

Rural Internship Kutch

Location: Rudramata, Bhuj.
(Copper Bell Craft)

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Introduction

Gujarat state is divided into four parts, which are Saurashtra, north Gujarat, south Gujarat and Kutch. Kutch is the largest district of the state of Gujarat as well as in India. It is located in the east of India. Kutch is rich in traditional handicraft production and has cultural connection with Sindh and north Rajasthan.

Some of the famous traditional arts in Kutch are copper coated bell, Rogan art, weaving art, Bandhni art, leather art and lacquer art.

Copper Coated Bells

Copper coated iron bells from Kutch were traditionally made in Sindh (now in Pakistan). At that time these bells were used at home entrances and were also hung around the necks of grazing animals like cow, goat and buffalo but they still serve the same purpose locally. Some years ago the local market for these bells declined due to earthquake but after few years the people of Zura again started the work of copper bell production to preserve their culture and tradition.

The process of making copper bells is divided into various steps starting from marking the parts to combining them and coating them with copper in the Bhatti (coal furnace) and finally producing the sound by inserting a cylindrical piece of wood. Unique feature of these bell is that the sound and the pitch can be increased or decreased by hammering.



Fig 1. Copper bell.

Regions of Production

Among different villages in Kutch, Zura is the hub of the copper coated bell making craft. other main villages involved in this craft are Nirona, Kunariya, Reha, Ratadiya and Bhuj city.

Most of the bell making is done by the Luhars of the muslim community. In this craft the whole family is involved, though women only do the mud coating on the raw iron bells before they are put in the furnace. Men performs the technical task of shaping the bells and setting their sound.

Raw materials

- Iron scrap
- Copper
- Brass
- Cotton
- Coal
- Wood

Scrap iron sheets of 1-2mm thickness are brought from the local market situated in Bhuj. The only thing required is hammering so that the sheets get properly flattened. These scrap iron sheets are available in the market at a cost of Rs. 30-40/kg. These scrap iron sheets are then directly used for making iron bells. Copper is used in powder form to coat the raw iron bells whereas cotton and clay are used to make a thick paste which is coated over the thin layer of copper.

Tools:

- Hammer
- Grip pincher(holder)
- Kapani(scissor)

- Compass
- Measuring tape



Fig. 2 Bell making tools.

Procedure

The making of copper bells can be divided into 7 parts.

- The body of bell is made by cutting rectangular strips of iron plates into a cylindrical hollow. The length and width of the iron strip used depends on the size of the bell to be made.
- The cylindrical body is supported at top by a semi- circular shaped body. this semi-

circular body is perfectly attached upon the cylindrical body of the bell.

- This semi- circular body is punched and a Kadi is attached to it.
- Copper powder is perfectly sprinkled on the whole surface of the bell and it is finally coated with the mud paste of the clay and cotton.
- After coating, this whole mud coated bell is kept in the Bhatti for some time depending upon the size of bell.
- After removing from the Bhatti, it undergoes a sound test in which the bell is repeatedly hammered upon with the help of hammer, this takes a lot of expertise, sensitive touch and careful listening.
- After this the bell is nicely polished and Kani (wood stick) is hooked inside the bell.

Products



Fig 3. Products made with bells.

Bell making craft is gaining popularity all over the world due to their use in many decorative items and for their beautiful sound. The bells are highly priced because they are handmade and they require a lot of labour and time. Price ranges from Rs 50 and goes up to thousands of rupees depending upon size and design. To make it more attractive they make various designs on the bell.

Different types of products from the bells are:

- Ring jumar
- Saregama
- Neck bells for cattles

- Wind chimes
- Key chain
- Bicycle chimes

Market

Bell products are sold in the local markets which includes the village itself and neighbouring towns and cities. During the festival of Rann- Utsav the government organizes many exhibitions and fairs to increase the sales. Major profit is earned during the time of exhibition due to tourism whereas major sales are due to wholesale orders. Many copper bells products are also exported to other countries. Sometimes NGO's are the only link between the small artisans and the market. But NGO could not give the proper orders to small artisan due to variation in prices. So small artisan mostly depends on the orders from large units like Sadaya handicrafts and Bell art and craft.

Problems faced by Artisans

- Furnaces are not available to most of the artisans of villages like Zura, Kunariya, Nirona and Reha.
- In monsoon season the coal gets moisturised and due to this coal doesn't burn properly.
- Small artisan doesn't get sufficient order.
- Many small artisans do not know the procedure to enter the exhibitions.
- NGOs sometimes give very large orders to artisans but when the manufacturing of product is completed they either cancel the order or lower the quantity of order. So the artisans face huge losses as their extra products remains unsold.
- They always face late payment problems for their products from NGOs and due to late payment they could not buy raw materials and it also affects their house economy.
- The new designs made by experienced artisans gets stolen during exhibitions and the same designs are sold at lesser prices

by other artisans. So, it is a very huge loss for experienced artisans as they do not get valued for their talent.

Other Major Arts

- **Rogan Art:**

This art is famous all over the world and it is practiced only in Kutch by artisan Abdul Gafur D. Khatri. The Tree of life and peacock art are some of the famous designs of Rogan art. Presently the 8th generation of their family is working on this art.

The Rogan is prepared by heating castor oil to boiling point over 12 hours, then cooling it and as the paste is formed, then it is mixed in appropriate amounts of organic colours to make designs of different colours. These colours should be always kept inside water to prevent them from hardening. A thin iron rod flat at both ends is used for painting.

- To make perfect design, it requires high patience, precision and skill.
- The products of Rogan art are wall piece, dress materials, shawls and special bridal sarees and lehngas.
- Price depends upon the size and the complexity of the design and the starting product has the price of Rs. 2500.
- The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, gifted a couple of exquisite Rogan paintings to the US president, Barack Obama, during his visit to the US in 2014.



Fig 4. Rogan art.

- **Leather Art:**



Fig 5. Leather chappal (slipper)

Maldhari and Meghwal communities are the roots of leather art industry. The leather art was traditionally used to make harnesses for camels and horses, musical instruments, storage containers and footwear.

The cities like Bhuj, Ahmedabad serve as source hub for raw materials. The pieces of leather are hand stitched by passing thick thread through small slits made with the stitching awl. The price of raw leather is Rs. 600/kg. The main type of leather gets from skin of animals like cow, buffalo, sheep, goat etc. The main products of leather art are

wallets, mirrors, slippers, bags, key chains, jhumar and many more.

- **Lacquer Art:**



Fig.6 kitchen utensils

Presently, the Vadha community is involved in lacquer art profession. The instrument used in this art is lathe. The lathe is manually powered using a stick and a rope arrangement. A rope is wound around the object to be worked on and is pulled and pushed with the help of stick attached to it.

This generates a rotating motion on the object. During rotation of item, colour piece is gently pressed on its wood surface so colour of the piece

is obtained on wood item. Then by pressing cotton cloth zig-zag design is formed on wood piece. And at last some smoothening and polishing is done on item to get the final product. The colour is made from the stones and lacquer is bought from local market. Products of lacquer art are spoons, forks, spatula, chakiya belan (chapatti roller), chairs.

- **Bandhni art:**



Fig. 7 Bandhni sadi

Bandhni is an art in Gujarat in which different designs are produced by tying individual parts of the fabric before dyeing. The people engaged in design making on fabric are known as bandhej. At the beginning, the fabric is printed with an attractive design, this cloth is sent to the weaving artist to make several designs with colourful

threads. It takes minimum three to four days for the procedure to complete. At last it goes for dyeing process and after getting dry, the product gets ready for selling. Bhuj is main centre for the traders for dyes and colours used in these crafts and the fabric required comes from Ahmedabad and Surat. Bandhni is highly popular amongst Rabari, Harijan communities etc. The main products of Bandhani art are dupatta, saree, dress material and shawls. The drawback of Bandhani products is that they can only be dry cleaned otherwise the colour gets dull on washing.

- **Weaving art**



Fig. 8 Weaving machine

Weaving is a method of textile production in which two different sets of threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth. In weaving art, the Vankar community is involved. Vankar Meghji Harji from village Sanjotnagar has got national award by the President of India.

In weaving art only 3-4 shawls are made per day on average but sometimes its quantity may reduce depending on the complexity of design. The raw thread required is brought from Ahmedabad and Ludhiana. Presently, their products are charged with GST whereas earlier they were tax free which is their major issue. The prices of the shawls start from Rs. 300 and may increase varying on design. Wool and kala cotton are main material to form yarn.

Survey of Kunariya village:

Village of Kunariya is in Bhuj taluka of Kutch district. Total no. of families in Kunariya village are 735 and the total population of village is 1660. There are 230 members of Ahir community, 110 are Muslims, 95 are of Korhi, 145 are Anusuchit caste, 30 are Bavaji and 15 families are of Suthar caste. The main profession of this village people is farming and some other occupations include labour work, shopkeeping, artisan work etc. The total area of Kunariya village is about approx. 5000 hectares. The Sarpanch of the village is Shri Suresh Bhai Chhanga.

As far as we have observed he is the most honest and active towards his work. He regularly conducts various surveys and awareness programs in his village. He is currently working on the rainwater harvesting project to counter the problem of scarcity of water. For safety of village people, he took some steps like giving identity cards to fruit

and vegetable vendors, salesman so that any untrusted person can't enter the village.

S.No.	School	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	Principal Name	Other Notes
1	Shree Kunariya Girls Primary School	147	5	Jayeshbhai C Patel	2 vacancies for staff.
2	Shree Kunariya Boys Primary School	142	6	Mitaben Z Parmar	About 90% attendance of students

The village has many facilities like drinking water facility, toilet facility, sewage system facility whereas it lacks in some major facilities like health facility and education facility etc. there is only one health subcentre present in which there are no doctors but only one nurse is present for some primary aid, delivery and dressing purposes.

The village has two primary schools but no secondary school. These two primary schools are joined with various schemes like BYSEC program, mid-day meal scheme etc. The school students

actively take part in all sports events like Khel Mahakumbh, Ramatotsav etc.

Awareness Programs:

- **World Environment day:**

On 5th June 2018, we had a tree plantation program in which we along with village people planted 1500 trees in different parts of village.



Fig. 10 Tree plantation program

- **Village Awareness Program:**



Fig. 11 Drama on excessive use of plastic.

On 12th June 2018, our group performed a drama to spread awareness about plastic after the meeting of Gram Panchayat. In this drama, all the members took an active part and played different roles.

We tried to show different scenarios in which alternatives of plastic can be used like we tried to show a scenario in which vegetable vendor was using plastic bags instead of paper, cotton or jute bags. We also showed that how consuming hot food in plastic items can cause serious health problems like cancer, diabetes and many more.

We also performed a scene in which we showed that plastic is not only harmful for humans but also for animals. We showed how plastic gets choked in their throat sometimes and they die due to suffocation. We also explained that how the plastic can block the sewage system and water pipes and make the gutters to overflow and resultantly the polluted water gets accumulated in the streets of the village which causes diseases like cholera, malaria, dengue etc.

And at the end all of us in the gram panchayat took an oath to use as much less plastic as possible.

- **School Awareness Program:**



Fig. 12 School awareness program

On 15th June 2018, during the occasion of Pravesh Utsav, we held another awareness program at Girls Primary School in presence of Sarpanch and village people. We gave a presentation on plastic awareness.

We interacted with school children about plastic awareness and we also discussed how we can reduce the use of plastic in our daily lives.

Survey in Zura village

Zura village is located in Bhuj taluka of Kutch district. It is located about 27 km to the north of Bhuj city. The total area of Zura village is 4000 hectares. The sarpanch of this village is P M Jadeja. He is not taking much care towards plastic awareness. There are 1300 family staying in Zura. Total population of Zura village is 5200. Communities present in these villages are Muslim (600), Dalit (300), Bhanushali (120), Rajput (65), Bhil (35), Brahmins(13) and Bavaji (5). Most of the villagers are involved in agriculture and cattle rearing. The second common occupation is labour work whereas other people are engaged in shopkeeping, artisan work, govt. jobs, transport etc.

Drinking water facility of the village is very good as the Sarpanch has arranged the water pot facility at different parts of the villages. Electricity is available in the village for 24 hours. Other main facilities in the village are community hall, dairy, well- built roads etc Sewage facility in the village is half done and other half is under construction.

There is only one primary health centre present but in that also one doctor is appointed and that too is not available all the time.

Primary education facility of the village is very good but secondary education is not good as the attendance of students as well as teachers is very less. But the new secondary school is in construction. Presently, the secondary education is provided at primary Boys school.

S No.	School	No. of students	No. of teachers	Principal	Other notes
1	Zura girls primary school	205	7	Chintan.M. Jobanputra	One visiting faculty from NGO
2	Zura boys primary school	200	8	Jayshreeben makwana	
3	Zura secondary school	120	3	Dr. V H Jadeja	Two visiting faculties(one present only 3 days/week)

We also came to know that village there was immediate requirements of funds to maintain cleanliness all over the village.

Artisan Survey

After the survey of various artisans, we came to know that Sadaya handicrafts (Janmamad Luhar) and Bell Art & Craft (Asgar Luhar) are the big units in Zura village. As compared to other villages, Zura has maximum number of copper bell artisans. The main source of income of Zura artisans mostly comes from exhibitions and export orders. Most of the artisans of Zura village are muslims of Luhar community but there are also some Hindu artisan units present like Kharki Craft (Thawar Matang Harijan). The small artisans mostly do not have coal furnace so they prepare only raw iron bells and give them to big units for further processing.

Survey in Nirona Village

Nirona village is located in Nakhtrana taluka of Kutch district. It is located 36 km from the east of Nakhtrana.

The total area of Nirona is about 12830 hectares. In Nirona village Laxmiben Rajesbhai Bhanushali is the sarpanch of that village. Total number of families living is about 1650 and total population is about 4950. Different communities living in village are Laghumati, Pachat Jati and others. Major occupation of the villagers is farming. Major crops are cotton, wheat, pomegranate etc. last year one farmer sold pomegranates worth of Rs 65 lakh.

Different facilities present in Nirona village are drinking water facility, sewage system facility, electricity for 24 hours, community hall and dairy.

The health facility of the village is very good and in primary health centre there is only one doctor (Dr. AK Prasad) and three nurses. Health centre remains open for 24 hours. Facilities present in centre are laboratory, dressing room, delivery room, ambulance service for 24 hours and medical store.

There are 2 primary schools and one high school in Nirona village. All students are joined with various programs like BYSEC program, midday meal etc.

The sports facilities in schools is very good as all schools take part in Khel Mahakumbh. Last year the students of high school of Nirona won about Rs. 60000 of prize money in different sports events.

S No.	School	No. of students	No. of teacher	Principal	Other notes
1	Shri Nirona primary girls school	355	9	Alkaben A Joshi	
2	Shri Nirona Primary Boys School	350	9	Kanchanben P Vadod	
3	Punjabhai Anandji High School	266	5	V.M Chaudhary	5 other visiting faculties while 7 vacancies

The results of high school of village is very good. Last year the 12th commerce result was 80% while class 10th result was about 65%.

Artisan Survey

During the copper bell artisan survey, we came to know that Copper Bell Art (Luhar Haji Husan) is the biggest unit in Nirona village. This unit brought a revolutionary change in copper bell industry. They invented the first Saregama in bell form and many new different designs of chimes like bicycle chimes. In general, his Saregama is 2 to 3 times costlier than the normal Saregama as its notes are more authentic and the product is more durable.

Many artisans practice different arts likes Rogan, lacquer, leather etc

Many different unique handicrafts are practising in this village are Rogan art, Lacquer art, Leather art.

Conclusion

Majority of the artisans are present in the village of Zura and they are economically stable because there are bigger artisans like Sadaya who purchase raw iron bells from smaller artisans and give work to them, also the artisans of Zura have access to government as well as private exhibitions hence they earn good profits as well as they have well countrywide contacts .

The artisans in Kunariya are handful and most of there earnings is due to the NGO Khamir. They claim to apply for government exhibitions but do not get entry. Hence, they have very limited contacts and hence they do not have orders all year around. Since prices from NGO are fixed they do not have a chance of more income.

The artisans in Nirona are very less in number but they were very experienced. They are very creative and have invented many new products like bicycle chimes. The instrument Saregama was also invented by elder artisans of nirona. The sound quality and finishing of bells are better than others. They mostly sell their products in exhibition

and export orders and are not much in contact with NGOs.