

Traditional Pottery Making System and Sustainable Practice: A Study among Oman and India

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 10 Mar 2025 Revised: 06 May 2025 Accepted: 15 May 2025	<p>Pottery is an eco-friendly small scale cottage base industry of India and Oman countries. And there is much evidence that potters were recognized as the first engineers in human civilization. Both nations has great history about the traditional pottery. These pots have been made since ancient times and although many alternative have come into the market, but no one has been able to replace this ancient art.</p> <p>Historical evidence suggests that pottery making has been around since 4000 years in Oman. Omani artists has also shown interest in pottery because of it multiple source of development, and the availability of sufficient space and rich soil also encouraged such industries, such as potters. Even India also practice same kind of many uses. Traditional Omani cooking utensils are made of two types one is tea and coffee pots locally known as Al Dallah, second type of food storage vessels such as milk pots, jars, halwa vessels and big jars to preservation of the date fruits locally known as Al Khuroos.</p> <p>The research paper concentrated to present issues and challenges of pottery makers at Oman and India, because both nations are pivotal history on pottery. In addition, in the modern era how old-style pottery system are sustain? By the competition of metal and plastic products. Particularly concentrated on Andhra Pradesh pottery (South part of India), predominantly research location is Naidupalem village (Nellore district-Near Bay of Bengal Sea). Whereas an Oman pottery locations are Bahla, Nizwa city and the southern region of Dhofar. We are depends on primary and secondary data an anthropological and sociological perspective.</p> <p>Keywords: Traditional Pottery, Eco-friendly, milk pots, craftsmen, Al Khuroos.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Sufficient land and resource have enable Indian potters to maintain this industry for year, but last 30 years old-style pottery industry facing lot off struggles, so many families disappeared this traditional making method, the pottery community (local name Kummari/Salivahana. etc) converted to other economic sector. Present generation they don't like these traditional working because of highly laborious and less profit.

In 2021 a research scholar (Jahanara at all) conducted a field study in Bengalure about the potters (Indian Institute of Management Banglure), what is known from his study is that many of potters changed their profession, the reason is that this work does not meet their basic needs (Chumki Das, Dec 22, 2022). Potters frequently experience disaffection when changing careers. There are many potter castes in Nellore district, but not all of them practice caste profession. Those who practice this craft have improved the quality of their products to suit current needs. These potters produce various types of pots and vessels, clay idols of Hindu gods and goddesses, decorative items, and ritual objects, they earn their largest income by selling the idols. Most of the pottery items are made for everyday use, such as food storage, water retaining and earthenware objectives. Basically, pot-making tracks old traditions which artisans inherit from generation to generation. The sustainability practice, durability, eco-properties, aesthetics,

smell and taste of food and drinks. At present government take some invitation to uplift the traditional work, by this sense tourism are one of the sector to give encouragement of pottery development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF POTTERY

The Gravettian culture belongs to 29,000-25,000 BC, Venus of Dolni Vestonice figurine excavated in the Czech Republic nation at Neolithic period. It indicated that the Pottery is one of the oldest human creations. Pottery is one of the oldest and most well-known of the ornate arts, consisting of objects made of clay and heat with hard-bitten. The objects made are generally useful ones, such as vessels for holding liquids or bowls or plates from which food can be served. Pottery is a specialized art that continues to attract people who love decoration and gardening (<http://lepakshihandicrafts.gov.in/blog/terracota-pottery.html>).

Pottery is the first artificial substantial ever created by humans. The term refers to objects made of clay that have been formed into a desire shape, dried, and baked to fix their form or either fired. Due to its richness of clay and its durability, pottery is one of the most common types of items found by archaeologists during excavations, and it has the possible of providing valuable evidence about the human earlier (Katherine Fortnum: Ceramics, <https://www.katherinefortnumceramics.com/post/origin-of-pottery>)

Historical relation of India and Oman: there is ample evidence to suggest that these two countries have had a close historical relationship for many decades and archaeological sits in Oman itself show evidence of Indo-Oman trade during the classical Era, dating back to the 3rd century BC. (Potsherd with Tamil-Brahmi Script found in Omen, December 2012). Later, Oman came into contact with Indian through Gujarat and Tamils along the Malabar Coast. Once we look at the British rule reveals that the Bombay presidency was controlled by the British Empire for Oman.

Links with the Indus Valley Civilization are confirmed by a variety of objects dating from the second half of the third millennium BC, these include seals, ivory amulets, metal objects, beads, and weights. However, the black slip jars, which are most commonly found in India, provide a big picture. Because there are in the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, coastal and inland areas this is rare pottery of Indus Valley are found. Black slipped jars are found in all stages dating back to the second half of the third millennium BC. Historical evidence suggests that around 2500 BC from were transported to Oman during the mature state of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Various types of pottery belonging to the traditional Indus Valley civilization have been found in the Omani archipelago, which are definitely associated with these settlements. Objects with perforated vessels and dishes with pedestalled are common, but some other types pottery are fond. Although it represents only a small part of the diversity of the Indus River valleys, most of them were found in the Ras Al-Jinj/ Ras Al-Had area, especially at the HD-1 site. The diversity of Indus pottery types is also evident at Umm An-Nar, on the Gulf coast. But in the interior of the Omen peninsula, only one or two varieties are usually identified, along with the black slipped jar. Perforated vessels and pedestal dishes were commonly found at Hili, Bat and AL-Moyasr. Some of this was imported form the Indus valley, but laboratory analysis has confirmed that some are local copies.

POTTERY INDUSTRY IN OMEN

The country of Oman is officially known as the Sultanate of Oman, a county in Arabia, Oman is located on the south eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and overlooks the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Muscat, the capital city of Oman, the nation's population is expected to reach 5.28 million by 2024, a growth rate of 4.60 percent. Traditional potter is a heritage of Oman for every 4000 years and are an integral part of culture. While today it is mainly used beautiful pieces in most households, utensils made of clay items were a daily necessity in the Sultanate in ancient times. Distant from many traditional industries and handicrafts, the pottery industry is one of the most projecting industries in Omen. Bahal in A'Dhahirah Governorate has been one of the main manufacturers of pottery items in Omen. In the Soil available there red soil is abundant, it is used to make various utensils (Times News Service, 2020)

Traditional pottery is a vital element of Oman's rich cultural heritage, with its roots extending back thousands of years. Pottery in Oman reflects the artistic, practical, and cultural expressions of the Omani people, evolving through centuries of trade, interaction, and local innovation. This paper seeks to investigate the historical context of Omani

pottery and present-day changes, the processes involved in its production, and the cultural significance that has made it a vital part of Oman's identity.

Cultural Significance of Pottery in Oman

Pottery in Oman has played both practical and figurative roles throughout history. Useful items, such as cooking vessels and water storage jars, were essential in daily life, particularly in rural areas where access to modern materials was limited. The large water storage jars as known as qolla, were vital for preserving and freezing water in the hot climate (Al-Salmi, 2018).

In addition to its practical applications, pottery held deep cultural significance, particularly in ceremonial and religious contexts. Incense burners, or majmar, are essential in Omani homes, where frankincense is burned during religious festivals, funerals, and weddings to invoke blessings and purify spaces (Costa, 2006). This custom is intensely tied to Oman's history as one of the world's major sources of frankincense, making pottery an intrinsic part of spiritual life.

Pottery-Making Techniques for Omani Pottery



Materials and Tools: The primary material used in traditional Omani pottery is clay, obtained locally from riverbeds or wade deposits. The clay is mixed with water to form a practical substance that can be moulded into different shapes. Tools such as a basic potter's wheel (the tabaqah) and simple wooden or metal mechanisms are used to shape the pottery (Al-Harthy, 2017).


2. Shaping and Firing: After first shaping, clay post should be dried in the sun light before being fired in kilns. Old-style kilns, often built from mud bricks, are fired by natural supplies like palm leaves or fire wood. The firing process, which typically lasts several hours, gives the pottery its specific strength and reddish-brown or green colour (Juma, 2015). Bahla potters developed a unique green-glazed pottery by accumulation copper oxides to the clay or coating before firing, which is an innovation unique to the region (Costa, 2006).

Decoration and Design: Omani pottery is generally simple, with little ornamentation. However, some pieces, particularly incense burners and ritualistic items, are decorated with simple incised patterns or perforations (Kennet, 2004). The lack of heavy beautification reflects the utilitarian nature of most Omani pottery, though some items, such as incense burners (majmar), feature more elegant designs due to their cultural importance in domestic rituals and religious (Al-Salmi, 2018).

Regional Variations of Pottery in Oman

Different regions of Oman have their own distinct pottery styles, shaped by local materials and cultural practices.

S.No	Types of Pottery in Oman	Art
1	Bahla Pottery: Bahla is the most well-known centre for pottery production in Oman. The pottery from Bahla is distinguished by its green glaze, which has been produced for centuries using old-style firing techniques (Al-Harthy, 2017). Bahla pottery is known for producing storage vessels, large jars, and ceremonial items.	
2	Nizwa Pottery: Nizwa city with deep historical roots, is known for producing pottery used in daily life, such as water jars (qolla) and cooking pots. Nizwa's pottery tends to be more purposeful than decorative, reflecting the city's focus on agricultural and domestic needs (Juma, 2015).	

S.No	Types of Pottery in Omen	Art
3	Dhofar Pottery: In the southern region of Dhofar, pottery is closely linked to the frankincense trade. Potters produce elaborate enrage burners that are central to Dhofari cultural and religious performs. The multipart designs on these burners reflect the region's historical trade links with the Arabian and Indian coasts (Costa, 2006).	

CHALLENGES AND PRESERVATION EFFORTS IN OMAN

Oman has laid out long-term planned plans under “Vision 2040” with a key focus on the building sector. Construction is one of the prime contributors to the non-oil economy and hence is of extreme reputation towards the divergence of the economy. In addition, the government's goal of reasonable housing and a growing number of dwelling visas through the property will attract more FDI leading to growth in the building sector (Oman Ceramic Sector, challenges aplenty, 31 August 2023).

Due to improved demand for luxury items such as vases and decorative pieces of cutlery, Oman Ceramics Market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 7.5% from 2020 to 2026. The increasing popularity of collectibles based on ancient artefacts has also led to an increase in the sales of these items. Rising buyer spending power, rapid growth and changing lifestyles are some of the other factors driving growth in this market. Growing digital technology is assisting provide access to authentic archaeological finds which have further improved demand for these goods across the globe. Moreover, enterprises taken by governments like tax discounts for collectors are also providing impetus to this sector? Growth prospects over the forecast period.

In the present era, traditional Omani pottery has faced challenges, mass-produced materials such as metal and plastic. As a result, the demand for traditional pottery has declined, and many artisans have shifted to other forms of employment (Kennet, 2004). Moreover, the market condition also unfavourable to local potters, most of the pottery items are imported and non-locals are highly involved in this sector because of the global trade agreement makes it difficult to control foreign goods. In supporting the traditional Omani ceramic industry, the public authority for Crafts Industries (PACI) is playing an important role. Ceramic experts say the government (PACI) has the responsibility to protect the local marked and the artisans believed. Many ceramic experts who joined this research said that this topic is coming and that trade and marketing circles and PACI agreed that this challenge can only be overcome if it takes more cultural artistic action (Badar Almamari, 2017).

Yet, there have been significant determinations to preserve this earliest craft. The Omani government, together with UNESCO, has conventional craft revival centres in Bahla and other cities, where younger generations can learn the traditional techniques of pottery making (Al-Harthy, 2017). Additionally, Omani cultural festivals, such as the Muscat Festival, provide a raised area for artisans to setting their work and raise consciousness about the importance of preserving traditional crafts (Al-Salmi, 2018).

Oman Ceramics Market Competition 2023: The Herfindahl-Hirscham Index (HHI) generally indicates market competition, according to HHI statistical report for Oman ceramic market in 2023 achieved 3329 points and when compared to the 6625 points of 2017, it is slightly decreased.

The Herfindahl Index measures the competitiveness of carry across countries.

This range is from 0 to 1000, here a lower index number indicates a higher number of players in the countries in the market or carries, while a large index number means fewer players or referees to the exporting countries in the market.

The range lies from 0 to 10000, where a lower index number characterizes a larger number of players or carry across the countries in the market while a large index number means fewer numbers of players or countries exporting in the market. (<https://www.6wresearch.com>)

Oman Ceramics Market Synopsis: Due to the increasing demand for luxury products such as vases and dinner service decorative items, Oman ceramics market is expected to grow at a CARR of 7.7% from 2020 to 2026. The increasing popularity of collectibles based on olden artefacts has also led to an increase in the sales of these substances. Increasing purchaser spending power, changing lifestyles and rapid urbanization are some of the other factors driving growth in this market. Increasing digital technology is helping deliver access to authentic archaeological finds which have further boosted demand for these goods across the globe. Furthermore, enterprises taken by governments like tax discounts for collectors are also providing impetus to this sectors? Growth prospects over the forecast period (<https://www.6wresearch.com>).

Pottery Industry in India: Pottery in the Indian subcontinent has an ancient history and is one of the most bright and iconic essentials of Indian art. Difference among ceramic and pottery, in essence, pottery is a type of ceramics that involves shaping and firing clay to create specially purposeful or decorative objects. Ceramics is a universal term covering a wide range of things and products formed by firing non-metallic inorganic materials at high temperatures.

Technical Process Pottery making: The main step in pottery production is to obtain the appropriate refined clay to obtain the desired shape. After the clay posts are dried, the clay is placed in a kiln or other heated surface in a pit. The high temperature of the fire must be around 1000°C, and all through this course, the iron reacts with oxygen, it is marked by a burnt body or a reddish colour. The colour range is generally wide, with various shades of yellow, orange, pink buff, fray, red, or brown. Fired terracotta pots may not be waterproof, but the process of burning the surface before firing reduces its pores, while the glaze layers fills it with water. Pots made of terracotta are used in many climates for garden pots or decorative drives or oil lamps, as well as ovens. Tinted terracotta, mainly covered with a thin layer of gesso, is also available, after painting. The high-temperature firing process is key in terracotta pots

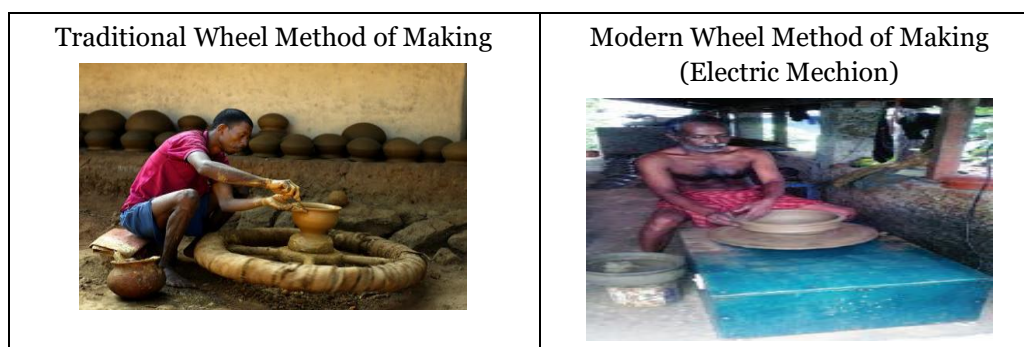
Pottery Centre of Andhra Pradesh





Naidupalem village and Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh are famous for making the most attractive pottery. This village, located on the Chennai to Kolkata highway, NH-5, has been a hub for pottery making in AP for the last 10 years. Usually locally available clay/ clay is considered ideal for pottery work. The potters here use two types of clay together to make the final products. Locally available black soil and red soil are used. Compared to natural terracotta products, potters these days create a variety of handicraft products. Various types of pottery items are available based on demand. Especially the grinding of clay, shaping on the pottery wheel, and the firing process also involve the use of electronic machine technology, we found out that they were using these to shoot at the covered shields. Designs on vessels are totally hand made. The pottery artists here make lamps, pots, drinking vessels, flower pots, statues, plates and many items are made, such as other highly attractive artefacts.

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN METHODS OF POTTERY MAKING NAIDUPALEM VILLAGE

Traditional and Modern Methods

The below pitchers reveals that traditional and modern variations on pottery making, traditional method are more taking and less productivity but modern methods are less time taking and more productivity. And machine making pots are very shine full compare with traditional pots.



 <p><i>Leg pugging to make the clay uniform</i></p>	 <p>Mini Pugmill</p>
 <p>Traditional pots</p>	 <p>Modern pots design</p>

SUSTAINABILITY OF POTTERY IN NAIDUPALEM VILLAGE

In the current era of globalization, potters are undergoing a professional transformation, this is evidence by the drastic change in their livelihoods and their area,

According to my research observation in past and present, it has been found that due to low profit, potters have changed their working methods. 20 years back in Naidupalem village 30 families depends on pottery, now only 12 families are practicing. Currently, only 19% of them are engaged in pottery making, the rest rely on other means of livelihood, the reason is that it cannot meet their basic needs. Who practice the pottery, express their dissatisfaction when changing their careers. The research felt it was important to discuss about the difficulties facing this long-standing profession. In the past, many families depended on the manufacture of these pots. Even other community people also got the opportunity in the pottery related works. Interestingly the researcher found that out of the six communities in this village, there was one Yanadi community (Tribal caste) highly involved in pottery related activities to support pottery makers last 10 years and gained good knowledge from pottery community to pursue their craft.

According to the research study female are equally participated pottery making work. Pottery workers in Naidupalem village crate various types of pots and vessels, clay idols of Hindu gods (the Lord Ganesh festival is a great season) and deities, decorative items and ritual artefacts. The potters of Naidupale village make various pots and utensils, as well as clay idols of Hindu gods (Lord Genesh festival is great season) and goddesses, decorative items, and ritual artefacts. Potters are trace out the seasonal demand for making items, particularly end of January to May months are hot season in this period water pots are highly demand, July or August month starts to Lard Ganesh festival, in this festival season devotes warship raw Lord Ganesh idols, for this demand potter prepare Lord Ganesh idol making, next season for November to December are spiritual month like Karthika Masam along with Deepawali (30days) high demand for clay lamps. Most of the clay objects are made for rituals. In addition, they also make terracotta figurines, food storage pots, and water storage vessels.

As shown about, this is the main source of income for 91.6% of the 19 % of potters. Their average annual family income is Rs. 200,000. Approximately annual income rages from Rs. 200,000 to 500,000. What is known from the visit to the field is that most of them are making post using the traditional method, very few people use electric machines.

The basic raw materials for ceramic production are clay and water. The most important tool needed by artists to crate their products is the potter's wheel. The seven steps of potter making are, that's what they are:

1. Collecting of the clay
2. Perfect clay (argillaceous) preparation
3. Pot making
4. Sun drying
5. Colouring
6. Baking
7. Marketing

Once we observe the pottery work it is connected with nature, air, fire, water, weather, earth these are the major elements to make the pottery.

Marketing: what I found in the research was that no one was selling their good entirely local or international markets, this items are sole in both local and external markets. In addition hasn't put their items online for sale. Potters sell their products directly to wholesalers or consumers. They do not use intermediaries in business. In the course of conversation with respondents, it was found that none had received job-specific skills training. It is known that they received this education from their ancestors. Due to lack of consistent and proper training, their products are less in demand in the market than their machine-made products.

Scarcity of raw materials, the availability of good quality goods made by outside potters in the local markets, and some of the main problems facing the pottery community today are low income from suppliers. Other important factors that affect how well a business performs include, trends, shocks and seasonality. Pottery making can be a part-time or full-time source of income. It is a more women-friendly profession, as they can work from home.

COMPARISON OF ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF POTTERY MAKERS IN OMEN AND INDIA

Omen: The pottery industry in Oman faces several key challenges that hinder its sustainability and growth. These challenges include

Increased Competition and Shifting Market Dynamics: The industry is facing growing competition from modern, mass-produced alternatives and lower-cost imported goods, leading to a decline in demand for traditional pottery both locally and internationally

Destruction of Traditional Skills: A significant challenge for the industry is the diminishing number of skilled artisans holding the necessary craftsmanship. Younger generations are gradually drawn to modern career paths, resulting in a decline in the transmission of traditional pottery-making knowledge.

Shortage of Unique Raw Materials: Omani pottery relies on specific types of clay with unique properties. Nevertheless, environmental changes and overexploitation have led to a decrease in these resources, increasing production costs and impacting product worth.

Restricted Technological Integration: The industry lacks the adoption of modern technological innovations, compelling its ability to expand and improve efficiency. Physical firing techniques and traditional clay processing systems limit the industry's capacity to meet increasing demand.

Marketing and Stamping Challenges: Many artisans face problems in developing effective marketing plans and enhancing their brand identity, which limits their ability to reach broader markets and increase visibility.

High Production and Labour Costs: The manual nature of traditional pottery-making procedures results in higher production costs, making it difficult for local products to strive with lower-cost alternatives.

Lack of Financial and Investment Support: The industry suffers from inadequate financial backing and speculation to upgrade infrastructure and procure advanced tools. This lack of support hampers artisans' ability to improve their products or access specialised training.

Unsatisfactory Promotion of Cultural Significance: Despite the rich cultural and historical value of Omani pottery, there is a lack of effective efforts to promote its significance, which affects its appeal as a heritage product and a tourism attraction.

Naidupalem village pottery: the pottery industry is the most historic industry in the rural village of Naidupalem. It provides a good financial status to the family of those who practice this pottery making. Now in this block, due to the increasing number of modern people, the demand is slowly decreasing for the pottery industry. The pottery industry is suffering from many problems in Naidupalem village. Not only are the problems numerous, but the characters are also diverse. Although some issues are very crucial, if they are not addressed with appropriate measures, the industry will stagnate. The problems faced by the pottery industry in the study area are as follows: Inadequate supply of raw material is one of the major constraints. Their production schedules and delivery delays are negatively affected by the irregular supply of certain raw materials. The main problems are poor product quality, shortage of raw materials, and variation in quality and price hike.

Today, the pottery industry is severely affected by the clay mafia. The control of others and the lack of information about the type of soil are also their problems. Because they buy soil from the tractor owner. Due to regular weather changes, sudden and frequent floods, they do not always have a proper supply of pots. As a result, their business is not performing as expected at this time. Due to frequent untimely rains, and often lack of sunshine, the clay pots do not dry out in time and they cannot deliver the goods to the consumer. In their words, climate change is having a serious impact on the livelihoods of potters. The reason potters are unable to purchase the necessary modern machinery is lack of money. And continue to use that 'old-fashioned potter' wheel. Because of this, their production and sales are declining. Potters cannot afford to buy an automatic pot making machine due to their financial situation. So that overall production rate does not increase. The current society and civilization are increasingly obsessed with the use of plastic, which is having an impact on natural ecosystem. In recent times, the use of everything from paper plates to plastic cups, glasses, and thermoses has become so widespread that potters are losing their skills due to lack of work. In recent times, the use of 'stainless steel' and glassware has improved instead of clay pots and idols, which is why the economy of potters is in danger today. De to the lockdown imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, almost all puja rituals on the Nellore land have come to halt till the beginning of 2020-2022. This forced potters to abandon their important caste profession and move on to other trades.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF BOTH COUNTRIES POTTERY MAKERS

According to Badar Almamari study in Omen pottery, he gave some of measurable suggestions.

1. Passing the law to present non-Omanis from being involved in the pottery industry in Omen.
2. Focusing on imported high-cost pots (high risks).
3. Focusing on manufacturing high quality, large-scale pottery (one piece for month)
4. Using intellectual property right laws to protect the local talent

As well as in India

1. To manage uncertain risks, they need to be trained in various professions.
2. They need support worldwide to promote their products.
3. Rural industrial development is still necessary today.
4. In protecting the traditional occupation livelihoods, field-level polity intervention by the MSME Ministry is essential.
5. Their products need to research.
6. Private/ government organisations and managers should come forward to ensure that potters benefit from insurance for product loss and health.

7. Civil society and government participation is needed in this field.
8. Occasional review by divisional officers can have a significant impact.
9. Understanding online marketing, because they don't know about the online market for pottery, raising awareness about online promotion is an important way.
10. There are some schemes for potters to get financial assistance, so connecting them with various financial institutions to get loans would be a great move.

Although people in today's society have many choices in the use of material (steel, aluminium, iron etc.) pottery still has its own place. The pottery industry in Naidupalem village is small scale, family-based and has skilled workers, it is characterized by the use of old-fashioned tools and widespread semi-literacy among the workers. The value of the land should be within the range of the potters' financial circumstances. This study examines the uneven supply of raw material for the pottery industry in the study area, lack of working capital, lack of product diversification and outdated technology, good marketing facilities, organizational problems, competition from the organized sector and research and shows that it suffers from a lack of development efforts etc. traders are often frequently exploited by brokers. Cobb-Douglas production analysis clearly identified that capital is essential to increase the productivity of this sector. Non-governmental organizations and government agencies can solve the problem and develop industries at the best level. Needless to say, it requires very capable and committed activists to understand the policies.

And traditional pottery in Oman is not purely a craft but a reflection of the country's cultural legacy and identity. In spite of the challenges posed by modern materials and technologies, the craft of pottery continues to hold cultural and historical consequence. The ongoing preservation efforts, both by the government and through local initiatives, confirm that this ancient craft remains a vibrant part of Oman's cultural landscape.

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