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## HISTORY

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### BIDRIWARE: HANDICRAFT OF BIDAR DISTRICT

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**Abstract** Among the wide range of Indian Islamic metalware, Bidriware is an important class of work produced from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. Bidriware objects have been fashioned in different shapes and adorned with a variety of techniques. They used by the Deccani and Mughal nobility, as well as by the princes and affluent people of Rajasthan, the Punjab Hill States, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Western India.

Bidar district is the home of the Bidriware industry and the very name Bidri is derived from Bidar. This craft was introduced in Bidar during the rule of Bahmanis. The Bidri articles are well known from their artistic elegance and beauty in India and abroad. Towards the end of the Baridi dynasty in Bidar this craft reached its zenith and a number of outstanding specimens were produced which today enrich some museums in India and abroad.

The basic materials required in Bidri industry are zinc, copper, silver and a particle type of earth. The process of production may be divided into four main stages viz. casting, engraving, inlaying and oxidizing.

There are five main types of inlay for ornamenting Bidriware objects. According to the process used for the inlay, the work is known as Tarkashi (if only wire is inlaid), Tehnishaan (if the inlay looks flush with the surface of the object); Mahtabi or Aftabi (if the design look black against the overlaid metal sheet); Zarnishaan (if the inlaid pieces are in low relief); and Zarbuland (if the inlaid pieces are in high relief).

In order to suit the modern tastes, to promote the sale of Bidriware articles, new designs are being introduced. The Bidri articles are marketed locally and also sent to big cities like Bangalore, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Pune, Nagpur, Hariyana, Mumbai, Bhuvaneshwar etc. Bidri articles also exported to 93 countries of the world like America, Ital, Singapur, England, Australiya, France, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Brazil, Austria, German, Greece, Japan Malasia, Netherland, Newzealand, Sweden, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Russia, Venizwela, Java, Burma etc.

The Bidriware is solid. It does not dent or break unless struck or hurled with great force. It does not rust either. The entire process of manufacture of Bidriware is carried on with great expertise and celerity by different sections of the people.

All those concerned to see Bidriware flourishing-promoters, manufacturers and designers-will support the creation of new forms and appealing designs for modern usages, and will strive to ensure the revival of skillful workmanship. Some

shapes and motifs might be adopted from early examples; others could be developed by artists and product designers with a keen grasp of modern aesthetic sensibilities and the possibilities inherent in Bidriware work. Products made under these circumstances will create a worldwide market for Bidriware artisans. to pay for exclusive We must bear in mind that Bidriware was never a mass-produced craft, and the work thus produced in future will find admirers among those who care about quality and are willing objects.

**Introduction:** Among the wide range of Indian Islamic metalware, Bidriware is an important class of work produced from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. Bidriware objects have been fashioned in different shapes and adorned with a variety of techniques. They used by the Deccani and Mughal nobility, as well as by the princes and affluent people of Rajasthan, the Punjab Hill States, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Western India.

**Bidar:** The district of Bidar is rich in ancient cultural traditions as well as in historical associations. Its several hallowed spots and monuments bring back to memory scenes of its glorious past. A number of traditions of crafts based on metals, alloys, gems and stones flourished in ancient India. Many of these traditions started in ancient India and continue vigorously even in modern India. Once such craft is Bidriware. Bidar district is the home of the Bidriware industry and the very name Bidri is derived from Bidar.

**Origin:** Bidriware is a flourishing Handicraft of Bidar, North Karnataka. The craft of Bidriware was introduced in Bidar by a Persian artisan Abdulla-bin-Kaiser, who was among a group of skilled workers brought from Iran by Sultan Ahmed Shah Wali Bahamani in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Abdulla's expertise in this exquisite craft impressed the Sultan to such an extent that he arranged for the training of local craftsmen in Bidriware handicraft in the Mahmud Gawan Madarsa. This craft was introduced in Bidar during the rule of Bahmanis. Most of the craftsmen trained in this Madarsa took to this industry. Thus this craft, which flourished under the Royal patronage of the Bahamani monarchs, the nobility and other rich families, reached a high degree of excellence. The Bidri articles are well known from their artistic elegance and beauty in India and abroad. Towards the end of the Baridi dynasty in Bidar this craft reached its zenith and a number of outstanding specimens were produced which today enrich some museums in India and abroad.

**Raw Material:** The chief material in the preparation of a Bidri article is Zinc, copper, Red clay, Resin Caster oil, Sangzeera (white stone powder), Coal, Wax, Copper sulphate, Silver, Gold, Sandpaper, Clay of old fort having saltpeter, Lead, Sal ammoniac, Tin, Groundnut oil, Charcoal.

**Tools and Implements:** The tools and implements used by the Bidri artists are generally very simple and hand-made. Except for the lathe machine all other tools are worked by hand and no power is used in their operation. The tools are the same as those in making brass castware articles or those employed by engravers, inlayers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, etc. A list of such tools and implements is given below:

1. Files, round and flat, of various sizes

2. Hand-drill (barma)
3. Scraper (randa)
4. Hammer (hadota)
5. Blower
6. Small hathodi
7. Small stool (tipati)
8. Grinder
9. Saw ( hook saw with frame)
10. Scissors
11. Pliers (ambooo)
12. Wire drawing scale (tarpatti)
13. Tongs
14. Stone (for sharpening the tools)
15. Balance (tarazu)
16. scales
17. crucible (moose)
18. brush
19. polish brush
20. chisels

**Process:** The basic materials required in Bidri industry are zinc, copper, silver and a particle type of earth. The process of production may be divided into four main stages viz. casting, engraving, inlaying and oxidizing.

**Techniques of Ornamentation:** There are five main types of inlay for ornamenting Bidriware objects. According to the process used for the inlay, the work is known as Tarkashi (if only wire is inlaid), Tehnishan (if the inlay looks flush with the surface of the object); Mahtabi or Aftabi (if the design look black against the overlaid metal sheet); Zarnishan ( if the inlaid pieces are in low relief); and Zarbuland ( if the inlaid pieces are in high relief).

**Unique feature:** A unique aspect of the Bidriware craft is the soil used to ornament the art objects. This soil, which has not received rain or sunlight for centuries, is collected by artisans from the inner areas of the Bidar fort. The soil contains ingredients that give a lustrous black colour to Bidriware. The Bidriware is solid. It does not dent or break unless struck or hurled with great force. It does not rust either. The entire process of manufacture of Bidriware is carried on with great expertise and celerity by different sections of the people.

**Bidri Artisans:** The Bidri craftsmen did not belong to a hereditary artisan caste, like the goldsmith, coppersmiths, ironsmiths, carpenters or weavers who, according to the age-old Indian tradition, belonged to a particular caste of artisans. Men of any caste, Hindu or Muslim, could learn one of its specialized process of production. In this industry, the role of the skilled designer and inlayer was above all others because his contribution was significant for the quality of work. The most frequently designs are conventionalized flowers, creepers and geometrical patterns. It is interesting to note that the artists engaged in the craft were the local and

Muslims and the Hindus of the Lingayat sect. The Hindus craftsmen preferred the swastika, the lotus, human figures, etc., while the Muslims craftsmen favoured Persian motifs.

**Bidriware designs:** The intricate nature of Bidriware craft demands painstaking efforts from the artists. Now –a–days there are more than 175 types of articles being manufactured due to change in tastes and preferences. Prominent among them are cigarette cases, ash-trays, buttons, light stands, bracelets, bangles, broaches, necklaces. Ear-rings, models, bowls, trays, photo and mirror frames, bust-size images, sari–pins, tie-pins, several stationary sets like paper cutters, paper weight, clips, pen stand, fruits boxes, wall and table decorative plates, all with variegated designs. The designs consist of geometrical and conventional patterns: The traditional artifacts made are the hookahs, goblets, vases, caskets, jewellery and various other decorative accessories.

**Places:** Bidriware, as we have seen in briefly were manufactured in four major centers e.g., Murshidabad and Purnea in West Bengal (at present Purnea is incorporated with the state of Bihar) and Lucknow in the north and Hyderabad in the Deccan. Kashmir also produced Bidri craft in a limited way. At present, however craft lingers only in Bidar or Hyderabad.

**Marketing:** In order to suit the modern tastes, to promote the sale of articles, new designs are being introduced. The Bidri articles are marketed locally and also sent to big cities like Bangalore, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Pune, Nagpur, Hariyana, Mumbai, Bhuvaneshwar etc. Bidri articles also exported to 93 countries of the world like America, Ital, Singapur, England, Australiya, France, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Brazil, Austria, German, Greece, Japan Malasia, Netherland, Newzealand, Sweden, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Russia, Venizwela, Java, Burma etc.

**Promoting Agencies:** To encourage the Bidri art many exhibitions, Museums and Marketing organizations and Government policies involved. It is high time to that art lover, marketing agencies and handicrafts promotion organizations join forces to save this great art form and take it to greater heights of glory..

**Conclusion:** The town of Bidar is celebrated for the manufacture of a kind of ware which is styled Bidriware. The metal is composed of an alloy of copper, lead, tin and zinc. It is worked into articles of most elegant designs, and inlaid with silver and occasionally gold. As there is not unfortunately much demand for these beautiful manufactures, the industry is fast dwindling.

All those concerned to see Bidriware flourishing–promoters, manufacturers and designers–will support the creation of new forms and appealing designs for modern usages, and will strive to ensure the revival of skillful workmanship. Some shapes and motifs might be adopted from early examples; others could be developed by artists and product designers with a keen grasp of modern aesthetic sensibilities and the possibilities inherent in Bidriware work. Products made under these circumstances will create a worldwide market for Bidriware artisans. to pay for exclusive We must bear in mind that Bidriware was never a mass-produced craft,

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