

Introduction:

Odisha is famous for its traditional arts and crafts since time immemorial; its other name “Utkal” signifies the significance of the same. Because the etymological derivation of the term i.e. “Ut” and “Kala” roughly refers to excellence of art. Hence, the term Utkal is aptly appropriate for this state. The famous temple of “Konark” is full of artistic sculptures, the forms of which are uniquely beautiful. Not only in stone works but also in other fields of handicrafts the ancient artisans of Odisha had advanced abundantly and reached the peak of quality and beauty in producing varieties of excellent articles of utility

and the adjoining territories of Cuttack district, they are very popularly known as the “Thattaries.” In the Puri district, they are popularly ascertained, the Bell Metal Artisans or the Kansa-Karigaras or the “braziers.” In Sambalpur district the “Kansari” or the “Kansa Karigaras” are popularly designated as the “Kharuras.”

In Bolangir district, the artisans or the Karigaras those who are engaged in the Brass and Bell metal work are ascertained as the “Khaduras.” In Phulbani district, the Kansari dominated belt i.e. the Kansari Padas or the Kansari residing villages are Phiringia, Gutingia, Khajuripada, Sarangada and numerous other

A Study on Brass and Bell Metal Industries of Odisha

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and of decorative value¹. The study of Brass and Bell-metal Industry in Odisha is a part of Odisha’s handicrafts) of the artisans or part of Odisha’s art and craft.

The people those who are engaged in the profession of bell metal work are normally known as the *Kansaries*. But the nomenclature “Kansari” has also different names in different places of Odisha. For instance, in some districts like Puri, Cuttack and Balasore, the artisans engaged in Brass and Bell metal work are popularly designated as the “Kansari”, while in the districts like Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Kendujhar

villages, whereas in the Boudh district the Kansari dominated belt is Guduvellipadara, near Manamunda. It is however 8 Kms. far from Manamunda. But in both the districts (Phulbani and Boudh districts) the *Kansaries* or the Kansa-Karigaras are popularly entitled as the “Kharadas.” On the contrary all the artisans or the Kansaris those who are engaged in the Brass and Bell metal work are popularly known as the “Thattaries” in the Kendujhar district only and no other nomenclature has been entitled so far.

However, all the artisans or the “Karigaras” or the works comprehending in the

Kansari community, are popularly known as the “Kansyakaras” in the Ganjam district. In this district the people belonging to Khandara, Sunari or Bania and Kamara (blacksmith) are also engaged in Brass and Bell metal ware/work. The people belonging to the Kansari community here are however known as the “Tameras” they are popularly known as the “Tamra Karigaras” or “Copper Artisans” or “Tamba Karigaras.” Here “Tamera” means “Tamra” or in Odia it is called Tamba (name of a metal) roughly indicates to copper.

Initially the Kansari were inhabiting at Kanyakubja or Kanauj, on the river bank of Ganga. It was however the metropolis or the city capital of Harsha-Vardhana, the last independent ruler of the Hindus, in ancient India. He belonged to the famous Pushyabhuti dynasty. But in the later phase, the Kansaris had hailed from the Ganges to Srikshetra Puri, at the invitation of Gajapati Kapilendra Dev (of the Suryavamsi dynasty). The proximate purpose of the king to greet the Kansari was to manufacture the Brass and Bell metal utensils of the “Lord of the Universe/Lord Jagannath” for His worship. Simultaneously, the perpetration of Brass-bands and Brass-Turis of the Lord was yet one of the other reasons to greet the brazier community to Odisha and since that day (hitherto) the Kansaris at first spread to Kantilo and subsequently to other parts of Odisha.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries of Odisha:- From ancient time, the artisans of Odisha knew the scientific process of preparing an alloy of zinc and brass known as bell-metal. The daily utility utensils are produced in artistic designs. It is a custom in Odisha to give some utility utensils of Bell-metal during the daughter's marriage. These utensils are also considered as

assets of a family. Utensils of various sizes and different designs cover all sorts of articles a man uses in day-to-day life. The artisans follow two processes of production – one by way of casting in moulds and the second by constant beating to get the required size and shapes. Besides utensils the artisans produce different kinds of statues generally the statues of Gods and Goddesses in Balakati and Kantilo of undivided Puri District, Bhuban in Dhenkanal District, Baidyarajpur in Cuttack District, Bellaguntha in Ganjam District, Remuna in Balasore District².

The nimble fingers of the craftsmen turned every article they touched into a thing of joy. The living generations of Odisha still carry the old traditions. The traditional designs and processes are recorded in the old palm-leaves and they still guide the craftsmen now. With the help and aid received from the State Government, the handicraft artisans have developed their arts and crafts both in quality and quantity. Filigree work, Brass work, articles of Golden grass Art, Textiles, Horn work, Stone carvings and many other items are now produced in innumerable varieties. Most of the handicrafts brought under the Co-operative Societies for handicrafts-artisans have been organized in the different parts of the State. A regular and well organized system of marketing of handicraft articles has been evolved by opening Emporia of Puri, Cuttack and Bhubaneswar³.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries of undivided Cuttack District:- The artisans of this industry are concentrated at Baidyarajpur (Jeypur), Bindhanima (Tigiria), Bhatimunda, Ganraba and Kanpur village. They produce Bell-metal utensils and decorative items in their traditional style and sell the products in the local market. The Bell-metal Industrial Co-operative Societies have been organized in the district and

about 1,500 artisans are now engaged in the craft. The industry provides employment to the artisans throughout the year⁴.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries of undivided Boudh-Kandhamal:- The only Brass and Bell-metal utensil manufacturing unit in the small scale sector has been established under co-operative fold at Gudvelipadar. It has invested Rs.9,000/- and provided employment to 11 persons⁵.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries in undivided Puri District:- Proficiency in the working of non-ferrous metal is one of the most ancient handicrafts of the district. This metal craft reached a high level of perfection during the rule of the Ganga Kings from the 11th century onwards. The types and varieties of Brass and Bell-metal products cover a vast number of objects. Among the more popular products mention may be made of household utensils and pots, temple accessories, ornaments and decorative wares and curios. Kantilo, Khalisahi, Pratapsasan(Balakati), Bhainchua and Muktepur are the important centres of this industry in the district. During 1961, there were 711 establishments in the district and 1,370 skilled artisans were engaged in this trade. The traditional caste of braziers is Kansari, but persons belonging to many other castes have also adopted this profession. Co-operative Societies have been formed to give the artisans better financial stability. At present there are 15 Co-operative Societies in the district having 517 members.

The Industry has to face stiff competition and has to survive against many new rivals like aluminium, stainless steel and ceramics. Yet it has not declined due to the conventional association of Brass and Bell-metal with the social and cultural life of the people of this country⁶.

Brass and Bell-metal utensils were manufactured by the Kansaris of Kantilo abundantly and these were reckoned as the primary sources of livelihood, in the vast village of the undivided Puri district and else the newly formed Nayagarh district as well⁷.

Brass and Bell-metal Industry of undivided Dhenkanal District:- Bell-metal industry is a vital part of cottage industry. The cottage industries played an important role in the rural economy of the district. However, Bhuban is famous for the manufactures of Brass and Bell-metal utensils known throughout Odisha for the beautiful craftsmanship and fine finish. This industry dates back to pretty old time and quite a large number of persons are engaged in this trade.

On 1st August, 1953, a Co-operative Society was started at Bhuban to give the artisans better financial stability and help. Another Co-operative Society was organized at Indupur in 1962. During 1965 a new Co-operative Society was started at Bhuban. Thus at present there are 3 nos. of Co-operative Societies in the district having 250 members. During 1967 the Bhuban and Nua-Bhuban Societies alone produced goods worth one lakh of rupees⁸.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries of undivided Balasore District:- So far as the trade centres of Balasore District are concerned, the chief commercial centres of the district are Balasore, Bhadrak, Chandbali, Nilagiri, Baliapal, Remuna and Chandipur.

But out of the 7 trade centres of the district, Remuna is the most noteworthy trade centre, which is profusely famous for its production of Brass and Bell-metal works. It is situated in the Balasore sub-division at a distance of 8 kms. west of Balasore. It is an important

trade centres, containing one of the largest markets in the northern part of the district. There is considerable trade in brass utensils and vegetables from its neighbourhood. The famous shrine of Khirachora Gopinath is located here and a religious fair is held here in February. The fair lasts for about thirteen days and large quantities of commodities are sold here during this occasion. A daily market sits herewith a few shops to meet the needs of the local people⁹.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries of undivided Sundargarh:- Brass and Bell-metal utensils for domestic use are being made by the Kansari caste. They make also the brass ornaments, anklets, bracelet, rings, etc. worn by women of the poorer classes. Tangarpali is one of the important centres of Brass and Bell-metal production in the district. At present the cheap aluminium and plastic products have almost replaced the use of bell-metal utensils by the common men. The use of stainless steel utensils is gradually becoming popular among the richer section of the society¹⁰.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries of undivided Mayurbhanj:- Some of the tribal people exhibit skill in casting toys and cult images from bell-metal. In order to encourage this art two Co-operative Societies have been organized at Baisai and Muruda and about 62 families are engaged in the work of casting. The products of these societies have earned good reputation outside the State¹¹.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries in undivided Sambalpur:- A large bell-metal industry existed in Sambalpur town during the first decade of the present century, where a number of Kansaris (from Kansa which means bell-metal) worked only in bell-metal and at Tukra (or Kultatukra), a village near Kadobahal in Bargarh

sub-division. A number of artisans were also found in Remenda, Barpali and Bijepur and a few at Rampela and Katapali. The artisans were Kharuras and Kansaris and the articles most commonly turned out were lotus, howls basins, plates, saucers, drinking-mugs, water-cans, lamp-stands and pipes, besides the curious boat-shaped anklets worn by many women. Brass cooking and water-pots (Kalsis) were usually imported, but were being made locally to a small extent, for during the famine of 1900 some brass-workers migrated from the south and settled in Tukra, and the local workmen were trying to acquire the craft. The old brass-work of the district was often curious and much superior to anything then attempted, but it was melted without regard to its artistic superiant down¹².

Brass and Bell-metal Industries in undivided Balangir District:- A large number of Kansaris work in bell-metal which constitute an important industry in the district. A number of artisans belonging to Khadura and Kansari castes concentrate Balangir, Bairasara, Tarabha, Bhainsa and Khumsamala. The articles most commonly turned out are bowls, basins, saucers, drinking mugs and lamp stands. Curious boat-shaped anklets worn by many women in the district are also prepared by local artisans. The total produce is greater than the local demand.¹³

Brass and Bell-metal Industries in Keonjhar District:- Brass and Bell-metal Industry in the district is chiefly concentrated in Kendujhargarh, Mujupur, Anandapur, Kalimati and Pitalanagar. About few families of Bell-metal artisans are engaged in this trade. These workers are popularly known as Thattari (Kansari) by caste. They make brass and bell-metal utensils, brass ornaments, anklets, bracelets, rings etc. Apart from this, they also make aluminium utensils

with the peculiar process of heating and beatings. They usually use tin-ingots, copper and zinc as raw-materials. There are eight Brass and Bell-metal Co-operative Societies functioning in the district¹⁴.

Brass and Bell-metal Industries in undivided Ganjam District:- Brass and Bell-metal are the two earliest known alloys of India. Large consumption of these two alloys is believed to be the reason for depletion of ores like zinc, copper and tin in this country. Kamara, Kansari, Khandara and Sunari or Bania are some of the professionally distinguishable castes engaged in metal ware. Metal ware can be best described as the result of a classical tradition where art and profession are ideally married¹⁵.

The flexible brass fish and snakes of Belaguntha and Nuapada are popular in the country. This is an exclusive craft of the district. The metals used for these products are brass, white-metal, silver and occasionally gold. Fish manufactured in this area is generally sold outside the district whereas brass snakes are sold locally which people buy for Siva temples¹⁶.

The Central Co-operative Banks at Barhampur and Aska and the Bhanjanagar Branch of the State Bank of India provide financial assistance in the shape of loans to all the artisans Co-operative Societies. Apex marketing Society is also rendering necessary assistance for the marketing of goods of the Societies¹⁷.

There were 110 Co-operative Societies in the district dealing with various industries.

A general survey of some vital Brass and Bell-metal Industries:-

Nayagarh:- So far as the Art and Craft is concerned, Nayagarh also has a matchless tradition of crafts. Brass and Bell-metal works of

Kantilo in Nayagarh district are well known throughout the State. The precious places, for producing Brass and Bell-metal works are Kantilo, Banigochha (Daspalla), Belapada (Gania), Khalisahi, Itamati, Sarankul, Sunakhala, Ranpur etc.

Khurda:- In Khurda district the vital venues may be cited as Muktapur, Balakati, Bhainachua, Chandapura.

Puri:- In Puri district, Dandamkundapur is well known for producing Brass and Bell-metal articles.

Cuttack:- The vital venues of Cuttack district for producing Brass and Bell-metal works are Kanpur, Badabhuin, Bhatimunda, Bindhanima, Rasikanagara, Kalapathar, Jagatpur, Bhutmunde etc.

Jajpur:- In Jajpur district the places which produce Brass and Bell-metal articles are Jafarpur and some other places, Jafarpur is a small village which is located 8 kms. from Jajpur town and its Post Office is Mugudiha. However Mugudiha is 2 kms. far from Jafarpur.

Balasore:- In Blasore district, Remuna is famous for producing Brass and Bell-metal works.

Ganjam:- In Ganjam district Belaguntha is the chief centre of Brass and Bell-metal production.

Phulbani:- In Phulbani district, Phiringia is famous for producing Brass and Bell-metal works.

Balangir:- In Balangir, the places famous for producing Brass and Bell-metal works are Tarabha, Titilagarh, Bairasar, Balangir town, Sudapada etc.

Sambalpur:- In Sambalpur district, the places which are famous for producing Brass and Bell-metal works are Rairakhole, Ainthapali, Rengali, etc.

Angul:- In Angul, it is Tube, which is famous for producing Brass and Bell-metal works.

Dhenkanal:- In Dhenkanal Aukhama is famous for yielding Brass and Bell-metal commodities¹⁹.

Brass and Bell-metal Industry at Kantilo:-

Kantilo, a village in Khandapara Tahasil, is situated in 85° 11' 30'E, and 20° 11' N. It stands on the bank of river Mahanadi and is 15 Kms. far from Khandapara with which, it is connected by road. The road from Cuttack to Sonapur that runs close to the right bank of the river Mahanadi passes through this village Kantilo has earned a good name and fame for the manufacture of Brass and Bell-metal Co-operative Society and an aluminium factory.

The temple of Lord Nilamadhava, who is believed to be the earlier form of Lord Jagannath of Puri stands on a hillock close to the river Mahanadi. In the same compound of the Nilamadhava temple, which is a miniature of the Jagannath temple of Puri, Siva is also worshipped. He is popularly known as Lord Siddheswar. Most of the festivals of Lord Jagannath at Puri are being observed here of which the Bhauma Ekadasi is celebrated on grand scale. On this occasion thousands of people congregate to witness the festival. The magnificent natural scenery of the place is worth seeing.

There is a Revenue Rest shed, Government Dispensary, Middle English School, Dharmasala, Homoeopathic Charitable Dispensary and a daily market at the place.

The population of the village in 1971 was 7, 3, 39²⁰.

Kantilo is one of the prominent pilgrimage places else popular picnic spot in the entire State as well. However, it is 80 kms. far from the State

capital Bhubaneswar, 33 kms. away from the district headquarters Nayagarh and 14 kms. far from Khandapara Assembly Constituency. As the biggest village in the Khandapada Tahasil, also in the entire district of Nayagarh, the 2nd biggest village of the State, next to Bhubana of Dhenkanal district. It is situated 85°11'E and 20°21'N.

However, Kantilo is also located in the south bank of river Mahanadi. It is merely 14 kms. far from Khandapara Block. The road from Cuttack to Sonapur, the Khurdha-Balangir National High way runs close to the river bank of Mahanadi, passes through this village²².

Kantilo is one of the prominent religious and cultural places of Odisha. It is famous for the Vishnu Shrine Nilamadhava on the bank of river Mahanadi in Nayagarh District, called *Padmakshetra*. Siddheswar Siva Temple is located nearby, within the temple premises. It is a scenic spot for worth seeing²³.

The principal deity of Nilamadhava temple is Madhava or Lord Nilamadhava. It is a deity who is universally designated as the former form or incarnation of Lord Vishnu with discuss in hand. Lord Nilamadhava is said to be worshipped by the Savara chief Viswavasu. However, several Madhava images are enshrined in the Madhava temples of divergent parts of Odisha like Niali, Gandharadi, etc.²⁴.

Issue of Identity Card to the Artisans (Karigara Parichaya Patra Anumodana):- The Central Government has undertaken initiatives for the issue of Identity Card (Karigara Parichaya Patra) to the artisans of divergent communities, like people engaged in pottery, brass and bell-metal industry, weaving, pattachitra, jhoti, wall-painting, etc. for the upliftment of their socio-economic condition in the country since 2007.

However, the Government has provided about 1,500 Artisans Identity Card to the people engaged in brass-metal work in the district of Nayagarh. These people comprehend to the divergent villages like Kantilo, Khalisahi, Kainphulia, Khalisahi, Itamati, Ranpur, Belpada(Gania), Bhapur, etc. So far as Kantilo is concerned about 1000 Artisan Identity Cards (Karigara Parichaya Patra) have been issued. But a few days before the Central Government has enunciated a law for the linkage of Aadhaar Card Number, Pan Card Number, with the Artisan Identity Card (Karigara Parichaya Patra) so that, novice Artisan Identity Cards were to be promulgated by the Central Government. As a matter of fact, Novice Artisan Identity Cards were mandatory on the part of the artisans. Hence, some people have applied, whereas some others are yet to apply and receive the novice Artisan Identity Card (Nuatan Karigara Parichaya Patra). The artisans are to apply these cards through the District Industrial Centre (DIC) in their respective regions. So far as Kantilo is concerned the artisans rush to the district headquarters Nayagarh where the District Industrial Centre (DIC) issues the Identity Cards²⁵.

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