



BIDRI ART: IN CONTEMPORARY ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Bidar is one of the district of Kalyana-Karnataka region. This district at the far end of Karnataka state is geographically 5858 sq. km It has an area spread over the Deccan Plateau. Bordering Telangana to the east and Maharashtra to the west, the district has people who speak Kannada (Urdu, Hindi speakers are also present) along with Telugu and Marathi languages. The history of Bidar is very ancient.

KEYWORDS: Toponyms, Lakkanna Dandesh, Shivathava Chintamani, Ramanna and Hemanna, Craftsmanship, Speculated, Patronized, Cultivated, Sultan Ahmad Shawali Bahmani, Char Gulshan, Splendor and Grandeur, Idolatry, Incubating, Bidri Colony, Ancestral heritage

INTRODUCTION

According to the mythological background-Bidar was famous as the city of Vidura during the time of Mahabharata. This Vidura city or Vidarbhapura was ruled by a prince named Vidura. Scholars are of the opinion that the city of Vidura itself may have become Bidar in course of time. It is also believed that this area was the love garden of Nala-Damayanti.

According to a historical background, the word 'Bidire' is very ancient, mentioned in a 10th century Sanskrit text. Later historians recognize the mention of toponyms like Bidire, Bidirapura, Bidinur etc. in Lakkanna Dandesh's '*Shivathava Chintamani*' of 15th century Vijayanagar period. There is an argument that the reason why this city got the name 'Bidra' is because of the dense forests here, and also because this area is famous for '*Bidari art*' and the root word of Bidar is called by names like Bidira, Bidire, Bidirapura, Bidinur and finally 'Bidar'. It is also clear that Bidar city as a whole has many ancient legends.

This ancient city was ruled by Bahmani Sultans, Baridashahis and Nizams of Hyderabad. As a result of these sultans having trade relations with Persia in those days, many Persian artists took shelter of these royal families. Along with the decorative Persian art, Bidri art was also popular at that time.

Origin and Evolution of Bidri Art: Bidri art is very ancient. The technique used for this art can be traced back to the Stone age itself. Craftsmanship designed on Paleolithic vessels appears to have been in vogue since very early times. Over time this method underwent changes and development by receiving under the patronage of kings. After the Kalyana Chalukyas, during the Kalachuri kings, the art of plating silver and gold on various tools and carving designs and adding silver and gold to it was customary. It is similar to the technique of present-day Bidri art.

It is speculated that Bidri art may have come from Iraq, Iran to the city of Bidar. The origin of this art is also said to be Persia. While the Mughals and Deccan Sultans patronized the art in India, the Bahmani and Barid Shahis of Bidar cultivated the art. This art was introduced to the city of Bidar during the reign of Sultan Ahmad Shawali Bahmani (1422-36). This Sultan not only shifted his capital from Gulbarga to Bidar but also invited many architects and artists from Iran to construct (Rangin Mahal and other) artistic buildings in Bidar Fort. Bidri art was created by the artists who decorated the buildings inside the Bidar fort. It is said in Lakkanna Dandesh's '*Sivatatva Chintamani*' that people named Ramanna and Hemanna were arranging pearls, gems and corals in bidri art. But the first written reference to Bidri handicrafts is found in the Persian text '*Char Gulshan*' written in 1759.

From all the literature mentioned above it is clear that Bidri art is a very ancient art form. This art is about 600 years old and is still in use today. Not only did they enter the city of Bidar on the inspiration of the rulers of that time, they also kept the city of Bidar as one of the important places. Today more than fifty families depend on this art. It is an inherited art for these families. In this art, objects of daily use and attractive objects of home decoration are made. Once upon a time these things added to the splendor and grandeur of the palace.

In the early 18th century, a small village of artisans was built in Purnia, Bihar. Later, these artisans got the collaboration of the British and got an opportunity to send Bidri artistic items to foreign countries. At that time Bidar, Purnia, Lucknow, Murshidabad were the main centers of Bidri art. Items produced in this art were sent to Kolkata, Hyderabad, Dhaka and England. Due to this, Bidri art gained more popularity in the country and abroad.

Decorative Design: Bidri art developed in India during the time of Mohammadian rulers. Idol worship is not so important

in Islamic art, in this art we find pictures of decorative designs like leaves, flowers and vines instead of nature scenes. The use of this decorative design is more common in Persia and Greece. Persian art was brought into use in India by the Mughals. Mughal art is a fusion of Persian and Mongolian styles. Many Persian artists came to India during the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Bidri art, along with other arts, gained greater artistry during the Mughal and Deccan Sultanates.

Method and Compositional Stage: It takes at least eight days to construct the structures surrounded by intricate designs. Even today, the creation of these things is done in the traditional way. Before an object is complete, it passes through the hands of many workers to take its final form. Design engraving and silver filling are done by skilled artisans. Bidar fort clay, tin, resin, zinc, copper, silver, gold, copper sulphate, ammonium chloride, beeswax, groundnut oil, and sandjirapudi are the raw materials used for making Bidri art. This technique is widely used in India. There are four main steps in making the products.

In the first stage copper and zinc elements are mixed with the help of tin in 1/16 proportion. By incubating these elements are dissolved and made into liquid form. Clay powder is sprinkled inside the wooden mold box. This prevents the mixed metal from sticking to the wood when it is put into the wooden mold. To make the material hollow, a piece of wood slightly smaller in shape than the mold wood is taken and placed on top of the wood. This leaves a gap between the clay mold and the overhang. A thin mixture of metal prepared in this gap is discharged from the nozzle. In this way the thickness and thinness are obtained according to the perimeter requirements of the respective material. Especially if a vase or a surai is to be made, the neck and base parts of the object are made in two separate molds and then both are joined together.

In second stage the surface of the molded material is leveled. A temporary black paint is coated on the design for engraving. Then skilled workers draw the design. The design is usually flower-vine, with leaves.

In third step the carved design is filled with silver. If the silver is impure it will not sit on the engraved design. Within a few days such silver is likely to come out of the material. Silver wire is used in line designing. A thin sheet of silver is used in flat and large design such as flowers and leaves.

Fourth stage is important in the creative stages of Bidri art. At this stage the constructed material is coated with black paint. This work is carried out in the traditional way. The soil in the local fort plays an important role in blackening the material. Chloride, potassium nitrate, sodium chloride and copper sulphate are mixed with this soil. Apply this mixture on the object substance is heated up to a point. In this process, all the silver is blackened. Finally this black color is rubbed well with coconut oil to make it matte black.

Craftsmanship Prepared: Bidri handicrafts mainly include hookah, vase, water pot, small boxes used for keeping valuables, pandan, bangles, ring, kumkum bharani etc. Since the 1980s,

there have been changes in the structure and design of Bidri. Today's modern people are building things that are of daily use and desire. In this, many types of bangles, cigarette box, photo frame, perfume box, necklace etc. are being produced.

Bidri Art and Artist's Status Today: As per the times, like all handicrafts, the Bidri artisans are giving creative form to this art. Bidri popularized art by organizing exhibitions of these works of art in the country and abroad. Artisans such as Ghulam Sattar, Basappa, Sheikh Ahmed Saheb, Ghulam Quddus, Manikappa, Muhammad Sharif, Sayyad Rafiq, Ahmad Qadri, Abdul Raoof (some of them are no more. So another generation is involved in this art) etc. have engaged themselves in this art. Many have received National and International Awards. These artisans have received many forms of support from the Government of India. 'Bidri Colony' has also been constructed in Bidar under a government scheme. The government not only provides the raw materials required for the manufacture of Bidri art objects but also has made a system to display and sell the objects produced there. Despite all these facilities being provided by the government, this ancient art form is struggling to survive in today's modern age.

As Bidar was a small city, local artisans migrated to Hyderabad and other cities. As a result, few workers remained in Bidar. Because of this, the reputation of Bidari art, which was traditionally produced, began to decline from the 1980s. Making a living became a difficult task for the artisans of this art. Although there is no local shop (That work has been done recent days) for this art in a small city like Bidar, Bidri items are sold at high prices in the market of Hyderabad. Due to this, traders are getting more profit than workers. So, while a lot of artisans leave this art and migrate to the cities in search of other jobs, some others continue to believe in this work as the art of their ancestral heritage. In any case, the credit for making this heritage art of Bidri world famous goes to these artisans.

It is a matter of pride that research studies are going on at University level about this art. Even on the Republic day, the tablo of this art is exhibited, which we as an artists admire.

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VARIOUS IMAGES OF BIDRI ART



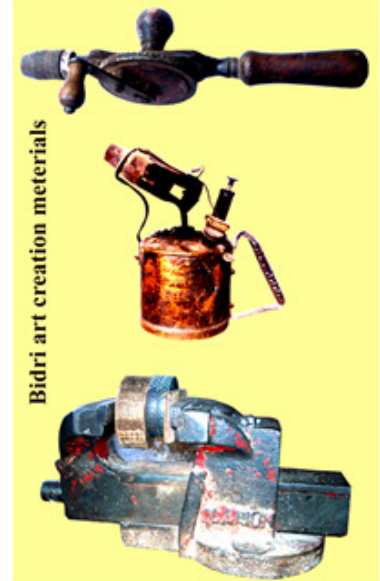
Tools of Bidri art



Inlaying



Designing



Bidri art creation materials



Then the Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi with Bidri Artisans



Bidri Art Parade on Republic Day