

**Bidri Art And the Harmony of Cultures:
An Indo-Islamic Synthesis
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ABSTRACT:

Bidri Art, though of Persian origin, is a unique Indo-Islamic synthesis and purely an Indian innovation, flourishing under the Bahamani and Baridi dynasties, particularly in Bidar. Its history traces back to the 15th century when Sultan Allauddin-II patronized Bidri workers from Bijapur, including the first Indian artisan, Shivanna. The art form, named 'Bidriware' by the Sultan, involves casting an alloy (primarily zinc and copper) followed by intricate silver and gold inlay work. The specialized blackening process, utilizing a mixture of local fort clay, is distinctive. Bidriware represents a harmonious blend of Hindu and Muslim craftsmanship, with artisans contributing diverse motifs—from Hindu figures to Persian flowers and geometric patterns. Though once widespread, the craft is now facing extinction and requires urgent support.

KEYWORDS:

Bidri Art, Indo-Islamic, Bidar, Inlay, Shivanna

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Bidri Art is a Persian origin but purely an Indian innovations. According to local tradition, the Kakathiya Kings of Warrangal constructed a temple of Lord Shiva in the mid of 13th Century A.D. around which a town gradually grew up and was called Bidar. In 1430 A.D. Ahmed Shah Wali, the 10th Bahamani Ruler founded the modern Bidar. The Bidar City grew into a reputed city and became Mecca for Artisans from all over the civilized world. The Bidri ware also appears to have been brought into existence as a result of this successful blend.

It is commonly believed that the original home of the Bidri Art is Iran, where it travelled to Ajmer in Rajasthan with the great Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti. After several years one Abdulla bin Kaisar, an expert in the art of Bidri migrated from Ajmer to Bijapur and started earning his livelihood by the practice thereof. A reputed Hindu carpenter of the time named Shivanna came into contact with Kaisar and became his disciple and learned this art. So Shivanna of Bijapur is credited with being the first

Indian to know the secrets of this art. This art remained secret in Shivan-na's family for generations.

Allauddin-II, the Sultan of Bidar on the occasion of his coronation, the Bidri ware him fascinated him. So he invited Bidri workers from Bijapur and made them to settle at Bidar itself, full royal patronage was extended. Allauddin named this art as 'Bidriware'. The local artisans Yellanna is found engraved and some scholars associated with Allauddin-II's coat. Ahmed Shah's son was Bahaman. He took personal interest in this art and flourished greatly. The Chief Minister of Bidar was Mohammed Gawan. He was also the Patron of Bidri Art from 1470-74. The Russian traveler Nikitin visited Bidar and took with him attractive Bidri articles for presentation to the Russian Emperor.

Towards end of the Baridi Dynasty in Bidar, this craft reached its zenith and number of outstanding specimens were produced which today enriched in some museums in India and abroad.

Raw material: The chief raw material in the preparation of Bidri article are:

1. Zinc
2. Copper
3. Red Clay
4. Resin
5. Castor Oil
6. Sangzeera
7. Coal
8. Bees wax
9. Copper Sulphate
10. Silver
11. Gold
12. Sand paper
13. Clay of old fort
14. Lead
15. Tin
16. Groundnut Oil
17. Charcoal

Above mentioned materials items (1) to (7) are applied to mould making and casting which is the first stage of manufacture of an art. Items (8) to (12) are needed for second stage namely engraving and inlaying and Items (13) to (17) are used for finishing the article.

Tools and Implements: The tools and implements used by the Bidri art are generally very simple and handmade except for the lathe ma-

chine, all other tools are worked by hand. No power is used in this operation. The tools are the same as those adopted in making from cast ware articles. These employed by engravers, inlayers, gold smiths, silver smiths.

List of tools and implements is given below:

1. Files
2. Hand Drill (Barma).
3. Scrapper (Randa)
4. Hammer (Hathoda)
5. Blower
6. Small Hammer (Hathodi)
7. Small stool (Tipai)
8. Grinder
9. Saw
10. Scissors
11. Pliers
12. Wire drawing scale (Thara Patti)
13. Tongs
14. Stone (For sharpening the tools).
15. Balance (Tharazu)
16. Seals.
17. Crucible (Moose)
18. Brush
19. Polish brush.
20. Chisels

The Bidri art was first started in Bidar, then extended to Hyderabad. In the 18th & 19th Century Murshidabad in Bengal, Purnia in Bihar were added. Later on in 19th Century Lucknow in UP became one of the centres of Bidri Ware. The Bidri ware of Bidar is a composition of metals like Copper-Zinc: 1:6 ratio, Zinc -83%, Copper-12%, Lead-3%.

The process of manufacture of Bidriware is carried out in the following stages. They are:

1. Casting
2. Designing.
3. Inlaying
4. Blacking.
5. Polishing.

Some important Bidri objects are:

1. Huqqa (Hubble-bubble)
2. Dibia (Spice box)
3. Surahi (Goblet)

4. Katora (Bowl)
5. Thali (Plate)
6. Lota (Pitcher)
7. Pandan (Beetle box)
8. Kursi (Chair)
9. Mez (Table)
10. Ugaldan (Splitan), etc.

It is interesting to note that the artisans engaged in the craft work, the local Muslims and the Hindus of the Lingayath Sects. The Hindu craftsmen prepared the Swasthika and other human figures. While the Muslims craftsmen formed Persian motifs, circular flowers with 5 petals, lines, angles, dots are frequent. Stars, the Sun and the Moon, vines, creepers and poppy plants with flowers are also to be seen.

Conclusion:

The Bidri Art is one of the traditional arts of India. Now this art is in the stage of extinction. So only 150 artisans are engaging this art so they need support and co-operation from the Government and the people.

References:

1. Bidriware, Krishnalal, National Museum, New Delhi, 1950.
2. Bidri Chitrakale, Dr. V.M. Bhagayat, 2004.

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