring road (Gwarko)

⁴³ A small city about 3.5 km away from ring road (Gwarko)

⁴⁴ A small city about 3.5 km away from ring road (Satdobato)

⁴⁵ An area about 4 km away from ring road (Gongabu)

⁴⁶ An area about 4 km away from ring road (Balaju)

⁴⁷ An area about 5 km away from ring road (Balaju)

⁴⁸ An area about 17 km away from ring road (Gongabu)

Ratnaman and Gopal gave an account of the celebration of many festivals and the organization of feasts on different occasions by Prajapatis. Especially, they notified about marriage ceremonies of children (both son and daughter), *chudakarma* (*bratabandha*) of sons, *guthi pa*⁴⁹ etc., during which, they organized feasts for the relatives and other friends. For such occasions, they needed many cereals for preparing alcohol, rice beer, and beaten rice. They stated that, for Prajapatis, one way they arranged it was through the exchange of clay items and cereals from different localities around the Kathmandu valley.

Ratnaman and Gopal explained their tradition of exchanging clay items for cereals. They mentioned that many of the Prajapatis in their community managed the cereals required for various occasions in such a way. Krishna too shared his experience of exchanging clay items for cereals with a smile on his face, as

I had a love affair with my girlfriend (now wife), and my parents planned for our marriage. The plan of marriage excited me, but it also added the tension of organizing a feast and fulfilling other requirements. We did not have adequate cereals at home to organize a feast for the marriage ceremony. Then my mother suggested I exchange the cereals for the clay items I had made. Hence, I carried away some of the clay items from Shiga (a netted rope used for carrying clay pots/items) and travelled to Lubhu, where I exchanged wheat and rice for the clay items I had brought. With the arrangement of cereals, I returned home happily.

They stated that they practiced exchanging cereals for the clay items they produced. However, they admitted they had left the tradition quite a long time ago. At present, none of the Prajapatis practices such a tradition. They produce mostly the demandable clay items in the market, like various-sized flower vases, flower vase plates, *laakh batti paala* (a middle or big-sized clay plate used to burn oil/ghee-dipped cotton sticks in temples), jar pots, etc., only after they get orders from the shopkeepers around Kathmandu valley or especially the local traders. Ratnaman also mentioned that he prepares the traditional clay items only upon orders from shopkeepers in Kathmandu Valley and outside it.

They admitted that they are paid immediately upon supplying the clay items to shopkeepers or local traders, either in cash or via mobile transfer/phone pay, and

⁴⁹ A group of people formed especially for performing death rituals and celebrate a function as rotation basis among the group members

occasionally in advance as well. They were somehow amazed by the shift from the traditional system of exchange of cereals to the immediate payment for the supply of clay items in the market. After all, Prajapatis are happy with the shift in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Carrying Loads to Market to Home Market

Apart from exchanging cereals for clay items, they shared their experience of roaming through cities and villages, carrying loads of clay items to sell. Unlike for the exchange of clay items with cereals, they went to cities and villages carrying loads of clay items to sell for cash. Ratnaman and Gopal visited several cities and villages to sell the traditional clay items. They mentioned that the exchange of cereals for clay items dramatically decreased with the introduction of plastic and other metal wares into the market, and that, as a result, the demand for traditional clay items decreased.

Although there was a reduction in the exchange of clay items for cereals, Krishna argued that demand for different-sized flower vases and other decorative items never decreased. He too visited many places in Kathmandu and Lalitpur carrying loads of flower vases in *shiga* (a netted rope used for carrying clay pots/items). He had to carry loads until the bus stand and then transport them through the vehicles very often. He stated that, actually, it was quite a tiresome job, and more often, there was a high chance of breaking the items while transporting them in a vehicle or while carrying. In this regard, he shared about the problems he faced as,

During transportation by vehicle and carrying, there is a high chance of breakage of the clay items as they are quite brittle and break even with simple force. Once any clay items are broken, then they cannot be sold out in the market, even though we can mend them with glue or magxol⁵⁰. However, the use of adhesive will more likely reduce the price of clay items, as they will be slightly different from the normal ones. In case of large cracks or breakage, they cannot be mended, and our hard labor goes in vain. We simply need to dump them out.

Krishna further elaborated that if they plan to visit a far area, they need to prepare the items the day before they move out. Especially when roaming through the villages, they had no option but to carry loads in *shiga* (a netted rope used to carry clay pots/items). Even in the cities, they had to carry loads and roam through alleys

⁵⁰ adhesive to join the cracks available in the market

and homes, though they later took them away in vehicles. Carrying loads was tiresome, and they often had to face frustration and humiliation in their work. In this regard, he shared his bitter experience in a frustrating tone as,

While selling the flower vase and other clay items in homes, we had to transport the clay items wherever the house owner orders us to deliver. Sometimes, we had to carry the clay items up to the fifth floor in the house, which was too tiring. Similarly, we used to feel quite humiliated that the house owner did not ask for even water, despite carrying away the clay items wherever they said. In some cases, people used to drop money from upstairs as if we were untouchables. It was frustrating to encounter such incidents and people.

At present, they are relaxed, with no bearing of tension, carrying heavy loads of clay items and roaming around cities and villages. Even they said that the frustration of unsold goods, the fear of breakage, and incidents of humiliation are gone with the home market. They produce various types of clay items as per order, and once they complete the assignment, mostly local traders and sometimes shopkeepers visit their home in a vehicle to collect the ordered clay items. They showed great satisfaction with the shift in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship from the traditional clay pottery to the home market. With the shift in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship to the home market, Prajapatis feel relaxed in one way, but in another, they lose their interpersonal skills in marketing, ideas to persuade customers, and their own way of doing business.

Production of Traditional Clay Items to Practice for Commercial Motive

Prajapatis mentioned that they grew up observing their family members practicing clay pottery in the traditional way. No doubt, various types of traditional clay items were a very important part of people's lives. Previously, people used clay pots for various activities, such as storing grains and water, cooking food, preparing beverages, washing clothes, and more. Actually, some of the traditional clay items like *gopa* (a small or medium sized clay item used to put water or rice beer during feasts and festivals), *soama* (a small sized pot used to put rice beer), *bhajan* (a small sized item used to parch cereals: rice, maize, wheat etc.) etc. are inseparable part of Newari culture. They are required during the death performances of people. In fact, people had no other options, and people happily used those clay items.

Ratnaman said that Prajapatis produced various types of traditional clay items and continued making them in the traditional way. However, Hari and Krishna argued that people used to work hard, but things had not changed as much as expected with the practice of traditional clay pottery. More often, it was very hard for people to fulfill the requirements of the family. With changing circumstances and time, people's priority for traditional clayware shifted to plastic and other metal wares. Ultimately, those items are less desirable in the market, and the number of Prajapatis producing traditional clay items slumped tremendously. Despite that, it does not mean that people do not comply with the clay items. Ratnaman accepted that only a few of them are continuing to produce traditional clay items, with limited demand from rural areas in Nepal.

During the field visit, I saw many Prajapatis producing various types of flower vases and other clay items across all field areas. They also agreed to prepare only the items that are in higher demand and earn money quickly. They gave an account of their current preference for the production of different types of flower vases. They were happy about the increased demand for flower vases and no longer needed to stock them. On many occasions, they have stated that local traders remove the flower vases from the kiln.

They advocated commercial motives for producing clay items rather than simply sticking to traditional ones. They are producing common types of clay items, mostly in response to market demand. Hence, they have focused on the production of flower vases, jar pots, flower plates, *laakh batti paala* (a middle or big sized clay plates used to burn oil/ghee dipped cotton sticks in temple), curd pots, *haalcha* (small clay pot to keep biryani or curd), *lassi* (a sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana, and some other sweets and resins) pots, *kulincha*⁵¹, *tihar paala* (very small clay tem in which oil dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or praying for god in temples) etc. that are highly demandable in the market for which they get appropriate cost. They have given preference to the fast income generation for easy subsistence. With such preference, they are losing their indigenous knowledge and traditional skill of producing various types of clay items.

⁵¹ Small jar like clay items used for religious performances

Shifting for Indigenous Entrepreneurship

As there is a decrease in demand for the traditional clay items, Prajapatis have concentrated on commercial motives and focused on the production of clay items that are highly demandable in the market. With the commercial motives, they are having good income and sustaining their life. Despite of that, they are facing a great challenge in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship with the escalation of imported clay items. Hence, some of them have adopted strategies to cope with these challenges and continue their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship as much as possible, in their own way.

Story 1: Shifting to Mechanization and Use of Technology

In the second week of June, I am wandering here and there in the field. I am thinking of a person from a traditional background who does something new rather than the traditional one. I get information about a person and move to meet him. After I walk through a narrow alley, I ask someone about a man I am searching for. He shows me his house. I ring a bell, and a man peeps out from the window. He calls me upstairs, and I walk upstairs slowly with a flashlight in my mobile.

Namaste dai!" I greet him after I enter one of the rooms in the house. A man who is sweating replies to me "Namaste". I try to make it clear to him about my purpose and desire to meet him after sitting in a chair. "Are you involved in traditional clay pot entrepreneurship?" I try to become formal. He replies to me immediately. "No, I don't practice traditional clay pots. However, I have a background in traditional clay pot entrepreneurship. Nowadays, I produce different clay items like tihaar paala (very small clay tem in which oil-dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or praying for god in temples), laakh batti paala (A middle or big-sized clay plate used to burn oil/ghee-dipped cotton sticks in temples), lassi (A sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana, and some other sweets and resins) pots, matka (clay) tea pots, decorative flower vases, etc., in a machine.

Why have you made changes in clay pot entrepreneurship?" I try to focus on his subject matter. "I tried to show how much we can do using clay other than the traditional items. Considering that, I decided to change the way we were working. I had a thought: I would do something new without completely diverting from clay pottery. Initially, I tried new ideas with decoration in the flower vase rather than simply producing a plain flower vase.

The man furthermore says, “I studied art and craft in college, and I wanted to show that the traditional concept that people, as clay items, are valueless is wrong.” The man says boastfully, “I realize that I cannot get whatever I have now if I simply keep on working in the traditional way our father and forefathers did in the past.”

I want to know the sustainability of his entrepreneurship and ask, “How is your entrepreneurship sustaining?” He replies with a smile. “There is demand for those items. I supply them to local traders, hotels, restaurants, small tea stalls, lassi (A sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana, and some other sweets and resins) shops, and very often people come to me.

Krishna closely observed traditional clay entrepreneurship and envisioned it. He could see people working hard to produce various types of clay items, but things had not changed much as they had expected. He thought of doing something new that could increase production of clay items, increase income, and sustain life easily than the way he had lived throughout his life. Hence, he has shifted to mechanization for the clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. With a bit of excitement in his face, he expressed his views about his adoption of mechanization for entrepreneurship as,

I have been observing the traditional status of clay pot making conditions since my childhood, and now I have tried to change the working conditions in it. Rather than continuing in the traditional way, I have focused on modernization and the introduction of machinery in this occupation. I am sure machinery work is quite faster than the traditional way. Its production level is far better and faster than in the traditional or manual way.

Krishna studied art and sculpture in college after completing his school-level education. He realized that his study and choice of art and sculpture was the turning point for him, which drove him to do something new for their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship without deviating much from the clay and clay activities. He tried to explore more of the clay, experimenting with some innovations in the clay works for which he did something new that the others in the community did not. Initially, he tried decorating the flower vases rather than simply making plain ones. Gradually, he kept on trying new ideas in sculpting as well. Due to changes in ideas about occupation and innovation, he could expand his personal contacts and connections. He thought his new works and innovations would attract and motivate the youngsters in the community to follow his path. However, he confessed that his

new works could not generate inquisitiveness among many of the others in the community. In this regard, he lamented as,

The more I explored, the more I understood the market and customers, which finally resulted in more exposure and fame in the community. I expected the others in the community, at least the younger ones, would follow the steps I walked on. Unfortunately, none of the others in the community followed my way, except for one or two who modified a few things in the production of clay items. They simply kept on producing the flower vase and others in the same way they have been doing.

Krishna considered shifting to mechanization and technology in the clay entrepreneurship, but soon he realized it was quite challenging to set up machines, since it was new and no one else in the community had tried it. He searched for an appropriate machine on the market with specific specifications that would facilitate the easy production of clay items. Despite searching for a machine for months, he was unable to find one that met his needs. However, he was able to order a machine with the specifications he chose with the support of his friend, who works in the pharmaceutical industry. Ultimately, after waiting for a few months, he acquired the machine and installed it in his workshop. In this regard, he elaborated the advantages of the machine with a tone of satisfaction, as,

I have brought a hydraulic machine from India, which is not a ready-made one. I used my ideas, experience, and skills, and requested that the machine be developed to meet my needs and requirements. There was some innovation in developing the machine to meet the requirements. The machine is not available in the market nor with anyone else in the community. As a result, I have been able to produce a large quantity of various clay items in a short period of time. Frankly speaking, I am happy with the machine work.

I have fulfilled the demand of the customers quite easily with less effort and tension.

Figure 8

Production of Paalas (Very Small Clay Item in which Oil Dipped Cotton Sticks are Burnt During Festivals or Praying for God in



(Field Study, 2025)

Krishna said he had gained name and fame through his new works in the community, which was further intensified with the installation of a hydraulic machine. He stated that after starting the hydraulic machine, production of various clay items increased, as did orders. Meeting customer demands was somewhat challenging. He had worries about supplying the orders on time.

Therefore, he could not complete all the details on his own and with his wife. Then he recruited some workers to produce clay items. Gradually, the number of workers was increased to eight. However, he has reduced the number of workers from before to the present.

In one way, orders for the clay items increased, and so did worker recruitment. In another way, Krishna was successful in immediately fulfilling customer demands and competing in the market with imported clay items. In this regard, he put forth his views as,

Once the hydraulic machine was installed and started, I felt the production of various clay items had quadrupled compared to manual work. It resulted in less investment. As a result, I could supply the clay items at a lower price than others in the market, enabling us to compete with imported clay items from India and China. I know the business will flourish when we supply attractive, high-quality clay items at lower market prices. The customers are more likely to purchase the attractive and cheaper clay items with quality.

With a sense of satisfaction, Krishna further elaborated on how mechanization has replaced manual labor and the traditional production of clay items. He stated that with the mechanization of the occupation, one has more options for producing various clay items than working by hand. On top of that, multiple productions can be run through a machine. He admitted that the more production, the more demand

fulfillment, and the more cash flow, the more important it is to entrepreneurship. In this regard, he tried to clarify.

In our community, people still prepare laakh batti pala (A middle or big-sized clay plate used to burn oil/ghee dipped cotton sticks in a temple) and a flower vase manually. I guess, people can hardly produce 50 lakh batti paala working for the whole day, whereas as many as 20 flower vases in a day. However, we can produce hundreds of laakh batti paala in a machine, and more than double the number of flower vases than manually. Just imagine how much effort and time are reduced with the mechanization than working manually.

Krishna elaborated on the dominance of mechanization and its impact on manual labor for the production of clay items. He perceived a significant difference between mechanized and manual production of various types of clay items. In manual work, people themselves work from morning to evening, whereas in mechanization, they simply observe the machine running. They are not directly involved in it. The machine performs all the activities. They simply monitor and supervise the activities within the machine. In fact, manual work is a tiresome, slow process, whereas mechanization is easy and fast. Moreover, in manual work, the production of clay items depends on a person's skill, performance, and labor. A person cannot keep working continuously. However, in mechanization, a machine can run for several hours.

With mechanization, Krishna now advocates that he does not labor much, and the machine drastically reduces his effort. He simply monitors and observes the machine's activities and production. He stated that he could run the machine and, at the same time, do other work. By the time the machine keeps on producing the clay items, he can take orders, fulfill demands, or manage other work. Moreover, in mechanization, he said, somewhat boastfully, that even he is not required; other workers can run the machine. He stressed that, actually, manual work can be learnt through continuous practice and devotion over years, but mechanization simply requires a few days of training. Manual work needs a lot of time to transfer the knowledge, whereas technology can be easily transferred.

Krishna argued that if they are supposed to compete with Indian and Chinese clay products in the market, they must adopt mechanization, digitalization, and innovation in their occupation. They must cope with the changing conditions and

digitalization. Hence, he admitted that along with the mechanization in the occupation, he has shifted it to the digital world, which has simplified his entrepreneurship. In this regard, he put his argument as,

I have an online portal and regularly post the clay items in the portal. I am quite content with the online portal. Customers use the online portal to order clay items. Nowadays, I do not need to search for customers or worry about selling the clay items. Customers place orders, and I fulfill their requests as soon as possible. This has resulted in a hassle-filled situation for the customers and me. Hence, I consider that without digitalization and new technology, our occupation cannot thrive. I think the ones who do not move with the changing conditions will either be left far behind or wiped out.

To broaden his business horizons, Krishna tried to expand his business and export the clay items he produced. However, he could not export many of the clay items due to various problems. In this regard, he stated,

Along with the mechanization and digitalization of the occupation, I have tried to export the clay items abroad as well. I am in contact with the foreigners. Few years ago, I got opportunity to take part in the exhibition programs (A one exhibition) in the five-star hotel (Hayatt) in Nepal where most of the guests would be the foreigners. With this, I could expand my contacts among foreigners. They have made inquiries about the clay items in an email. They invite me to the fest and events regularly, but I am not able to focus more on that due to a busy and tight schedule at present.

Story 2: Practice of Terracotta

“During the conversation with one of my participants, I got information about a person who is from traditional clay pot entrepreneurship but practices terracotta. It’s Saturday today. After having lunch, I decided to meet him. However, I am not sure whether I can meet him. After I cross my first participant’s house, I reach an open area and ask someone about a man practicing terracotta. He shows me one of the houses in the middle of a row. I go upstairs, calling him Kumar dai (brother). I see a lot of terracotta items placed on the ground floor and even on the first floor. After reaching the second floor, I see a man covered with many terracotta items scattered here and there in the room, working on a terracotta idol. I made up my mind to make him next participant and, in fact, I am happy to meet him. He is sitting on a

small laasaa⁵², with his back to the room's door. I greet him "Namaste dai!" He nods his head and sees my face. He might have thought of me as a customer and been busy with his work. I tell him about my purpose and study. Then, he tells me to sit on a small stool.

"How did you start making terracotta items?" I ask him. He says, "My parents and uncles were involved in clay pottery. They had been continuing their occupation for a long time. With the family environment, it is obvious that we get inclined towards clay activities. Since my childhood, I have been very much interested in making terracotta and other decorative items. Even though I had to support my parents in clay activities, my aspiration was to perform painting, artwork, and terracotta. At the age of (15-16) years, people start producing clay items, but I tried to make terracotta of some animals at that age."

I put on my curiosity, "How did you learn terracotta?" With a slight excitement, he replies, "I had a complete background in clay pottery. I could learn a lot about clay production from my parents, but my desires and temptations forced me to learn on my own. In fact, no one taught me about terracotta." He keeps on designing the idol with a tool and explains, "Actually, there was no one practicing terracotta in the locality. I was simply intrigued by the passion I carried for so long. I was fascinated with the animals and their behaviors. So, initially, I tried to make terracotta of the animal head, especially deer, lion, tiger, rooster, etc."

I am astonished by his fine work and am curious to learn more about him and ask, "How did you gain confidence in terracotta?" With a glow in his face, he replies, "From my perspective, I was successful in my attempts. Initially, I could not produce more and perfect. However, I never criticized myself and kept on working on it. The more I worked, the more I delved into it. Gradually, I was improving day by day. If I did not improve, then I could not move forward. Later on, I made producing terracotta my habit and started enjoying it a lot. Day by day, I improved my dexterity and made the items as fine as possible. Then, at one stage, I thought of making it an occupation."

"How do you see the condition of your entrepreneurship?" I ask him again. "It's all right till now. Whatever I prepare, it sells out. I am able to sustain my life. I

⁵² A handmade carpet which is made by using straw

can fulfill my daily needs, the education of my children, and other socio-cultural activities.” He gasps.

Kumar and Purna are involved in the preparation of clay terracotta. Kumar has expertise in the preparation of bricks to be kept in temples, decorative flower vases, and clay statues for the garden, *sukunda*⁵³, *panas*⁵⁴, statues for doors, statues of idols for temples, and gates of houses, etc.

Figure 9

Various Types of Terracotta Items



(Field Study, 2025)

Kumar started terracotta out of passion and interest and learnt it through self-practice, whereas Purna's destitute led him to learn terracotta initially from one of the terracotta workshops and, finally, from the brass statue factory before practicing it individually.

Both Kumar and Purna shared their stories of starting their career in terracotta. With a complete background in traditional clay pottery, Kumar said he unknowingly switched to terracotta. He mentioned that his mother was dumb, and his father raised no questions about his interest in and deviation from traditional clay pottery. He does not even remember, or care much about, the expectations they might have of him. They never pointed out the activities he performed. He simply followed his passion and thought of building a career in terracotta. Purna had a somewhat different situation from Kumar's. He elaborated that his father died in his childhood, and rather

⁵³ An item consisting hollow part in which oil is stored and cotton sticks dipped in oil are burnt at front part

⁵⁴ An item to be used for burning oil dipped cotton sticks

than continuing the traditional clay pottery, with no one to teach him, he started working at a terracotta-producing ceramic workshop, where he learnt to design terracotta items. After some time, he joined a brass statue factory in Lalitpur, where he learnt how to cast statues. Ultimately, with knowledge of terracotta and the preparation of cast, he began working individually to produce terracotta items. He admitted that actually, he learnt by doing. The more he worked, the more persistently he sharpened his skill and passion for terracotta.

Though they have different circumstances and started their carrier in terracotta in different way, both of them have learnt by practice and shared common understanding on terracotta. They stated that the start of terracotta was unique and completely different from the normal traditional clay items. The early days were not as fruitful as usual for the beginners. Many others were practicing traditional clay pottery. However, they were the only ones practicing terracotta in the locality. Therefore, they could not get help from others, and, knowingly or unknowingly, they did it themselves.

Both of them started by preparing terracotta items with different animal heads, birds, and decorative items. As a beginner, they were completely new to the business. They did not have contact with related people who could take their terracotta items. In the early days, they simply had some knowledge of designing, craft making, and preparation of castings. However, they were confident to start terracotta alone. They faced many challenges in searching for customers, persuading them, and selling to them. In this regard, Purna expressed his frustration with the initial days of terracotta entrepreneurship.

Initially, I developed various terracotta items, especially animals, garden wares, and decorative pieces, as I wished. After producing such terracotta items, I used to search the customers and contact them. Remembering the early days is frustrating for me. I did not realize that selling terracotta items is as tough a task as they are prepared. My several years of experience and confidence seemed to be blur against searching of customers. It was hard for me to persuade the customers for acquiring terracotta items. They used to visit me, observe terracotta items but refused to buy them. Their praise and compliments would satisfy me but denial and unwilling to contact demotivated me. My desperation and anguish gradually faded away after a contact with

one of the shopkeepers in Kathmandu. Soon, my happy time flourished and I continuously supplied various terracotta items there.

Even though the initial days were challenging and they had to struggle in their entrepreneurship, their blissful days followed one after another, and they started to remain busy mostly after they increased their business with a shopkeeper in Kathmandu. Expansion of networks led to contact with many customers as well. Hence, Kumar somehow boastfully stated that none of the others in the locality produces terracotta statues and idols for temples, gates, etc. Therefore, he is the first choice of people for it. In this regard, he put his statement with a smile on his face as,

Many people have come in contact with me for the construction of temples and other decorative items for gardens, gates, and residential areas. Many people put my statues in their main gate and in their living rooms. They come and observe my work. Really, I am pleased with their commendation for my work, which adds energy to work better in the future too.

Unlike Kumar, Purna also mentioned that he would be the choice for preparing idols and deities, especially for Gumbas (Buddhist religious shrines). He stated that people get astonished with the idols of Buddha, Padamshambhab, Lokeshwor, Tara, etc., which he prepares. At present, many customers approach his home and workplace. He gets orders and prepares terracotta items as per their demand. Very often, he receives calls from customers outside the Kathmandu valley regarding his home address. Many of them visit his home, observe his work, and see his terracotta items. Hence, he showed a sense of relaxation and happiness for the work he has been doing and the regular contacts he has extended. Due to orders of terracotta items, he was able to complete the assignment as soon as possible and hence do not need to stock them.

Both of them admitted that at present, they do not prepare any terracotta items before they get any orders from customers. They mentioned that when people call for the orders, they send a photograph of the idols they wish to develop. Initially, observing the photograph, the cast of the ordered idol is prepared, which they say is a lengthy process.

Kumar elaborated on the process of cast preparation before starting the preparation of terracotta items. He stated that when they are supposed to prepare either one or two terracotta statues, then he prepares them by hand. Initially, clay is turned down flat, and the structures are carved slowly and carefully by hand. Crafting

designs and structures needs skill and rigorous practice. However, when they have orders for the preparation of idols and statues, a frame or cast is initially prepared in plaster of Paris. To prepare it, a masterpiece is initially handcrafted, and then a cast is made by pouring liquid plaster of Paris into it. Actually, casts are prepared from clay, plaster of Paris, and even rubber. Clay casts dry, but plaster of Paris and rubber casts do not. Normally, it takes (4-5) days and occasionally a week to prepare a cast. Once a cast is ready, then terracotta items can be ready in a day or a few days.

After the cast is prepared, terracotta items are made from clay. Both of them admitted that once the terracotta is developed, that is not the final one. Then, they need to refine it, which requires dexterity and patience. In this regard, Purna put his statement as,

Real dexterity is tested during the refining of terracotta. We need to design and decorate the terracotta item as lively as possible. We need to carve the face, hair on the head, hand position with finger alignment, leg position, and other important features of idols as portrayed in the photographs. All the structures are minutely carved. A small mistake can reveal a different sense and distort the value of the idol. Therefore, we use tools slowly and carefully when shaping and decorating body parts. Finally, it is finished in (3-4) days or in a week.

Kumar also acknowledged that preparing terracotta is quite a tough, time-consuming task. He needs to be very careful while preparing the idols. In fact, people need to have a proper understanding of the values and knowledge of religion, as well as religious performances. He advocated that they listen to the recitation of religious stories and be guided by religious myths to better understand idols and deities. Very often, the people who order such terracotta items also guide and provide ideas. They suggest the position and other requirements for a particular idol and deity. He insisted on perfection in work and mentioned his views as,

Different idols have different structures. Finger alignment, hand posture, weapons, bahans or vehicles, and ornaments must be placed in the correct position for the particular deity. Errors and false positions symbolize different meanings. Decorating and carving require patience, hard work, devotion, and dexterity. In many situations, I prepare the items as requested. Provisions of ideas and suggestions support in overcoming the shortcomings and confusions for the completion of the task.

Both of them mentioned that learning about terracotta is quite tough. People need passion, devotion, and skill in terracotta. It involves designing and carving, both of which require patience and fine work. In fact, mastering terracotta requires a lot of time. Actually, preparing terracotta items is a slow process. Hence, Prajapatis involved in clay pottery have not shown interest in terracotta. Both of them argued that by the time people prepare a terracotta item, they could produce several clay items. Nowadays, people produce clay items using machines, so they tend to complete many items swiftly. However, they need to wait for several days to prepare a cast for a terracotta item. By that time, people can produce many clay items and even sell them in the market. Therefore, people do not want to wait a long time to benefit from what they do. In fact, people want cash flow and quick money in a short period that they cannot easily obtain from terracotta. Despite that, Kumar and Purna admitted that people could earn more from terracotta if they work consistently and patiently.

Both of them share the view that they cannot earn fast income from terracotta entrepreneurship as they can from normal clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. However, both of them were satisfied and stated that God has given them what they want. They are able to fulfill education, health services, and other family requirements to date. They are continuing their work for their passion and the sense of satisfaction they feel from the commendations they receive from customers. In this regard, Kumar gasped with a sense of relief as,

People get perplexed with the statues I make and remark on the excellent commendation for my work. They say my terracotta items are masterpieces and incomparable among those in Thimi. I get rejuvenated with the arguments people make for the placement of weapons, armors, vehicles in the statues of deities that make them as alive as possible.

Story 3: Shifting to Ceramics

During my conversation with one of my participants, I learned about a person who is from a traditional clay-pot entrepreneurship background but practices ceramics. It's Sunday today and the day has been quite sunny since morning. In the afternoon, I decide to meet him. However, I am not sure whether I can meet him. After 5 minutes of bike riding, I reach the entrance to a place, and, walking through the narrow alley, I reach another place where various types of unbaked clay items are drying in the sunlight. On the right side of the road, I see a signboard "Jyojalapa ceramics" and enter the compound. Directly after entering, there is a shop with

showcases displaying many ceramic items. As I enter there, I see a young man talking with some of the people. He told me to wait for a few minutes. I thought of him as the owner of the ceramics and decided to make him the next participant. After the people left the premises, he called me upstairs, and I followed him, where varieties of ceramics were displayed. Some others are working in their own way. I tell him about my purpose and study. Then, he tells me to sit on a small stool.

“How did you start making ceramic items?” I ask him. He says, “I have been making these items since my childhood. Actually, I joined SOS (Save Our Soul) Sanothimi Ceramics at the age of 12. I learnt ceramics from there. I got training there for 2 years and started my own entrepreneurship. Nowadays, I make these items (showing the items) here in the workshop.” I put on my curiosity, “Why did you start ceramics when you had more options?” With a slight excitement, he replies, “I had an interest in making something new other than the normal clay pottery. When I was 12 years old, I heard of ceramics training at SOS Sanothimi. Then, without delaying, I joined them and started training. I thought I would practice more on it than practicing traditional items. Actually, our traditional work was decreasing, and I wanted to try something different. After I got training, I was more confident to start it on my own.”

“How do you see the condition of your entrepreneurship?” I ask him again. “It’s all right till now. A total of 12 people, including four family members, work here in the workshop. I am in regular contact with the personnel from the Handicraft Association of Nepal. We supply our ceramics items to them, and finally, they export the ceramics items even abroad as well.”

When I first met Binay, he was busy with the customers. I started the interview, and he continued working on the motor-driven wheel to produce a ceramic item. At the side, his younger brother was also busy preparing another type of ceramic item on the motor-driven wheel. Binay had been in the ceramics field for thirty years. Initially, he started his carrier in ceramics with the interest of doing something new other than the normal clay pottery, which later on he made his family occupation including the spouse and his younger brother and his wife. Now, he has a workshop with twelve employees and producing various types of ceramics items.

Binay has come across traditional clay pottery, with which he has had close observation. He remembered that his father used to work very hard to produce the traditional clay pottery. However, he could not see the easy fulfillment of family

requirements through the clay pottery his father had practiced for a long time. Hence, he shifted from the traditional clay pottery to ceramics at a young age.

Binay mentioned that preparing ceramic items is completely different from producing traditional clay pottery. He admitted that he was satisfied with his decision of adopting ceramics than practicing traditional clay pottery like his father did. He stressed that he could use creativity and innovation as needed to produce various types of ceramic items. He advocated that, given the health benefits of clay items, people nowadays prefer ceramic items and that demand for them is increasing.

Figure 10

Production of Ceramics Items and Collection of Ceramics Items



(Field Study, 2025)

Binay mentioned that demand for traditional clay pottery decreased as plastic and metal wares flourished in the market. Hence, it was somewhat mandatory to switch to others; otherwise, they would not sustain well. He asserted that, as the cost of clay for ceramics is high, they do not produce flower vases and other normal clay items from it. He stated about the reasons and his preferences for ceramics items, as

People need less physical labor and clay for producing various ceramic items. We tend to prepare the items for which we get an appropriate cost. Mostly, we produce kulincha (small jar-like clay items used for religious performances), tiharpaala (very small clay item in which oil-dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or for praying to god in temples), cups, plates, teapots, dinner plates, and other kitchen wares from fine clay. Moreover, we use glazing on the ceramic items that intensifies their appearance. There is good demand and a better market for ceramics items. People here in Nepal prefer ceramic kitchen and tableware, too. However, many of the ceramic items are exported abroad.

As chairperson of the ceramics cooperative in Thimi, Binay argued that people are interested in ceramics training. They even conduct training for people based on the funding they receive. The number of females receiving ceramics training has increased recently. He emphasized that people who received training from the ceramic cooperative also prefer to prepare *tiharpaala* (very small clay item in which oil-dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or for praying to god in temples) due to its high demand and easy market sale. Apart from that, people can prepare it with less clay as well, and it yields a high profit.

Binay mentioned that they have been trying to support people. However, he lamented that Prajapatis lack formal education, business ideas, and are unwilling to take risks for changing something new. Hence, he said they are stuck producing only flower vases rather than trying ceramics or terracotta.

He gave an account of the support provided by the Nepal Handicraft Association. He said that Prajapatis in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurs continue their occupation from generation to generation without formal registration with the municipality or any other governmental authorities. Actually, lack of registration is affecting them from getting various opportunities from those concerned authorities. Many organizations like to support them but due to lack of registration in the concerned authorities, they are losing those supports. In this regard, he put his statement as,

On behalf of the ceramic cooperative, Nepal Handicraft Association came up with the installation of kilns, only with 20% investment from our side and 80% from their side. In that situation, the ceramic cooperative could not support many people in clay entrepreneurship because it lacked formal registration with the relevant authorities. In fact, the organizations will support people by meeting all the required criteria and completing other processes. We contacted many people involved in clay pottery throughout Thimi, but it was very hard to find anyone with a business registration. Nepal Handicraft Association could hardly support a few people. Really, people missed many opportunities at that time. People have built individual kilns at great cost themselves. They could have a huge advantage with the support from the Nepal Handicraft Association.

Summary

With the changing times, Prajapatis have observed and realized many changes in their entrepreneurship. In the past, they considered the clay pottery as very tough. They had to do almost all the tasks related to clay pottery solely by individual effort or with family support. Ranging from the fetching of clay, kneading of clay, producing clay items, baking them, and selling them in the market, they have observed massive changes. At present, they mentioned that their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship have become easier, and many of them are sustaining well. Meanwhile, they are losing their indigenous knowledge and skills in traditional clay pottery, threatening the survival of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Hence, some of them have adopted mechanization in clay pottery and shifted to terracotta and ceramics. As a result, they have a name and fame for their entrepreneurship. They are successful in generating income, creating job opportunities, and sustaining well in their entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER VII

FINAL REFLECTIONS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I have presented my reflections on the journey of dissertation writing: the start, fieldwork, data analysis, write-up, and the hurdles encountered in completing the dissertation. Furthermore, I have discussed the study's findings and concluded the chapter with implications.

My Final Reflections

With the hope of learning how to develop research ideas, I joined the MPhil program at Kathmandu University in 2011. The theoretical classes went well. Almost immediately after completing the third semester, I successfully defended my dissertation proposal and advanced to fieldwork. I was continuing the fieldwork as well, but due to some of my personal reasons, I could not continue the fieldwork further, and my efforts for the dissertation halted. As I halted, I began to deviate from it more. As time passed, the more I deviated from the dissertation work, the more I diverted myself from the studies' focus. Eventually, the dissertation deadline passed, and my intention to complete it remained dormant. However, I always felt anxious about the incompleteness of my dissertation.

As time moved on, the family responsibilities increased. One thing I confess is that concentrating fully on the dissertation while bearing family responsibilities and working full-time is really a challenge. I realize that failure to maintain balance among responsibilities, employment, and study work resulted in the incomplete dissertation. In 2024, my better half was selected in a competitive examination conducted by the Teachers' Service Commission and was posted outside the Kathmandu Valley. At that time, my younger daughter was just 16 months old, and I had to take a break from employment. I think myself lucky that, in early 2025, the university issued a call for re-registration to complete dissertation work. Immediately, I registered and committed myself to continuing my studies and completing my dissertation. Yet, there was bearing of family responsibilities and taking care of two children. However, I decided to continue with the dissertation work, and now I am in the final stage of completing it.

My birthplace is in the neighborhood of the study areas. We have been using various types of clay items produced by Prajapatis. I used to observe the drying of

various clay items in open areas and, occasionally, the production of clay items. I used to meet some of the Prajapatis carrying loads of clay items in *khamoo* (a round, structured basket made of metal or bamboo), and I would very often see clay items loaded onto trucks. However, I have never focused on or paid attention to their clay pottery. Actually, the production and drying of clay items used to fascinate me as a child. Hence, I wanted to study more about their entrepreneurship and decided to conduct research work on it.

Though I conducted the fieldwork quite early, I had to repeat it. Considering that things might have changed a lot since then, the fieldwork began. I visited the study areas for several days and continued observation and interviews with the informants. I even had informal discussions with many others. I had no difficulty in contacting the informants to collect the required data from the study areas. None of the informants felt awkward in providing information. I think they felt at ease as someone like me talked to them in their own language.

After collecting the necessary data, I transcribed and translated them. Based on the collected information and data, I have presented the anecdotes and stories in each of the chapters (IV, V, and VI) and further elaborated them. I started writing my dissertation but struggled a lot with when and how to begin. To resolve my dilemma, I reviewed some dissertations prepared by past students. Yet for many days, I had trouble continuing my writing. Finally, with some clumsiness, I started with the existing clay-pottery practice of the Prajapatis. Once the writing started, it gradually moved on. I attempted to maintain strict linearity, utterances, and coherence in the interpretation and analysis of the information in the chapters. Moreover, I enriched the analysis by incorporating photographs throughout. I have the following reflections on the chapters mentioned in the previous sections.

Existing Practice of Clay Pottery

I have explored the practice of clay entrepreneurship of Prajapatis in Chapter IV. Actually, they have inherited indigenous knowledge and skills in clay pottery and have been practicing their clay entrepreneurship from generation to generation. Though some younger generations have received training in ceramics from limited organizations, there are no formal training programs for them; they learn the knowledge and skills of clay pottery from their parents or elders and sharpen them through continuous practice. Regarding their entrepreneurship, they do not have

formal entrepreneurial education; rather, they are practicing what they have learnt or observed from their parents or others in the community.

The prime requirement of their entrepreneurship is the clay they order and receive from some local traders in their own locality. They consider the clay they are supplied with to be low quality, and they need to add *khara cha* (a high quality, elastic yellow clay). In fact, they are spending extra money on managing the clay needed to produce various types of clay items. However, they have mentioned that clay mines are limited and the supply of clay is limited at present.

After leaving the clay mixed with water for a few days, Prajapatis knead it in an electricity-driven machine. Kneading clay in a machine is quite fast, reducing physical labor. However, in fact, they are losing their indigenous knowledge of the elasticity of clay needed for the preparation of various types of clay items due to mechanical procedures. Modernization, characterized by technological advancement, has significantly influenced traditional crafts, including clay pottery. At present, all the Prajapatis use electrically driven wheels to produce various types of clay items. Even those involved in the production of traditional clay items use an electric wheel to produce clay items that are further beaten and have additional clay added to form a new structure. Such changes have shifted pottery to semi-industrial production, increasing efficiency but altering traditional techniques. Modernization theory views such shifts toward productivity and economic efficiency. However, the number of Prajapatis involved solely in the production of traditional clay items has dramatically decreased. Once such people stop working or die, it is more likely that the indigenous knowledge and traditional skills in clay pottery they possess will vanish.

There is a decrease in demand for traditional clay items but an increase in demand for different-sized flower vases and other decorative clay items. Hence, Prajapatis have focused more on the production of demandable clay items like flower vase, jar pots, *haalcha* (small clay pot to keep biryani or curd), *lassi* (a sweet drink prepared by mixing curd, banana and some other sweets and resins) pots, *tihar paala* (very small clay item in which oil dipped cotton sticks are burnt during festivals or praying for god in temples), *laakh batti paala* (a middle or big sized clay plates used to burn oil/ghee dipped cotton sticks in temple) etc. With the modernization, there is expansion of market and commercialization resulting into shifts in clay pottery from use-value (daily household items) to market-value (commercial commodities). Linking with the notion of hybridity by Bhaba, this shift shows transformation in

which Prajapatis have adapted production styles to survive economically while attempting to preserve cultural identity. I have found that Prajapatis have focused more on income and work for economic reasons than on creativity and innovation in their clay work. As a result, some of them have forgotten their skill in producing various types of clay items, and many do not have any knowledge or skill in producing clay items beyond a limited range.

Prajapatis involved in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship are practicing a family business in which both husband and wife equally participate in producing various types of clay items. Mostly, the males/husbands produce clay items in an electric wheel and dry them in the sunlight. Then the females/wives smooth, level, and color the clay items before baking them. In fact, the females are handling children and other household chores and are equally supporting males in the family's income generation. I have found that females are quite happy and satisfied with their clay pottery. Though the Prajapatis' families are male dominant, the devotion, determination and role played by females is not only enhancing the family income, they are actively participating for the successful running of clay pottery in Madhyapur Thimi. Along with the females, migratory people (workers) from different parts of Nepal are also supporting them in their clay pottery. Workers support them in carrying clay, kneading clay, drying and baking clay items, and finally transporting them to deliver in the market, for which they are paid on an hourly and contract basis. I realize that worker support is crucial to the smooth continuation of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, as they lack family members to support their entrepreneurship. Many of the participants proclaimed that their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship could collapse without their support.

Once the Prajapatis dry the clay items well in the sunlight, they are ready for baking in either communal or individual kilns constructed in various localities. They are running communal kilns on a rotation system that signifies a sense of communal ownership for the protection and smooth running of the kilns. However, they use their conscience to stop firing in the kiln. Such an unscientific method poses a threat of improper baking and early breaking of the clay items. I consider it carelessness and a lack of proper education towards their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Hence, some of the informants admitted that there have been frequent customer complaints about the durability of the clay items they produce in recent times.

After baking the clay items, Prajapatis now have a home market. Mostly, the concerned local traders, and sometimes the shopkeepers around Kathmandu valley, approach their homes in a vehicle to deliver clay items. I suppose they could sell the clay items directly in the market. However, because they deliver to local traders, they are losing profits. Even, I have seen that the price of the clay items is determined by the local traders rather than the Prajapatis themselves. This has resulted in a monopoly by local traders, and they are unable to obtain an appropriate price for the knowledge and skill they put into producing clay items. Yet, participants reported that they could meet the family's daily needs, including social and cultural activities. In fact, if they have complete freedom to set prices and market clay items, their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship would be quite advantageous to them.

Challenges to Traditional Clay Pottery

I have explored and mentioned the perception, challenges, and needs of Prajapatis in their clay pottery in chapter V. For many of them, clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship are not only a way of living; it is an identity for them. They have been practicing their indigenous knowledge, skills, and creativity in pottery and using it to sustain their lives. I have observed that Prajapatis can start their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship with limited investment and continuous training for a few months. They already have the required materials and background, paved by their parents and other seniors. Even, they can have a better income to sustain their life. Despite this, they are pessimistic about the extent of their children's involvement and the transfer of their indigenous knowledge and traditional clay-pottery skills. In fact, they are uncertain about the future of their clay-based entrepreneurship, mostly because of the assumption of clay scarcity. However, they have not shown an intention to explore the possibilities in uncertainties, and many of them have not tried to modify the business.

I have found that Prajapatis consider their occupation and work to be dirty, lacking social dignity and prestige. Hence, they stated that they do not expect their children to suffer more in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, but rather wish their children to be involved in some white-collar jobs. They are at the stage of accepting changes and the conditions in the new contexts. They have left their children to decide for themselves. As a result, the children are doing their best to explore in line with their education. They dream of doing other jobs besides their family's occupation. Hence, I feel and realize that there is a threat to the loss of clay

pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, and to the wiping out of the traditional skill of clay pottery.

I have realized that Prajapatis are continuing their work with considerable dissatisfaction. It is true that they are generating income and sustaining their families with their clay pottery. However, they do not have a deep sense of what they do. Only a limited number of them face less competition in clay terracotta, and they are quite satisfied with their accomplishments. For them, gaining an identity and recognition in clay work, not only at the local level but also at the national level, is a matter of pride.

As Prajapatis are less likely to transfer their knowledge to their offspring, I realize that the number of people involved in clay pottery will decrease over time. Even they suspect that their home-based clay pottery may turn into home-based studios in the coming few decades. However, they believe the demand for various clay items will not be greatly reduced. In that situation, some of them, by adopting mechanization, will be practicing clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship and producing clay items swiftly. I also consider that, though the number of people involved in clay pottery will be fewer, they will meet market demand. Ultimately, they can have better income, and their business will flourish.

Prajapatis have revealed many challenges that hinder their income and clay pottery. I have realized that many of the clay items that were inseparable parts of human life are now not preferred, mostly due to the introduction of durable plastic and metal wares. At present, the use of plastic and metal wares is so dominant that people cannot avoid them, even as health consciousness toward clay items increases. Apart from that, they are facing strong competition from imported Indian and Chinese glazed clay items (mostly flower vases, ceramic items, and terracotta items), which seem to be superior in finish and appearance to the standard clay items they produce. I consider it due to the lack of competitiveness of Prajapatis, as well as favorable policies for the import of clay items from abroad. There is a massive influx of imported goods into the market, and they are unable to handle it. There is suppression of clay items and they seem to be less competitive.

I realize Prajapati's testimony seems to be weaker due to their lack of understanding of modern education, business ideas, and plans for their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. They too admitted that a lack of modern education deactivated their skill in personal relations and contacts. As a result, their eloquence and interpersonal skills lag behind despite their dexterity. While talking with the

informants, they were happy with the sale of all the demandable clay items they produce. However, they were reluctant to try new things in which they were not sure would succeed. Ultimately, they are involved only in the production of flower vases and other desirable items for the market.

Prajapatis are continuing clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship in the traditional way, without changing the occupation's ideas. Hence, they are undesirable to clarify the importance of this entrepreneurship, inculcate the habit of innovation, and link it with the new perspective for their children. I have come to know that Prajapatis involved in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship lack a clear roadmap for entrepreneurship, innovation, and the extension of business. They are uncertain about how they will continue the occupation in the future. Many of them are reluctant to expand their entrepreneurship due to a lack of investment and ideas. In fact, they are afraid of taking risks and want to remain in their comfort zone. I have realized that many of them have creativity but hesitate to try innovation and bring change to their occupation. Many of them are afraid of losing whatever they possess at present. Actually, they have a predominance of failure, which prevents them from trying something new in their entrepreneurship.

They were univocal about the scarcity of clay. In fact, the unavailability of clay means they have to stop their work and their entrepreneurship. Even though the clay mines are limited now, people will undoubtedly explore new clay mines in the future. However, clay can be expensive. If the cost of clay items is high, Prajapatis may have difficulty selling them due to intense competition with attractive imported clay items. Ultimately, they may not withstand their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. They may have to leave the occupation willingly or unwillingly.

I have realized that the young generation shows complete indifference towards clay entrepreneurship. I have found that they hold dual perceptions regarding the involvement of their young generation in entrepreneurship. In one way, they expect their children to support them in their work, whereas in another way, they are completely pessimistic about their involvement in their occupation. Hence, they have not even transferred their indigenous knowledge and skills to their children. Therefore, it is not only the young generation to blame for their passiveness towards clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. As a result, there is a high chance that entrepreneurship will be lost from the locality.

Prajapatis in Thimi are not able to export their clay items, despite the great value of handicrafts and other handmade items abroad. I consider the inadequacies of business ideas and plans, as well as language, to be barriers to the smooth, continuous export of clay items for them. Moreover, transportation issues, completing multiple steps and administrative processes are hurdles for them when exporting clay items abroad.

Despite the health benefits, many clay items are highly neglected by people. I relate it to the lack of publicity and promotion for their use. Some of the informants also mentioned that no one has suggested them for the publicity of the clay items. I consider the local government (municipality) is unable to link clay pottery to tourism development in Thimi. In fact, promoting tourism development increases employment opportunities and the collection of certain taxes and revenues by the local government. Along with that, they want the concerned organizations, such as Prajapati Samaj and the ceramic cooperative, to take the initiative to promote and conserve their clay entrepreneurship.

Shift from Traditional Clay Pottery to Entrepreneurship

I have explored the change and shifts in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship in Chapter VI. With changing circumstances and time, they have observed and realized many changes in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. I consider they have observed many changes in fetching clay, kneading it, producing clay items, baking them, selling them in the market, using technology, and using patterns of the clay items. They have mentioned that the changes have helped them start businesses more easily.

In the past, with the support of family members and, occasionally, friends and relatives, they used to carry clay to produce various types of clay items from nearby areas. Now, they do not have to waste their physical labor. They can simply order clay, and some local traders supply the required clay in their own areas whenever they order. Previously, they had to knead clay manually by hand and foot several times, which was too time-consuming and tiresome. They expressed their reminiscence of the physical torture they had to face during winter. Now, they knead clay in an electrically driven machine, resulting in a comfortable, rapid kneading process. I consider that kneading clay has definitely made their work easier. However, they have lost their indigenous knowledge of understanding about the elasticity of clay required for the production of various types of clay items.

They used old vehicle (bus or truck) wheels to produce various types of clay items, though it is hardly seen in the houses or workshops of Prajapatis in Thimi nowadays. At present, they use a motor-driven electric wheel, which has boosted the quality and quantity of clay item production. I relate it to their adoption of technology in the changed conditions. As globalization and the diffusion of technologies developed in the western world have spread, they too have adopted them in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, which have eased physical comfort and enabled rapid production of clay items.

For them, baking clay items in the open air has remained a way to remember their tradition, one they have observed since childhood. The communal and individual kilns with rooftop ovens at various localities have replaced open-space baking. However, they have lost their traditional skills and art in baking with the introduction of new kilns in the community. They have a history of carrying loads of clay items to sell in cities and villages. Carrying a load itself is quite a tiresome job, and there is always a risk of breakage of clay items. Moreover, many of them had to endure frustration and humiliation in their occupations. Now, none of them sells the clay items; rather, they have a market in their home. I consider that with the shift of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship to the home market, they feel relaxed in one way, but in another, they lose their interpersonal skills in marketing, ideas to persuade customers, and their own way of doing business.

Previously, they used to prepare various types of clay items for different household activities. As they were inseparable parts of human life, some of the informants had experience of exchanging clay items for cereals. Such a traditional system persisted for several decades, and they upheld it as tradition. They were happy with such a tradition. However, with the introduction of plastic and metal wares, they were forced to leave such tradition. Hence, they prioritize commercial motives and limit their production to a few desirable items in the market today. I observe that they have become money-minded and have neglected their traditional clay pottery.

Prajapatis had family-based clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship run with the support of family members. Yet, it is a family-based entrepreneurship, but the support of family members has shifted to the migrant workers from different parts of Nepal. I realize that the workers' hourly pay system is unique, and they have been successfully practicing it for a few years. I consider it a major shift in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Prajapatis are practicing their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship in a traditional way. Hence, some of them are adopting mechanization to cope with the changed situation. Mechanization has not only enhanced production but also shifted the way entrepreneurship is done, with higher earnings and faster task completion. With strong competition from imported clay items, they actually have to adopt such methods to compete on price and production. In fact, that is possible only with the introduction of machinery in their clay pottery. Even, they have easily accepted the use of mobiles for extending networks and getting orders as well as deliveries. More often, they are paid digitally for the selling of clay items. They are following the changes and technologies as per modernization. I consider it a demand of time to sustain their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship.

Kumar and Purna are involved in terracotta preparation through which they have achieved local as well as national level recognition, name, and fame. They are continuing their work out of a passion for terracotta. However, I consider they are unable to transfer their knowledge to younger generations or others. I, too, believe that learning terracotta is tough and deserves more devotion, time, and dexterity than learning skills for normal clay pottery. Terracotta cannot yield returns on labor and hard work as quickly as ordinary clay pottery. One needs to understand the values of religion and religious practice to master terracotta, which I consider lacking among today's younger generation. Terracotta has a strong market and good income, but the new generation's disinterest in terracotta poses a threat to its future sustainability.

Some of the Prajapatis have shifted from traditional clay pottery to ceramics. They are searching new future in it and no doubt; they are somehow successful in it. They are producing various types of ceramic tableware and kitchenware that are consumed not only in Nepal but also abroad. Introduction of glazing in the ceramics items is a way of sustaining for coping competition from the imported ceramics items. However, I think they need to work more on the decoration and the outlook of the ceramic items they produce. Ceramics has not only employed them but also created job opportunities for others. This is one of the good aspects of ceramics in Thimi. Practice of ceramics shows a blending of traditional skills with modern innovations that reflects hybridity. Furthermore, it signifies traditional techniques increasingly coexist with modern technologies and global aesthetics. However, ceramics cannot produce the traditional clay items. Some people are receiving training in ceramics, but

I do not consider this can preserve the indigenous knowledge and traditional skills of clay pottery in Thimi.

Conclusion

Without formal training and through the social learning process, Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi are inheriting the indigenous knowledge and traditional skill of clay pottery from generation to generation. This has portrayed their identity and supported them in sustaining their life as well. However, the number of Prajapatis solely practicing traditional clay pottery is dramatically reduced. They have focused solely on the production of flower vases and certain demandable clay items. Despite that, they are generating a good income and sustaining their lives. Females have a pivotal role in the practice of clay pottery and the indigenous entrepreneurship. They are handling the family well and, at the same time, supporting the successful running of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship through their hard labour and diligence. Similarly, migrant workers also play a crucial role in the smooth continuation of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, without whom, the Prajapatis say, their clay pottery could already have stopped.

Though clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship are part of the identity of many Prajapatis, they are considered valueless and less prestigious in society. They are pessimistic about the transfer of indigenous knowledge and traditional skills of clay pottery to the young (new) generation. The parents are quite uncertain about the better future of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. They have identified many challenges to the smooth running of their clay pottery business. It is true that the prime requirement of clay pottery is clay that is supplied in a limited amount. The young generation is educated and wishes to follow a path in a globalized context, showing indifference toward their family occupation. There is a lack of promotion of clay items, with a preference given to the import of Indian and Chinese clay items. Hence, they are facing massive competition with them and other plastics and metal wares in the market. Moreover, understanding of Prajapatis for lack of modern education, business ideas, innovation and creativity are suppressing them for facing competition, marketing, commercializing and generating more income in their clay entrepreneurship. Hence, no transfer of knowledge and lack of perseverance is leading towards gradual decrease in number of Prajapatis practicing clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Collectively, the signs and symptoms indicate the

degradation of clay pottery, leading towards the extinction of indigenous knowledge, skill, and entrepreneurship among the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi.

Even though there has not been many changes in the process of clay pottery, the activities and methods used in it have changed drastically over time. They feel relaxed in fetching and kneading clay, producing clay items, baking them, and selling them in the market. They have followed modernization and globalization in the use of technologies and the use of patterns of clay items. In the past, most activities in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship were manual, but are now eased by machinery and technologies. Ultimately, they have stated that their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship are now easier than before. However, easy entrepreneurship has posed a threat to the gradual loss of indigenous knowledge and traditional skills in clay pottery among the Prajapatis in Madhyapur Thimi.

With the changed circumstances and intense competition from the plastic and metal wares as well as imported clay items, some of them are now adopting mechanization to cope with the changed situation. Some of them have practiced terracotta, and some have shifted to ceramics. However, a lack of followers in terracotta and limited training in ceramics cannot preserve the indigenous knowledge and traditional skills of clay pottery in Thimi.

Clay items flourished with human civilization. It has been acquainted with human beings for various activities, ranging from birth to death. Therefore, the clay items will remain with the human beings as long as they remain on Earth. Despite all of that, people are leaving the occupation. It will cause significant harm to the continuity of certain customs and traditions. It is becoming too late to ponder it. Prajapatis have not seriously thought about it. However, it depends on how seriously people involved in the occupation take it and how they promote it through various promotional activities.

Implications

Based on my reflections and conclusion, I have made the following implications:

- Considering the scenario and circumstances, it seems difficult to sustain clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship for long. Therefore, it is quite important to transfer the traditional knowledge and skills to the new generation. It is necessary to start immediate tasks at present. Prajapatis need to prepare for the future from the very moment because the skill of making traditional clay items cannot be acquired in a few months. People require

consistent training, practice, and devotion for decades to master the production of traditional clay items.

- The municipality needs to support the transfer of traditional and indigenous knowledge to the new generation, for which it should provide training, primarily on new technologies and innovation.
- Normally, when Prajapatis produce similar types of clay items, there is more competition among them, which may affect business. In order to keep on sustaining in their clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, it is quite important to become creative. They need to use their creativity and skill to produce new types of clay items, focusing on decoration and outlook, so that they are always in demand in the market. There is a high chance they will get a better price for such creatively designed new items.
- The ceramic cooperative has been established to support people involved in clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship. Though the ceramic cooperative manages the chemicals used to decorate clay items and distributes them to its members and other customers, it has not supported individuals in enhancing their entrepreneurship and businesses. In fact, such an organization should develop plans to enhance clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship, and make efforts to transfer indigenous knowledge and skills to the new generation.
- As clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship can promote the tourism industry in Madhyapur Thimi, the municipality should support clay pottery and take steps to ensure the easy availability of clay for Prajapatis.
- Prajapatis should adopt modern, cost-effective methods to produce attractive clay items to compete in the market. They should focus on such items that consume less clay and generate more income. They need to focus on innovation and glazing in ceramics, as well as more decorative terracotta. Focusing on new things will generate more income, and there will not be a problem of market for such items.
- The concerned authorities, and especially the ceramic cooperative, should conduct regular training for the new generation. The trainees should be assured of job placement upon completion of the training period. Apart from that, it needs to orient the trainees on market and business skills.

- People in the locality have complained about air pollution caused by the kiln's operation. The kilns need to run systematically or be replaced with electric kilns. The municipality should work in partnership with groups across various localities to electrify kilns. It would be commendable for the municipality to identify market areas to support the effective operation of clay entrepreneurship.
- The world has changed a lot, and it is clear that people should follow the trends and ways developing worldwide. It will be wise enough to accept the change and acclimate to it. Prajapatis are less likely to get better results working in the traditional way. Hence, it is mandatory to bring changes and innovation to the occupation. In fact, it is too late for them to adopt new ideas, innovations, and changes in their occupation.
- Given the threat of the extinction of clay pottery, those involved in this occupation must, without hesitation, ensure their children and the new generation are aware of it. As much as possible, they need to transfer their indigenous skills and knowledge to the new generation. The most important thing is that they consider the occupation positively and inculcate optimism about the continuity of clay pottery and indigenous entrepreneurship among the new generation. It will be wise to blend the experience and skills of parents with the new ideas and technological knowledge of the new generation to further enhance clay pottery in the days ahead.
- The great challenge for the clay pottery is not the easy availability of clay. People in Thimi and Bhaktapur are facing the same problem. The problem cannot be solved at the individual level. Hence, the institution or Prajapati Samaj or any registered organization should take the initiative for the easy availability of clay for those involved in the occupation.
- According to Piaget (1962), hands-on activities such as modeling with clay enable children to construct knowledge through active exploration and sensory engagement. Similarly, Lowenfeld & Brittain (1987) also emphasized that clay play promotes imaginative thinking and creative expression by allowing students to transform ideas into tangible forms. When students play with clay, the movement of their fingers tends to foster focus, creativity, and concentration, resulting in motor development and enhanced cognitive skills.

Hence, the concerned authorities should include clay work as part of the school curriculum, and schools should prioritize clay work for students.

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