



# Make me and mould me?

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**T**he arrival of overseas guests inspired a visit to our local pottery where we were given a running commentary as the potter demonstrated his skill.

First, he took an unattractive lump of grey clay and threw it with some force onto his wheel. As the wheel span round, he kneaded the clay well, then moulded it into a lovely shape before flattening it and starting all over again.

'You must have very sensitive fingers', said my companion, 'Are you feeling some impurities in the clay?' 'Yes', replied the potter, 'Some clay resists more than others. Its basic nature affects how much it has to be worked on before it's ready to be shaped into what I have in mind.'

After much patient refashioning he finally produced an elegant container, hollowed out by hand and carefully smoothed both inside and out to his satisfaction. Of course it was still soft, so he gently manoeuvred it off the wheel to await the next stage. Before it could keep its shape it would have to go through the intense heat of an oven, finally emerging firm, strong and attractively coloured instead of the original dull grey. We heard how the innate property of the clay and the

temperature of the fumace govern the final outcome.

'Another thing', he said, 'if you go upstairs to the factory you'll see them turning out a lot of look-alikes, but with my work each piece is unique. That's what I love about it. From each lump of clay I start with I plan to make something new and different. Then, when I'm satisfied, I mark it with my initials and it goes on display. You won't find it in the general store'. He spoke without arrogance and it was with loving satisfaction that he showed us some of his creations, each identifiable as his because they bore his mark.

I could no longer keep silent. Had he deliberately been speaking in parables? I asked if he knew the verse, 'we are the clay, you are the potter' (Isaiah 64:8). He nodded and gave a little smile. We agreed that there are times in life when we can feel like protesting clay, but all the time the sensitive (and pierced) hands of our master potter are shaping us into something uniquely to his glory - unless we keep up our resistance.

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