

A Lesson Learned at the Potter's Wheel

June Fiorito, Chair, School of Education, Canadian University College, Lacombe, AB

Boarded at our grandma's place along with my two brothers and 10 cousins, I didn't often have time for frivolous acts. Study, work, more study and more work was the nature of our daily activities. However, on weekends, once homework and daily chores were done, we had time to scout the large neighbourhood for interesting events and people.

One of my favourite memories of those elementary school days was the time we visited the potters' colony several miles away from my grandma's place. We took off at noon and walked all the way to the colony. This was the event of the day!

Sitting there, spinning and twirling the wheel, these potters produced such beautiful earthenware that was often the talk of the town. They deftly handled the clay, removing any object that looked strange to the potter's eye. The clay was then slapped on to the twirling wheel. With one hand slapping the clay and the other hand guiding it into an exquisite shape, the potter often used his feet to manipulate and propel the wheel. Round and round went the wheel and larger and larger grew the pot. It was a miracle taking place before my eyes.

Making a clay pot calls for skill and expertise. First the potter looks for soft clay (in those days it was right out of the rice fields) and makes a ball out of it. Next, he centers the ball of clay on the wheel. Does he have a particular shape in mind? You bet he does!

A *Google* search gave me additional information: "There are two rules to throwing clay on a potter's wheel: keep the clay wet and keep the clay spinning. Centering clay can be tricky, but alignment is necessary to make an even pottery piece." This quote reminds me of many occasions when the potter was not able to do what he expected to do.

One day, as I watched the potter skilfully shaping a vessel, he suddenly stopped his wheel, picked up the vessel and dashed it on the heap of clay that lay nearby. "Oh, no" I gasped! "Not that beautifully shaped vessel! Nooooooooooooo!" Without a word, the potter went back to another heap of clay and started balling it up in his hands.

The potter explained that he had discovered a hard lump in the clay. Imperfections in the clay are not tolerated or passed on to the customer. The only place for the imperfect vessel was the heap of discarded clay!

A parallel can be drawn between the earthly potter who uses the earthy, wet, clay and the heavenly Potter who made us out of Eden's clay. Wasn't that how God made Adam? I could imagine how God chose the best soil in the Garden of Eden to carefully fashion and shape His first creation. How much He must have enjoyed creating someone. That someone was created in His own image, created to be His masterpiece! The Creator had a master plan, but Adam and Eve and had a counter plan. Have I, have we, been found wanting?

I am a progeny of God's creation. He is my potter, I am His clay! Come join me in singing praises to Him.

Not mine own way Lord, not mine own way.
You are the Potter, I am the clay.
Mould me and make me after your will,
While I am waiting, wounded and still.