

Bidri Craft Cluster Document

DONE BY
DIYA SUCHETH
EESHA JOSHI
ELESHA SURYAWANSHI
GAYATRI GUNDU
KARTHIK KUMAR
KEERTHI A.
DEVIKA RAJ



Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank NIFT for giving us the opportunity to interact with these artisans and gain a whole new perspective on the art of Bidri craft. We'd also like to thank our department for organizing the meetings and guiding us through the project.

We'd like to thank the artisan we interacted with, Mr. Khaleel Ahmed. Without his passion for the craft and helpful cooperation, we would not have discovered the true depth and beauty of the craft.

BACKGROUND IMAGE OF A CIRCULAR BIDRI TRAY
(TASHTARI) VIA MICHAEL BACKMAN LTD

About the Project

This document is the compilation of the primary and secondary research of the craft - bidri. It starts with an introduction to the craft and is followed by its history, present status, and the production process in detail. The document also includes information on the selling and promotion of the craft along with a summary on the future of bidri craft.

Objective

Our objective was to meet with the artisans and learn about the craft, how they work, their environment and the conditions they produce their handicrafts in. The aim was to document the entire process from procurement of raw material to marketing techniques in the present scenario.

Methodology

We took a qualitative research approach for our documentation. We went through many papers, books, online articles as our references to make a record of the our cluster. We did a primary research before our cluster to know the basics of the craft, so that we could interact accordingly with the artisan. The interaction we had with the artisan was through the online mode.

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Introduction

A geometric motif patterned Bidri vase

The Bidri art form is an elegant metal handicraft that is created using intricate inlay work of silver and gold, on an alloy of zinc and copper, where the zinc gives it a rich black colour.

Bidri craft gets its name from Bidar, located in Karnataka. The artisans create unique designs consisting of flowers, leaves, symmetrical geometric patterns, stylized plants, and figures, Bidri ware is used to make different products like Hookahs, vases, plates, and paanholders.

The Salar Jung museum possesses many household Bidri items.

The intricate metal artwork is a reflection of royalty. The shining silver motifs inlay on the lustrous black metal are a prized possession for any craft enthusiast.



SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.TELANGANATOURISM.GOV.IN/PARTIALS/ABOUT/ARTS-CRAFTS/BIDRI-CRAFT.HTML](https://www.telanganatourism.gov.in/partials/about/arts-crafts/bidri-craft.html)
[HTTPS://WWW.DIRECTCREATE.COM/PRODUCT/5507/SUPREME-BIDRI-ARTS-AND-HANDICRAFTS-FLOWER-VASE-PHULJADI-WORK](https://www.directcreate.com/product/5507/SUPREME-BIDRI-ARTS-AND-HANDICRAFTS-FLOWER-VASE-PHULJADI-WORK)





History of the Craft

Bidriware is known to have its roots in ancient Persia but it developed and flourished in Bidar under the Bahmani Sultanate. During the Abbasid period in Persia (750-1258 A.D) copper inlaid objects were used in palaces and merchants' homes. As the technique grew popular, silver and gold inlay also began and started being practiced in Islamic lands.

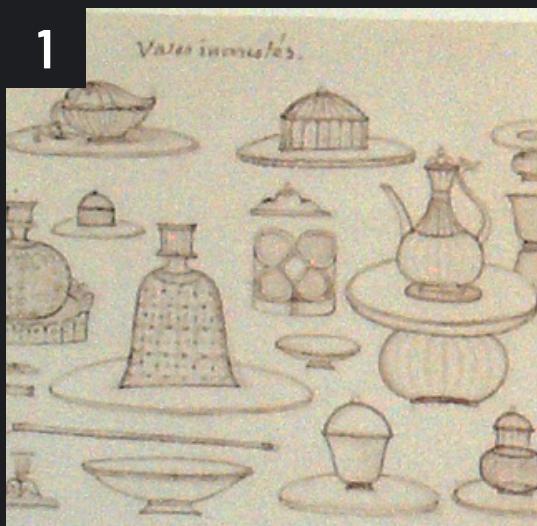
There's a high possibility that the art was brought by Iranian craftsmen who migrated to the Deccan regions. The Bahmani sultan allowed and invited lots of craftsmen to settle in their kingdoms. Bidri art traveled across many regions before it touched down in Bidar.

Bidar is now in Karnataka state in southern India. Bahmani's ruled the Deccan region in the 14th and 15th centuries. It is said that the Bahmani's encourages art and took special interest to promote the same.

1. A BIDRIWARE TEAPOT
2. A BIDRIWARE TEAPOT
3. A BIDRIWARE HOOKAH

PHOTO COURTESY : WWW.THENEWSPRINT.COM/ARTICLE/DECLINE-BIDRIWARE-HOW-14TH-CENTURY-PERSIAN-HANDICRAFT-DYING-HYDERABAD-104540; WIKIPEDIA

1

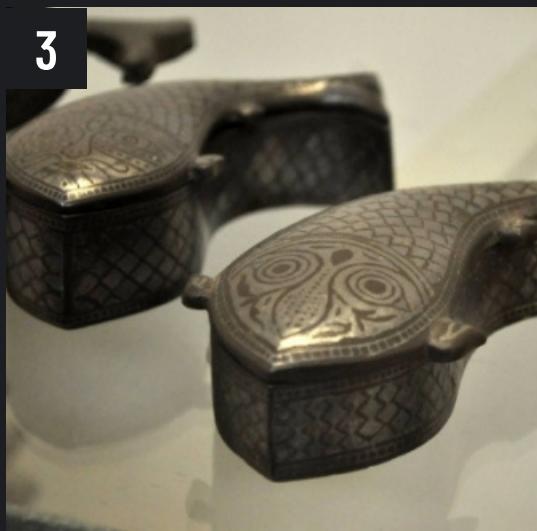


2



1. A SECTION OF A MAP "SUBAH OF BIDAR" SHOWING VARIOUS ARTICLES PRODUCED DURING THE TIME

3



4



2. POPPY FLOWER-BUD MOTIF BIDRIWARE (17TH - 18TH CENTURY)

3. FISH SHAPED BOXES FROM LUCKNOW

4. BIDRI IN THE MODERN DAY

PHOTO COURTESY & REFERENCE : [HTTPS://WWW.SAHAPEDIA.ORG/LIFE-OF-BIDRI-600-YEARS-OF-SURVIVAL](https://www.sahapedia.org/life-of-bidri-600-years-of-survival)

Bidri adapted to numerous civilizations and absorbed a lot of influence during its journey from Persia to Bidar. It was a mash-up of Persian and Arabic styles that quickly blended with the local style.

Other places of India, such as Lucknow and Murshidabad, began producing Bidri art in the 19th century. Due to varied influences, each location has subtle differences in style.

In the 19th century, Bidri had its first decline. "This is a significant industry that commands a large demand," the Colonial and Indian Exhibition catalogue declared in 1886. As a result of increased demand, overall production standards have dropped, repetitive shapes and patterns have become more common, and inlay quality has deteriorated.

Bidri was relegated to Bidar and Hyderabad in the latter half of the 20th century, when the state reorganised in 1956, placing Bidar in Karnataka and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. For better living conditions, the majority of craftspeople relocated to these areas.

Bidri was naturally highly expensive due to the detailed work, precious materials, and slow process, and only royals, aristocrats, and individuals from the upper class could afford it for the longest time.

About The Artist



Mr. Khaleel Ahmed is a Bidri artist from Hyderabad, Telangana. He has been practising this craft for the past 40 years. This craft has been passed on to him by his father who went to an arts and craft college. The workshop has a total of eight members and is entirely managed by his family. His sons know the art of bidri as well but they work more on the forefront of the business. They take care of the order placement, deliveries and social media handling. Mr.

Ahmed was introduced to today's technology - Google Pay, Instagram, Facebook, etc by his sons. Personally for him this has helped him boost his business drastically. The ease of order placement, removal of middlemen and social media presence all have contributed to his business to a great extent.

ARTISAN IMAGE VIA BIDRI CRAFTS
KHALEEL ON GOOGLE MAPS

BACKGROUND IMAGE: ANTIQUE INDIAN BIDRI WARE TRAY, MUGHAL
INDIA - LATE 17TH CENTURY VIA JOSEPH COHEN ANTIQUES

Present Status of The Craft

Bidri's industry hasn't changed much in the twenty-first century. Governmental and nonprofit organisations are striving to resurrect the fading trade through the formation of various co-operatives/self-help groups, but the artisans do not appear to be fully benefiting from them. Currently, artisans in Bidar can be divided into two groups: winners of National/State/Shilp Guru Awards versus the remainder of the artisans. The latter category, which has a larger number of artisans, is also thought to be migrating away from the craft. The well-known artists not only have a strong connection to their craft, but they also receive a significant amount of work and consignments on a regular basis.

Although bidri appeared to be thriving in Hyderabad, intermediaries left artisans in Bidar hanging. The Karnataka Handicraft Development Corporation sought a GI (geographical indicator) designation for bidri in 2006. Bidri, on the other hand, received the long-awaited GI tag in early 2008.



1. CHANGE IN POPPY FLOWER MOTIFS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

2. BIDRI WORK TODAY

PHOTO COURTESY 1 & 2: [HTTPS://WWW.SAHAPEDIA.ORG/LIFE-OF-BIDRI-600-YEARS-OF-SURVIVAL](https://www.sahapedia.org/life-of-bidri-600-years-of-survival)

Today, the bidri business, which once produced domestic utilitarian items, serves the demands of tourists, producing largely giving items or showpieces. The bidri industry has seen significant changes as a result of this. As a result of the shift in the target market, the art has been negatively impacted since then, and this trend continues now. This has eventually resulted in a disconnect between the artisan and the art, which has a negative impact on the quality of work. From early bidris till today, an example of a poppy flower plant pattern is shown above.

The difference in craftsmanship is visible in the photographs above. Wire work is used in the majority of bidri pieces today, not only to save money but also to save time while filling space. The majority of goods manufactured by craftsmen have similar shapes and designs and are retained for sale by tourists, however due to collaborations with designers and thriving e-commerce companies, designs are evolving to meet market demands and tastes.

The fact that bidri has survived all these years is an achievement in and of itself for the art. Even today, though, intermediaries are attempting to profit from the art in a variety of ways. As a result, in order for the craft to continue to advance, collaborations between governmental and non-governmental organisations and artisans must be formed while taking into account the art's potential. Modern product development is a fantastic step forward, but preserving the richness of the patterns and motifs inherent in the art will assist to preserve the authenticity of bidri for future generations.

Individuality of Bidri

Bidri handicraft is different compared to other metal handicrafts, Its preparation and manufacturing process is what differentiates it from other handicrafts. The significance of bidri lies not just in its beauty and history but also in its production technique. For the production of the craft a particular black soil from the Bidar fort is required, this soil is an important ingredient as it has some chemical properties

Bidri traveled places and was produced in many different parts of the country, namely Lucknow, Purnea, Faizabad, Delhi, Jaipur, Benaras, Calcutta, Zawar, Surat, Ahmednagar, Golconda, Bombay, Bijapur, Purnea, and Murshidabad, under the Mughal and nawab rule during 1707 AD Deccan and Mughal style bidri are visibly different compared to each other. Mughal designs are rigid and repetitive whereas Deccan styles are flowy.

In Lucknow a variation of Bidri known as Zarbuland is created, It is a lead-based silver inlay. In this process, after the molding and designing are done, deep grooves are made for the motifs, where lead is fitted by slightly beating it with a hammer, after which a silver sheet is placed, this process is used to raise the design higher than the black surface, this production process differentiates it from Hyderabad Bidar.

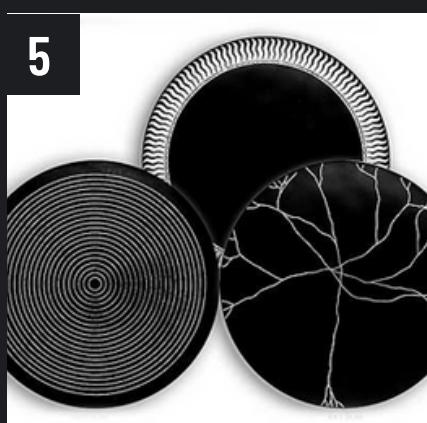
Another type of Bidar artwork was the Prakshkhari kaam, which meant this work gave a shine to regular bidri work, this was done by reworking with extra detail on a completed silver design making it more visually appealing, the name of this artwork was also changed to pradashkhaari style and it died over time.

Modern Interpretation of the Craft

The craft has always had particular designs inspired by Persian art. Its floral motifs are quite prominent. Even though these designs have been used for decades artisans are now trying out different designs to fit the modern world. They have been experimenting with motifs that appeal to the newer generations.

Bidri craft originally started with basic home accessories like utensils - pots, vases, etc, but now it has expanded into more diverse and modern objects.

Innovative Bidri Products



1. BIDRI BROAD BANGLE
2. BIDRI CARD HOLDER
3. BIDRI CANDLE HOLDER
4. BIDRI PORTABLE BLUETOOTH SPEAKER
5. BIDRI PLATES
6. BIDRI ASHTRAY

Brass



Gold



Zinc



Coconut oil



Raw Materials

The most commonly utilised raw materials are zinc, copper, gold, silver, brass, red clay, castor oil, copper sulphate, ammonium sulphate, Bidar Fort Soil, Navsagar combined with water, Coconut Oil, Marvel powder, Argan oil.

Red clay



Silver



Copper sulphate



Copper



TOOLS USED BY THE ARTISAN



- 1. SILVER METAL WIRE
- 2. FILERS
- 3. PLIERS
- 4. CLAMPS
- 5. SILVER INLAY TOOL
- 6. SHARPENING STONE
- 7. CRUCIBLE
- 8. BRASS METAL WIRE

Production Process

OXIDIZING

The soil is combined with water and ammonium chloride to make a paste that is then rubbed over a heated bidri surface. The paste darkens the body selectively while having no effect on the silver inlay.



MOULD MAKING

A mould is made from a mixture of soil, castor oil, and resin.

MELTING THE ALLOY AND CASTING THE ARTICLE

A molten metal alloy of zinc and copper (in the ratio of 16:1) is poured into this mould. Different metal cast parts need to be welded together to produce one unified product



PUTTING THE DESIGN TOGETHER

Silver sheet or wire is used for inlaying, and it is inserted deftly and skillfully in the carved grooves. The surface of the inlaid artwork is then polished to smooth it out.

ENGRAVING THE DESIGN

The engraving instrument, a kalam or metal chisel with varying forms and points, is used to engrave the free-hand drawings. Various Mughal-inspired themes as flowers, Geometric Designs and so on.



Detailed Process

1



2



3



4



The alloy is melted.

The clay-filled mould is filled with boric powder.

The frame is positioned on top of the metal.

Clay is used to fill the frame, which is then stamped.

Tools Used In the Process



CRUCIBLE

A crucible is a metal container that can be used to melt metals at extremely high temperatures

MOULD FRAME

Moulding frames used to cast the mould made by the artisan

5



The mould is now ready for casting.

6



Metal that has been melted is poured into the mould.

7



The casted metal product is taken out and buffed.

8



To achieve a temporary black color, copper sulphate is used.

Tools Used In the Process

TONGS

Tongs are a tool that is used to move hot metallic objects



BUFFING TOOL

Buffing tool is used to polish or smoothen the surface of the moulded object





9



Temporary
blackening
helps to draw
the designs.

10



The design to be
carved is drawn
on the surface.

11



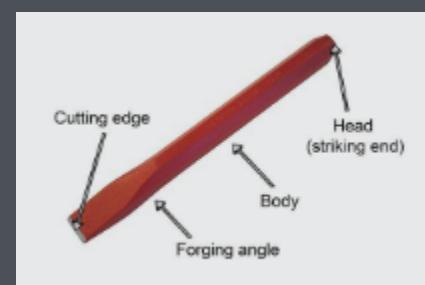
A chisel is used to
carve the article's
surface.

12



To enhance the
design's outside
appeal, brass
metal wire is
inserted within
the gaps.

Tools Used In the Process



CHISELS

A chisel is a tool with a sharp edge on one end for carving or cutting a hard material such as stone, or metal with the help of mallet



BRASS

METAL WIRE

Brass metal wire is hammered on the patterns made by chisel

13



14



15



16



The silver wire or sheet is then hammered or chiselled into the decorative patterns.

By hammering the inserted silver into place, it is precisely aligned.

The product has been inlaid and is now ready for buffing.

Buffing is used to smooth out the surface.

Tools Used In the Process



SILVER INLAY TOOL

silver inlay tool is to inlay the wires made of silver or brass on the patterns carved by artisan



HAMMER

Hammer used on the tools such as chisels to get the pattern carved by the artisan

Bidar fort black soil is an important component of Bidri work because of its unique chemical qualities; the soil has been kept out of direct sunshine and rain for hundreds of years and is utilised as an oxidising agent.

17



Soil is boiled at high temperature

18



The bidri product is added to the boiling solution.

19



The object is polished with Bidri Matti, which gives it a permanent black hue - a feature of bidri ware.

20



To enhance the black hue, the final product is coated in coconut oil.

Tools Used In the Process



WIDE PAN :
wide pan is a container which is used to mix the paste of fort soil and ammonium chloride for the final blackening it

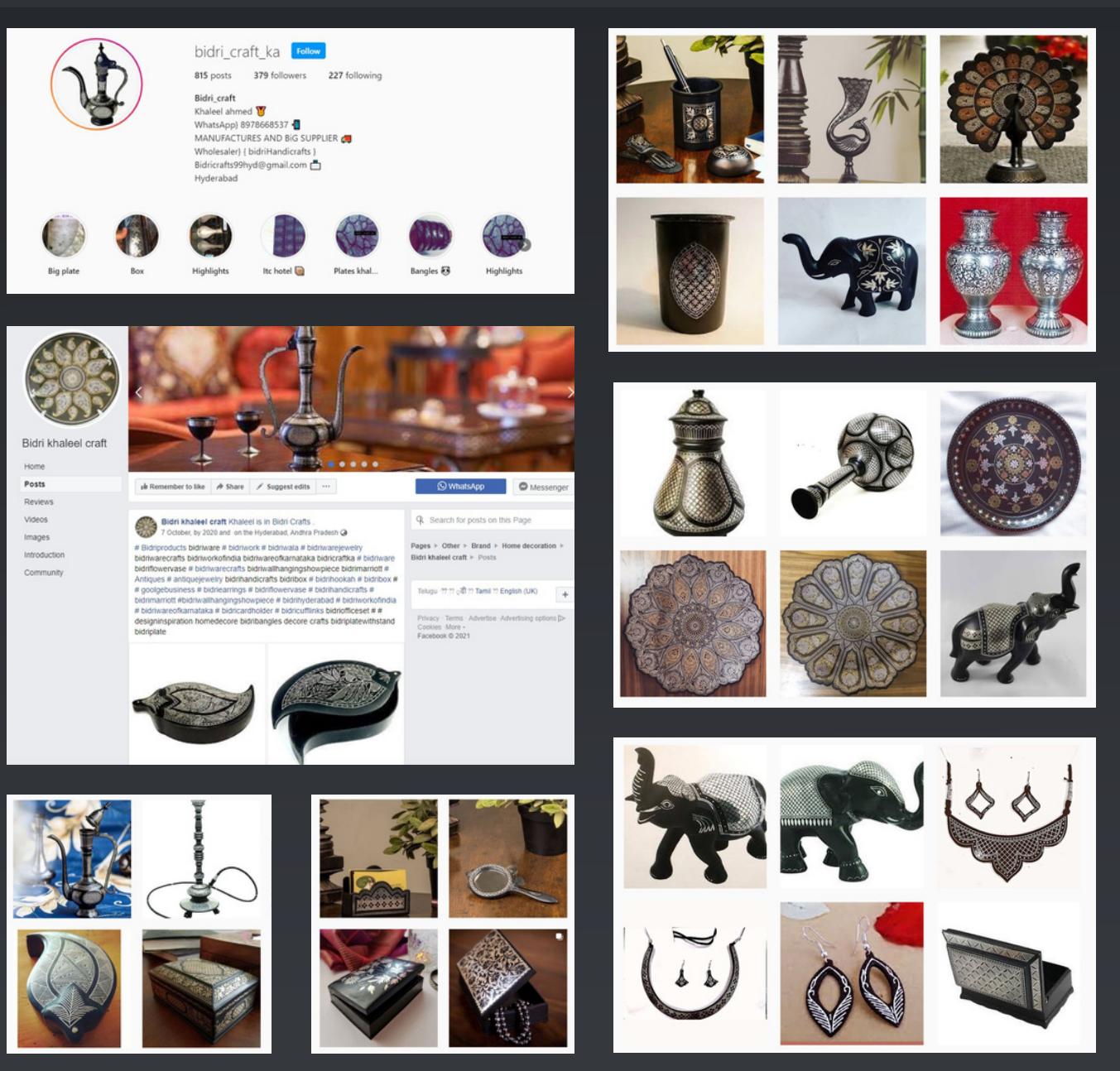


LADLE
a ladle is a vessel used to transport and pour out mixture of soil and ammonium chloride on the object

Marketing

Bidri Crafts Khaleel has two social media accounts: an Instagram (@bidri_craft_ka) and a Facebook (Bidri Khaleel Craft). They post photos of newly completed projects regularly. These consist of everything from plates to hand mirrors to jewellery. A unique curation of works is available on their social media feeds.

Their creative selection of works connects with the audience and piques interest in the craft. They also regularly upload videos of their process and shorts of any big projects they're currently doing. This lets the audience know where their product is coming from and provides valuable insight into the shop's inner workings.



SCREENSHOTS OF THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES AND PHOTOS FROM THEIR INSTAGRAM FEED (@BIDRI_CRAFT_KA)

Promotion

The shop cites social media as their main source of promotion. They also rely on word of mouth and self advertising. Their reputation and the skill of the artisan precedes them and brings them multiple commission projects per month.

Selling

The Bidri products are priced by piece, prices starting at Rs. 200 and increasing upwards with rising complexity in the designs and nature of the inlays. The materials used for the inlaying also causes a variation in price. The workshop does bulk orders and corporate projects for companies in the hotel and IT industries.



BACKGROUND IMAGE VIA BIDRI CRAFTS
KHALEEL ON GOOGLE MAPS

Future of Bidri

Bidriware saw a decline a few years ago as India believed it was moving forward but it was leaving behind its culture. Now, the youth of India has been reviving its culture and gaining interest in handicrafts and sustainability.

People have started appreciating handwork and the time and patience that goes into making one piece, it is believed that a handmade product is more personal and hence is kept for a longer time. Undoubtedly the intricate work done on the bidar items is something that is pleasing to the eye. We believe if we continue to promote handicrafts and people continue to appreciate this beautiful work Bidri craft will be there for a long time.

The future of Bidri is bright, like the silver inlaying it is famous for. With online vendors popping up all across the country, gaining access to a whole new platform has widened the audience of the craft significantly. The advent of social media and online shopping has expanded the once local reach of these artisans to a global level. The limitations of the craft have been removed altogether, leaving an immense potential for growth.

The possibilities for the future of bidri craft seems endless. Perhaps there will be reusable water bottles, or even phone cases one day made with the same technique. One thing is for sure; the craft will continue to grow and evolve as it has done for centuries.

Conclusion

Bidri craft saw a decline as it was largely confined to one part of the country and not adequately advertised.

Nevertheless, nowadays the workshops have maintained an online presence by creating websites and social media handles where they showcase their work, they have also started producing daily need items like keychains and have started taking custom-made orders.

As times and tastes have changed, the artisans have also evolved their products to make them more relatable to the current crowd and their wants.

Even though we had an online session, we could see how the artisans were working thanks to technology and the internet.



SOURCES: [HTTPS://WWW.AUCTIONZIP.COM/AUCTION-LOT/ISLAMIC-ART-A-BIDRI-DIVINATION-BOWL-INDIA-DECCA_D614C1A87C/](https://www.auctionzip.com/auction-lot/islamic-art-a-bidri-divination-bowl-india-decca_d614c1a87c/)
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[ACCESSED DATE : 2.09.21] [WEBSITE : THE HINDU]

Appendix

Bidri Crafts Khaleel

Address: Dabalpura Road success the school, Motinala, Dabeerpura South, Hyderabad, Telangana 500002

Contact: 9676938140

Taj Bidri Craft Manufacturer & Suppliers

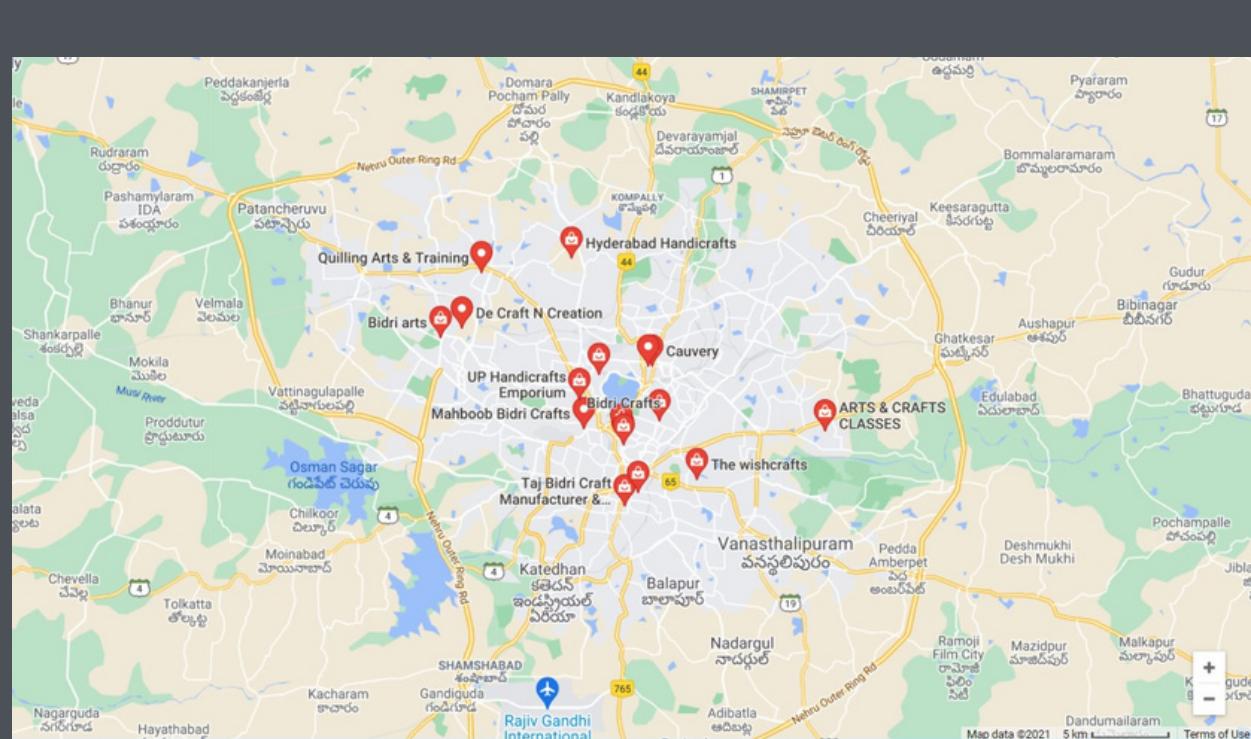
Address: 9F5G+JJ5, Moghalpura, Hyderabad, Telangana 500002

Contact: 092473 27851

Gulistan Bidri Works

Address: Abids Road, Fateh Maidan, Abids, Hyderabad, Telangana 500001

Contact: 9246525836



| Map of Bidri Workshops in and around Hyderabad via Google Maps