

Design Resource

## Naqqashi

Metal craft of Lucknow

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/naqqashi>



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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/naqqashi/introduction>

## Introduction

Introduced during the time of the Nawabs, Naqqashi or repousse is the art of engraving that has been present in the city of Lucknow for a very long period of time. During those times, it was lucrative business for the artisans to sell their craftsmanship to the British as well as the markets in North India. This craft actually marked one of the turning points for the high culture that was found in Lucknow from 18th century onwards and engravings on metal such as on Paandaans, Khaasdaans and Ughaldaans were the objects that glorified Lucknow's ethnicity.

In earlier times, oversize copper and brass utensils were given during weddings since they were considered as an asset. Wazu ka lota (used for washing hands before Namaaz) and Paandaans (container used to keep all the materials required to make a Paan) are still given in most Muslim weddings.



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## Place

Everyone in Lucknow must have been to the Bartan Market in Yahiyaganj atleast once in their life! In the crowded bylanes of this bazaar, people are spotted buying steel and aluminum utensils for their home. In the midst of all this hustle-bustle is a quintessential shop by the name of Kanhaiya Lal Prag Das that deals in beautifully crafted copperware. Several generations old now, this shop is run by Pramesh Agarwal and his father.

Other than running the shop jointly with this father, Pramesh is also the founder of a brand/ label called 'Thatera'. Whereas the regular, fast-moving, inexpensive copper products are sold under the label 'Kanhaiya Lal Prag Das' in the shop, the more intricately 'designed' and expensive ones are sold under 'Thatera' through exhibitions only. This initiative is his effort to give back to his roots, save the intricacy and finesse of the craft from dying out and also to satisfy his creative instinct!



On the way to Yahiyaganj in Lucknow.

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Bartan Bazaar in Yahiyaganj.



Bartan Bazaar in Yahiyaganj.



Kanhaiya Lal Prag Das shop.



Copperware in Bartan Bazaar.

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Alams.

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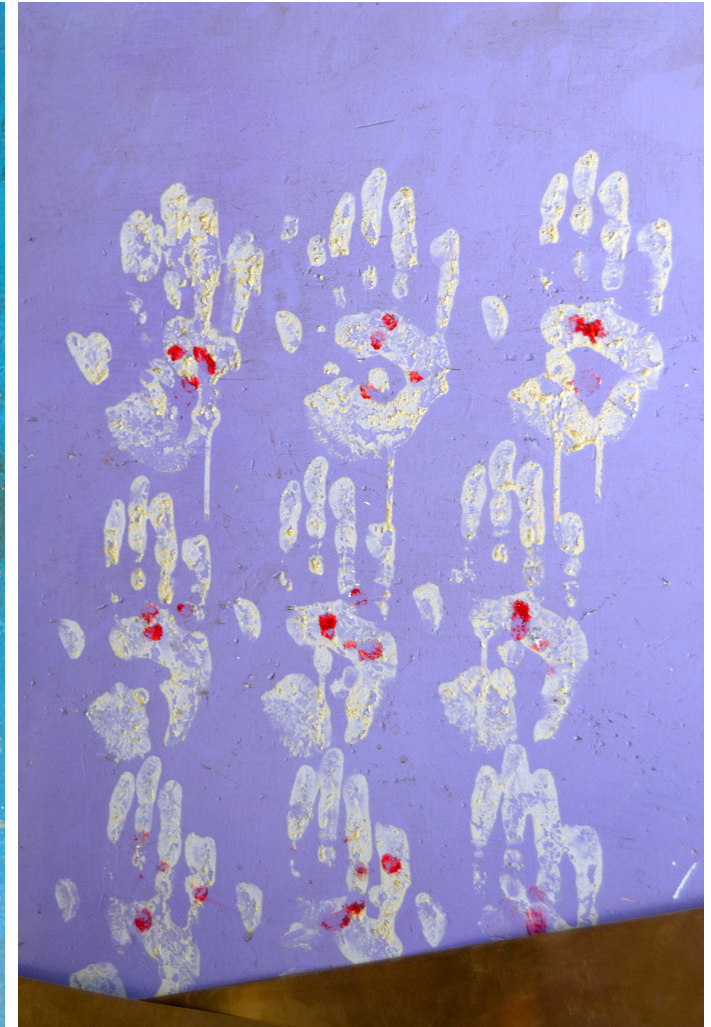
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On the streets of the bazaar.



On the streets of the bazaar.

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Raju's board for Alams.



Bartan Bazaar in Yahiyaganj.

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Small homes where craftsmen live and work.



Display of brass products.



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## People

In general, Naqqashi art is on a decline as only a handful of skilled artisans are left who practice this art form. One major reason why people don't want to practice the craft is low income. Another major reason being the influx of machine made products in the market.

On a more positive note, the 15 artisans who are left practicing this craft are immensely dedicated, hard-working and unbelievably skilled. Their craft has been passed on from one generation to another. The master craftsmen include Raju, Kanhaiya, Santosh, Mukesh, Om Nath, Shyam Nath, Deep Chand amongst several others. They work six or seven hours daily, their fingers making magic on metal using different types of tools.



Naqqashi craftsman at work.

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Raju - Naqqashi craftsman at work.



Naqqashi craftsman at work.

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Santosh - Naqqashi craftsman at work.



Mukesh - Naqqashi craftsman at work.

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Moulding craftsman at work.



Moulding craftsman at work.

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Moulding craftsman at work.



Moulding craftsman at work.

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Buffing craftsman at work.

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## Process

Earlier this work of intricate naqqashi was done only on copper, brass and silver but as the times flew by and innovations and the need for market growth came in, this craft also began to be attempted on aluminum and steel as per the convenience of the customers. But, no matter what the metal is, the process remains the same:



Moulding



Naqqashi



Kalai



Buffing



Packaging

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## Moulding

The raw material for making any product is sourced from Mathura, Moradabad and Jagadhri in the form of rectangular and circular metal sheets. These are then cast/ moulded in different shapes and sizes by very skilled craftsmen, using a variety of tools and machines. Sometimes, it is completely done by hand too, depending on the requirement of the product. Once the product takes shape, it goes through 'chilayi' (scraping) using sharp metal tools for the under layer of metal to get exposed. This results in a lot of metal shavings that are melted and reused. The scraped form then goes for 'naqqashi'.



Copper sheets (raw material).

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Moulding/ shaping the copper sheets.



Moulding/ shaping the copper sheets.



Moulding/ shaping the copper sheets.



Moulding/ shaping the copper sheets.

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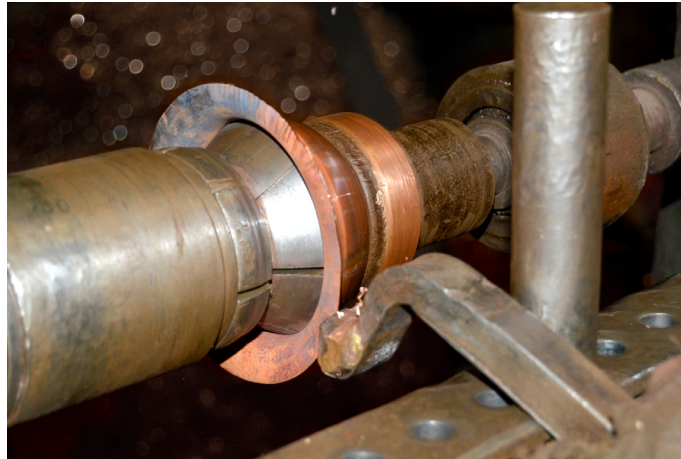
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Moulding/ shaping the copper sheets.



Copper scrap/ shavings.



Moulding/ shaping the brass sheets.



Chilayi/ scraping for sheen.

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Chilayi/ scraping for sheen.



Chilayi/ scraping for sheen.

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Copper shavings.



Chilayi/ scraping for sheen.

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Chilayi/ scraping for sheen.



Chilayi/ scraping for sheen.

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Brass glasses.

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Copper jugs.



Cast handles for Paandaans.



Scraped copper ware, ready for naqqashi.

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Scraped copper ware, ready for naqqashi.



Scraped copper ware, ready for naqqashi.



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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/naqqashi/process/naqqashi>

## Naqqashi

The first step of naqqashi is to draw/ trace the design on the product. This is done using khakha (paper stencils, dies), chisels and prakaar (compass). Once the pattern is roughly planned out, different types of kalam (chisels) are used to etch/ emboss/ engrave or make a jaali (net) pattern. A hammer is used to hit on the top end of the chisel, the tip of which creates the design on metal that rests on an iron slab called 'nihai'. Earlier, this work was done with lac filled under the metal sheet for greater precision. Slowly, the use of lac as an under layer disappeared resulting in better speed and less damage to the metal.

There are two types of naqqashi: 'ubhaar naqqashi' (emboss and relief designs) and 'jaalidaar naqqashi' (net and lace patterns). Jaalidaar is finer and more time-taking, hence more expensive. The motifs of naqqashi are similar to those found in Mughal art designs, the only difference being in the intricacy of this work. Earlier it used to be more elaborate but now the designs are minimalist for the sake of production purposes. The most popular patterns include the half-moon, full moon, stars and flowers.



Khakha (stencils).

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Kalams (chisels) used for different types of naqqashi.



Kalams (chisels) used for different types of naqqashi.



Etching a name on a copper lid.

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Etching a name on a copper lid.



Etched names of copper lid.

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Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.



Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.

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Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.



Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.



Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.

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Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.

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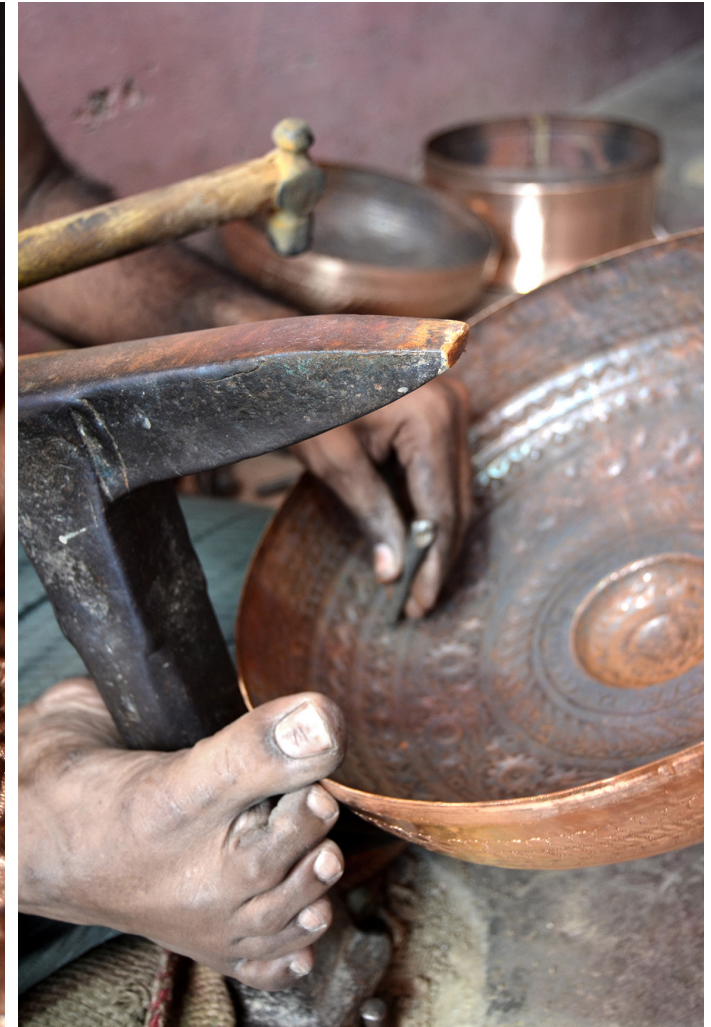
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Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.



Naqqashi being done on Ubhaar paandaan.

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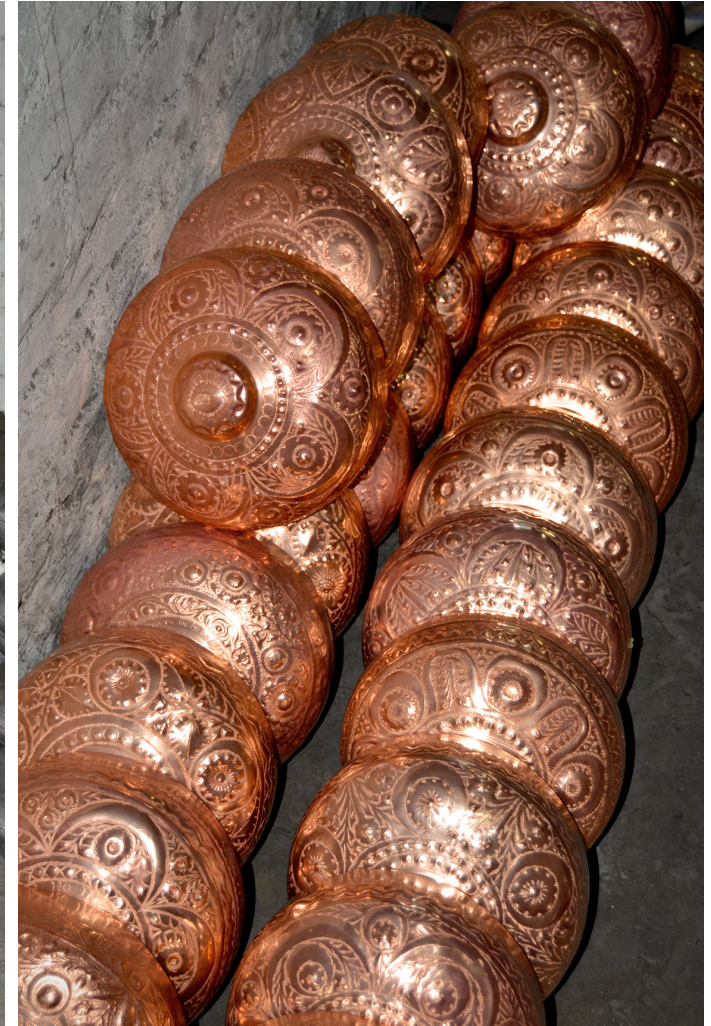
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Lower half of the Paandaans.



Dome shaped lid (upper half) of the Paandaan.



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A complete Ubhaar Paandaan.



Fish design on Surahi (used for keeping water).

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Aluminum Paandaan being made.



Aluminum Paandaan being made.

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Aluminum Paandaan being made.



Aluminum Paandaan being made.



Aluminum Paandaan being made.

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Brass Alam being made.



Brass Alam being made.

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Brass Alam being made.



Brass Alam being made.



Brass shavings.

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Part of the Alam.

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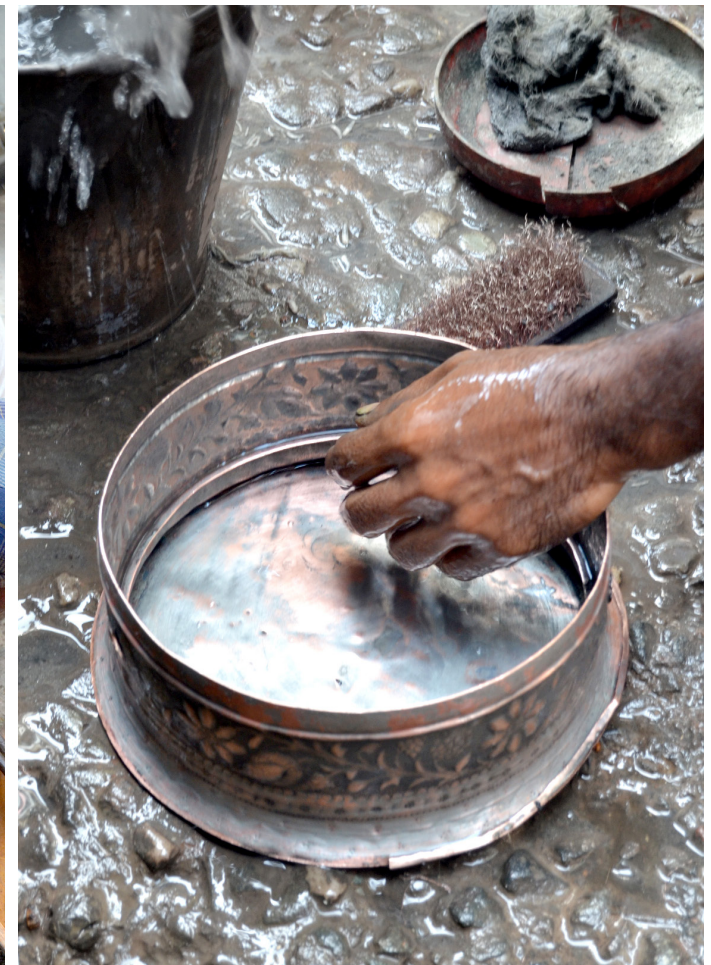
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## Kalai

Copper is a reactive metal and therefore the cooking utensils need to be lined/ layered on the inside to be food-safe. A thin layer of 'raanga' is coated inside the copper and brass utensils by extremely skilled artisans. This process is called 'kalai' and the craftsmen are called kalaiwaalas. This job of re-tinning the utensils needs to be repeated every six months or so because without the lining, copper may discolour the food, impart a bitter taste or sometimes, even lead to food poisoning. Jugs, glasses (products used for drinking water only) and decorative products don't need kalai.



Kalaiwaala.



Paandaan being coated with kalai.



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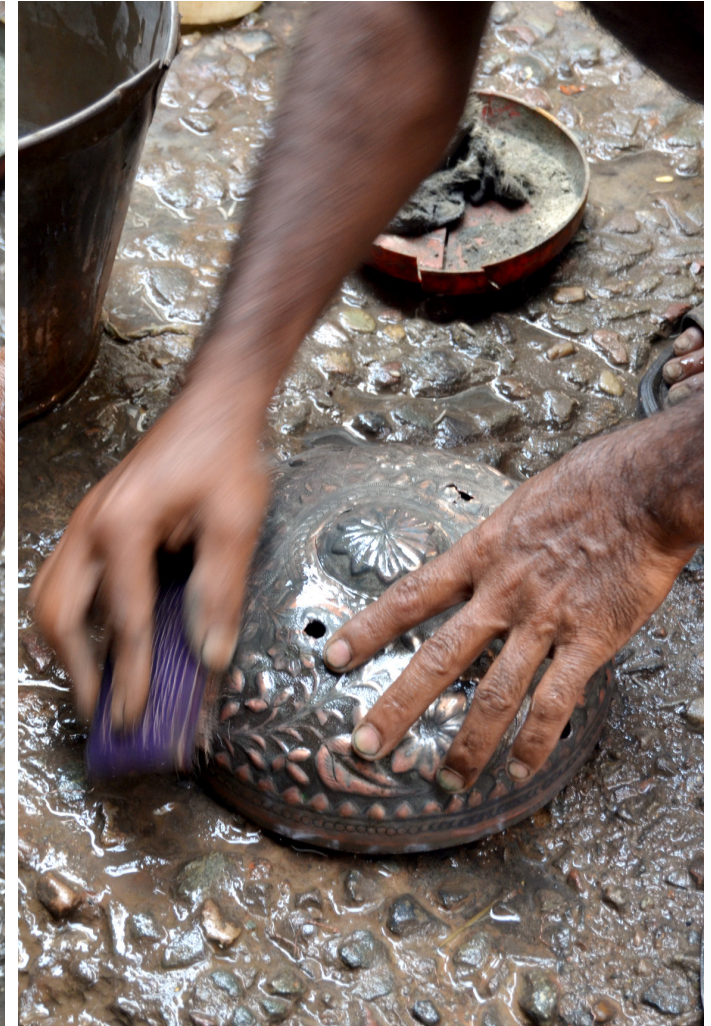
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Paandaan being coated with kalai.



Paandaan being coated with kalai.

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Kalaiwaala's workshop.



Raanga.

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/naqqashi/process/buffing>

## Buffing

The copperware is washed in several chemicals, rubbed clean and then polished using a buffing machine. This gives it a great sheen, making it look sparkling and flawless.



Copperware being washed in different chemicals.

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## Naqqashi

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Copperware being washed in different chemicals.



Copperware being washed in different chemicals.



Washed copperware.

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Copperware being washed in different chemicals.



Copperware being washed in different chemicals.

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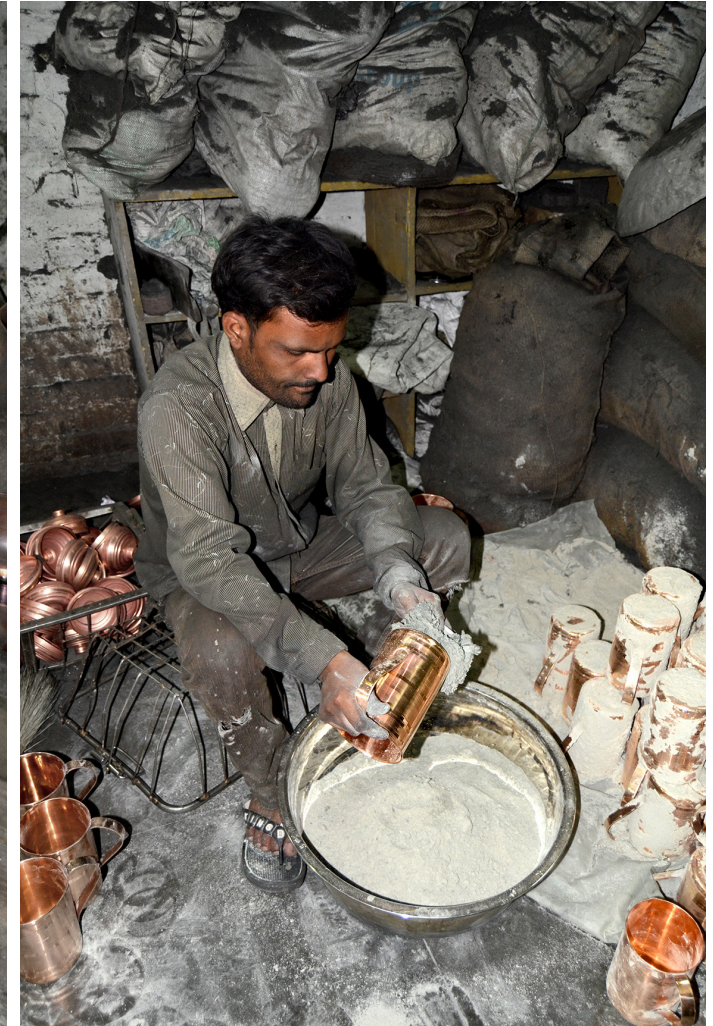
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Copperware coated with a chemical powder/dust before buffing.



Copperware coated with a chemical powder/dust before buffing.

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Copperware coated with a chemical powder/dust before buffing.



Copperware coated with a chemical powder/dust before buffing.

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Buffing machine making it shine.



Buffing machine making it shine.



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## Packaging

The polished copper and brassware are put inside transparent plastic bags (to prevent oxidization that results in patina), labeled with the shop's stickers and then packed inside big jute bags to be sent to retailers and clients.



Paandaan being packed in a plastic bag.



Labeled with the shop's sticker.

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Being packed.



Counting and accounting in progress.

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Packed copperware.



Finally packed in jute bags to be sent to retailers and clients.

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## Naqqashi

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/naqqashi/products>

## Products

The traditional popular products of this craft are Paandaan (containing boxes of various items used to prepare a paan), Khaasdaan (the pots in which the prepared paans are kept and served), Ughaldaan (used as spittoons which are necessary after chewing pan), Wazoo ka lota, (water pot used for washing hands before Namaaz), Lagan (paraat), Sini (metal plate for covering), Kabgir-chammach (cooking utensils), Deg (cooking pot) and jugs. Alams are also a significant product of this craft. Raju is an Alam specialist and his products are sent to Bombay, from where they are exported to all parts of the world. These Alams are decorated in Muslim homes and mosques. Bought by Shia muslims, these are passed on from one generation to another - like a legacy!

New products with contemporary utility like kettles, fish shaped platters, coasters and fruit bowls are also being made in small sizes for gifting purposes under the label 'Thatera'.

Care: As it is a natural quality of copper to oxidize over time, it is advised that these intricate items be cleaned with vinegar and salt using a non-scratch cloth to reduce oxidization.



Copper glasses.

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Jaalidaar copper Khaasdaan.



Fruit bowl.

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Copper urlis.



Fish platters.

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Jaalidaar copper Khaasdaan.



Jaalidaar copper Khaasdaan.

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Jaalidaar copper Khaasdaan.



Kettles.



Kettle detailing.

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Wazoo ka lota.



Kettle.



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Surahi.



Ubhaar naqqashi copper platter.

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Ubhaar naqqashi copper platter with kalai coating.



Ubhaar naqqashi copper platter.

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Jaalidaar brass Paandaan.



Jaalidaar brass Paandaan.

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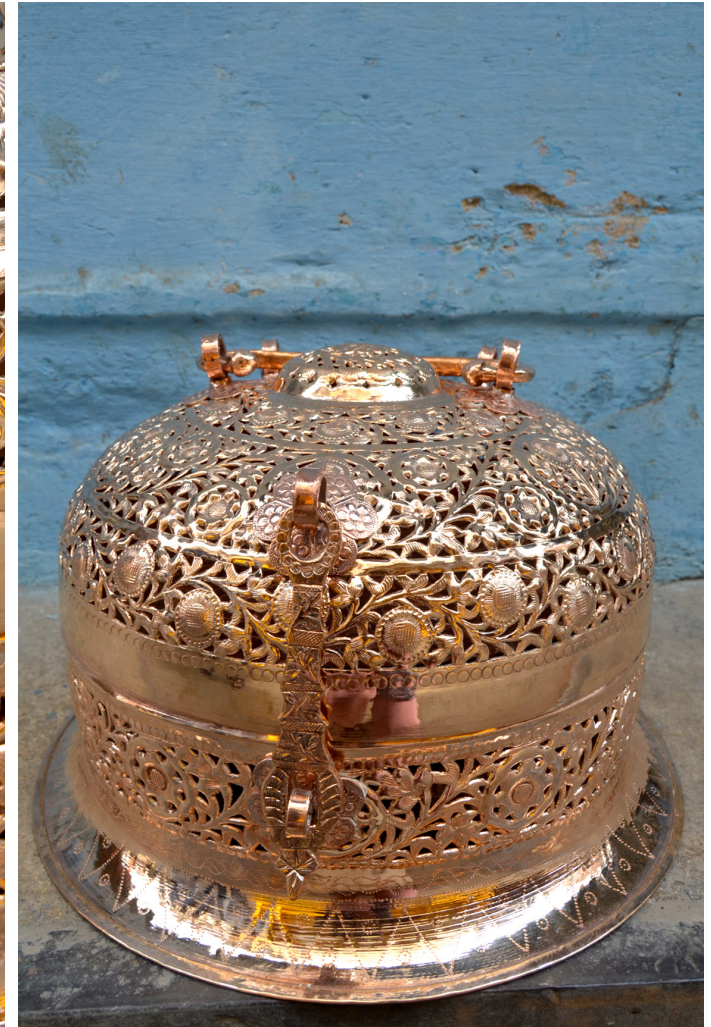
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Jaalidaar copper Paandaan.



Jaalidaar copper Paandaan.

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Jaalidaar copper Paandaan.



Jaalidaar copper Paandaan.

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Boxes inside the Paandaan with Ubhaar naqqashi.



Small container with kalai coating.

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Small container with kalai coating.



Jaalidaar copper Paandaan.



Jaalidaar copper Paandaan.

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Ubhaar naqqashi copper platter.



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Alam.



Copper Alam made by Raju.

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Variety of Alams.



Brass Alam.

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Details of the brass Alam.



Details of the brass Alam.

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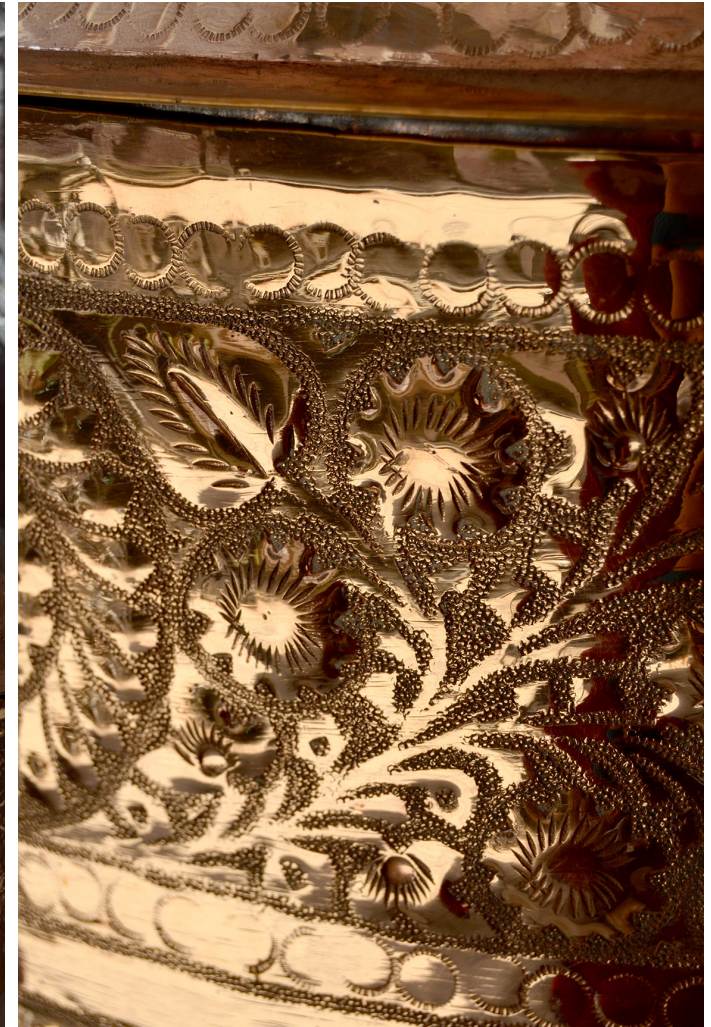
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Oversize copper container with Ubhaar naqqashi, used for serving Kahwa/ Chai in a gathering.



Details of Ubhaar naqqashi.

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Details of Ubhaar naqqashi.

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### Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/naqqashi/contact-details>

## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Sakshi Gambhir, M. Des., IDC, IIT Bombay.

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Fax: 091-22-25767803

Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

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