

Design Resource

Dhokra Shilp

The Bell Metal Craft of Bastar

by

Palash Vaswani

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp>



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2. History

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<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/introduction>

Introduction

The term “Dhokra” is believed to be deriving from the word “dhokna”, which means to cast. “Dhokra Shilp” is the regional word for the craft of bell metal casting. It is one of the most distinguished craft of Chattisgarh. It is also famous for its traditional lost wax technique which has been carried forward since thousands of years of its origin. Artifacts similar to the present craft form have been discovered at the sights of Mohenjedaro and Harappa. Dhokra shilp is widely practiced by the Ghadwa community of Bastar. The handcraft includes traditional ornaments, animal and tribal figures, idols of the local deities, which are most popular in the region.



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History

The bell metal craft is the oldest form of metal casting. It has been undertaken in India for over 4000 yrs. The dancing girl of Mohenjodaro is one of the earliest known lost wax artifacts. The Ghadwas are artisans who produce the bell metal crafts. Term “ghadwa” means giving shape and creating. It is still unclear whether the community originated in the jungles of Bastar or migrated from Orissa. As their culture and traditions have strikingly similarities with the tribal's of Bastar, many do believe that their traces are from Bastar. Ironically the community is given a lower status than the tribal's of the region.

Some believe that in the historical period, when king built his palace, he searched some craftsmen to make the idol of Danteshwari Devi. Few of the ghadwa families were invited from Orissa and then they settled in this region. These are also called as 'Ghasis', 'Khaser', 'Mangan' & 'Vishwakarma' in different regions.

The Ghadwa craftsmen used to supply the utensils of daily use to the villagers. Slowly jewelry and forms of local deities also became part of their work. With time the figures of birds, animals, decorative objects and dance poses were added to make the craft more innovative.

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Bell metal craftsman Jhimtu Sagar at Karanpur.



Idol of local deities “Jhitku Mitki”.

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Head made of bee wax.



Artifacts.



Utensils made of Bell metal craft.

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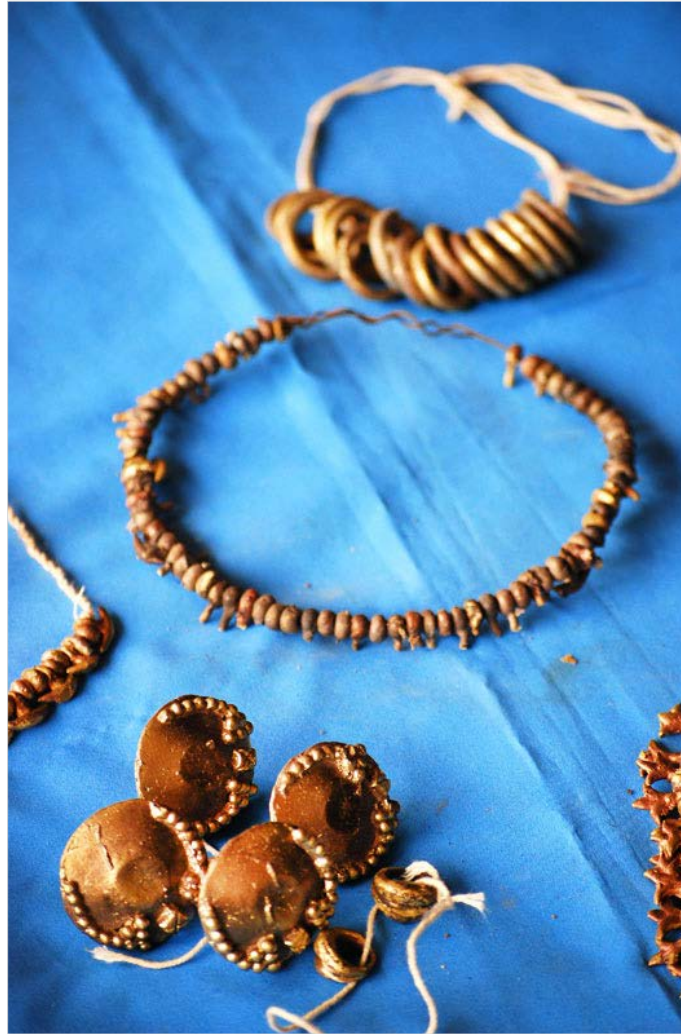
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Ornaments.



Goddess.

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Idol of local deities "Jhitku Mitki".



Local God.

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Place

Bastar, a land of tribal's, is the largest district in the state of Chhattisgarh. Endowed with rich minerals deposits and precious stones, it forms the southern part of Chhattisgarh. The total forest area of the district is roughly 7112 sq km, which is more than 75 per cent of the total area. Tribes consist of 31.8% of the total Chhattisgarh population, with 66.3% of concentration in Bastar. The main tribes of Bastar are Gonds, Kamars, Biagas, halbas and Bhatras. This region is also famous for some distinctive and equally beautiful craft forms.

Kondagaon is one of the bigger towns in the area and is considered to be the centre of handicrafts manufacturing. Bhelwapadrapara, which is about 2kms from Kondagaon is famous for bell-metal craftsmen community. The place has about hundred people dedicated to Dhokra shilp. Another less known place is Karanpur, where traditional craftsmen reside. It is 40 km from Kondagaon.



Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.

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Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon Village Edka.



Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.

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Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



House of famous craftsmen Jaidev Baghel, Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.

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Shabbir's house and workshop at Bhelwapadrapara, Kondagaon.



Pond at Karanpur.

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Locals catching fish.



Locals catching fish.



Local temple.

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Local deities "Jhitku Mitki".



A very old Banyan tree.



Karanpur.



Karanpur.

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Karanpur.



Karanpur.



Karanpur.

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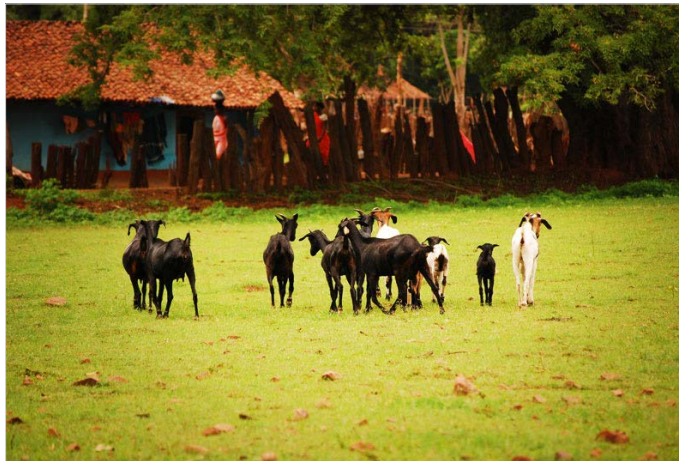
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Karanpur.



Karanpur.



Karanpur.

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People

Craftsman Mr. Shabbir Nag lives in Bhelwapadrapara area of Kondagaon. He hails from a family, which was not always a craftsman by occupation, but slowly picked up the work with guidance of the fellow members of “Ghad-wa” community. Now many craftsmen work under him and are responsible for the production of bell metal artifacts in bulk. He is one the prosperous member of the bell metal community in Bhelwapadrapara.

This place is also famous for the legend Dr. Jaidev Baghel, also known as the “shilp guru”. Born in Kondagaon, he belongs to the artisan community. He learnt the techniques of casting metals from his father, a well-known craftsman of his time. A winner of the National Award in 1977 and several other awards shows his outstanding skills and strength in the craftsmanship. It is said that he is the reason for the current successful state of the craft form. Dr. Jaidev Baghel has traveled all around the world with his exhibitions. He lives with his wife, sons and daughters. Rajendra Baghel, nephew of Dr. Baghel is also doing good work in the same field and tries to incorporate what he has learnt from his uncle.

Karanpur is a tiny village, 40 km from Kondagaon, surrounded by lush green jungles. It is home traditional bell metal craftsmen Bhondia Ram Baghel and his son Manglu Baghel. They still use the oldest technique of casting, which is fixing the metal pot with the cast and usage of pure bee wax. Bell metal figures made by them are more pure (non-commercialized) in their form. It's hard not to fall in love with their traditional art form. Jhimtu Sagar is another famous artisan who lives in the same village.



Shabbir Nag with his craftsman.

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Craftsman welding an unfinished artifact.



Making of charcoal sheets.

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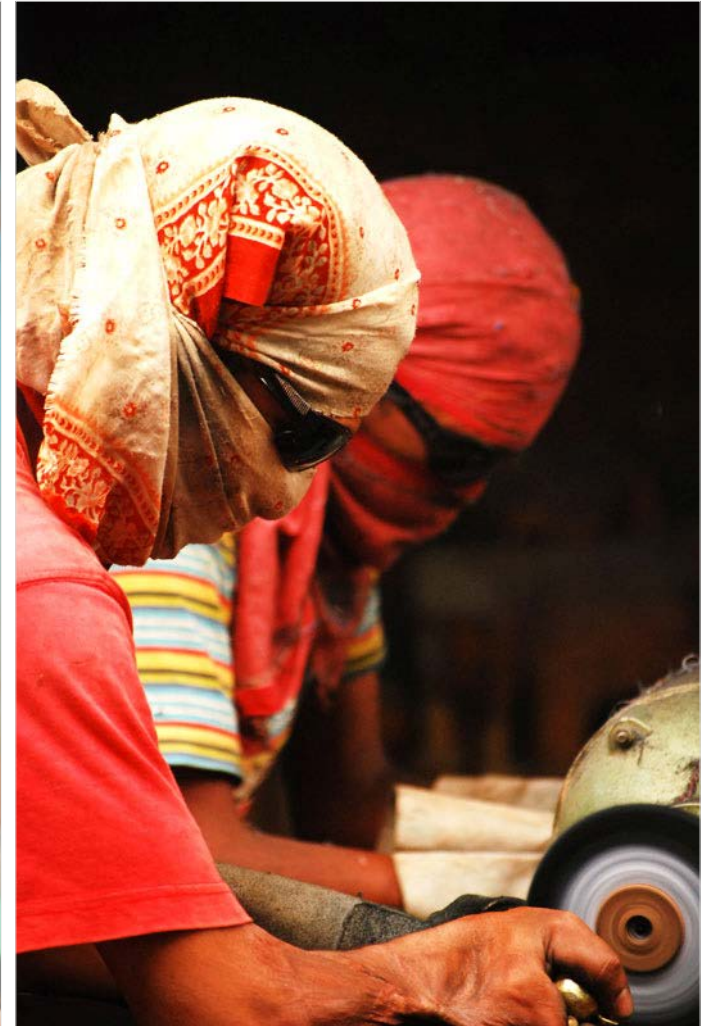
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Wives of craftsman at Bhelwapadrapara.



Buffing of the artifacts.

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Bell metal craftsman with his kid.



Bell metal craftsman showing unfinished model.

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Shabbir Nag.



Bhondia Ram Baghel.

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Bhondia Ram Baghel's wife.



Manglu Baghel.

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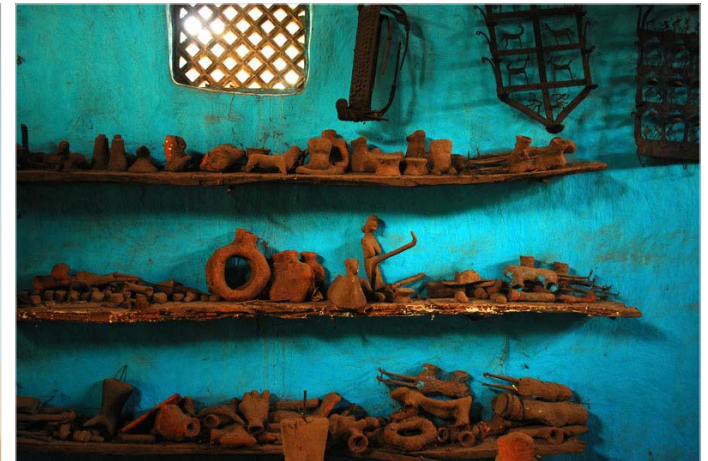
Shabbir's team.



People at Karanpur.



Manglu, Bhondia Ram and his wife.



Rajendra Bahgel's workshop.

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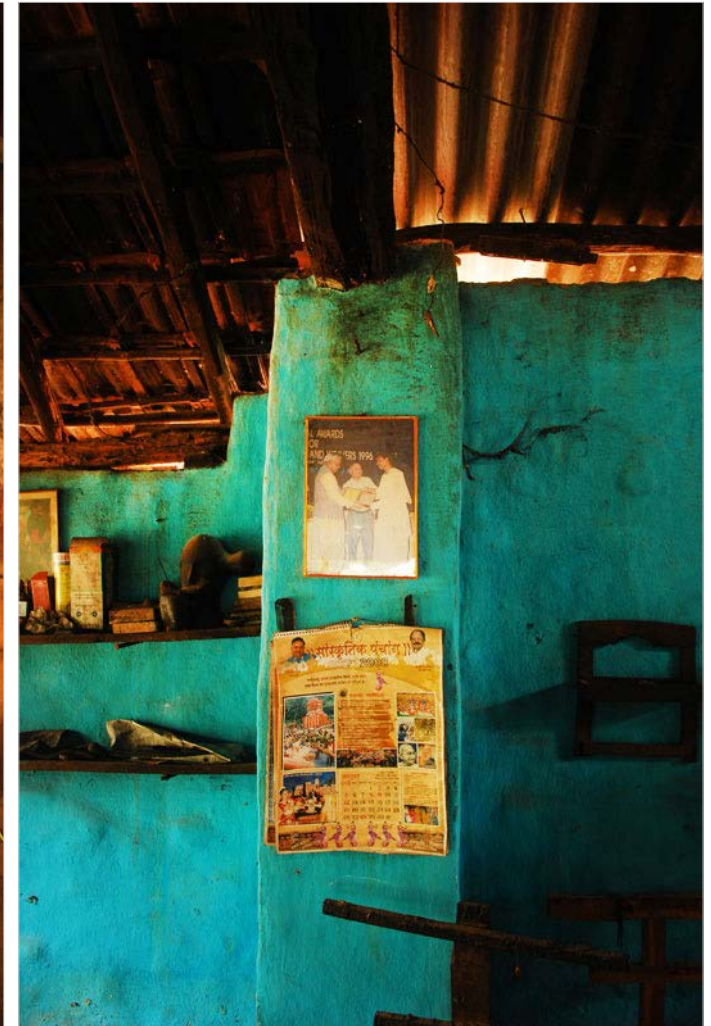
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Jhimtu Sagar.



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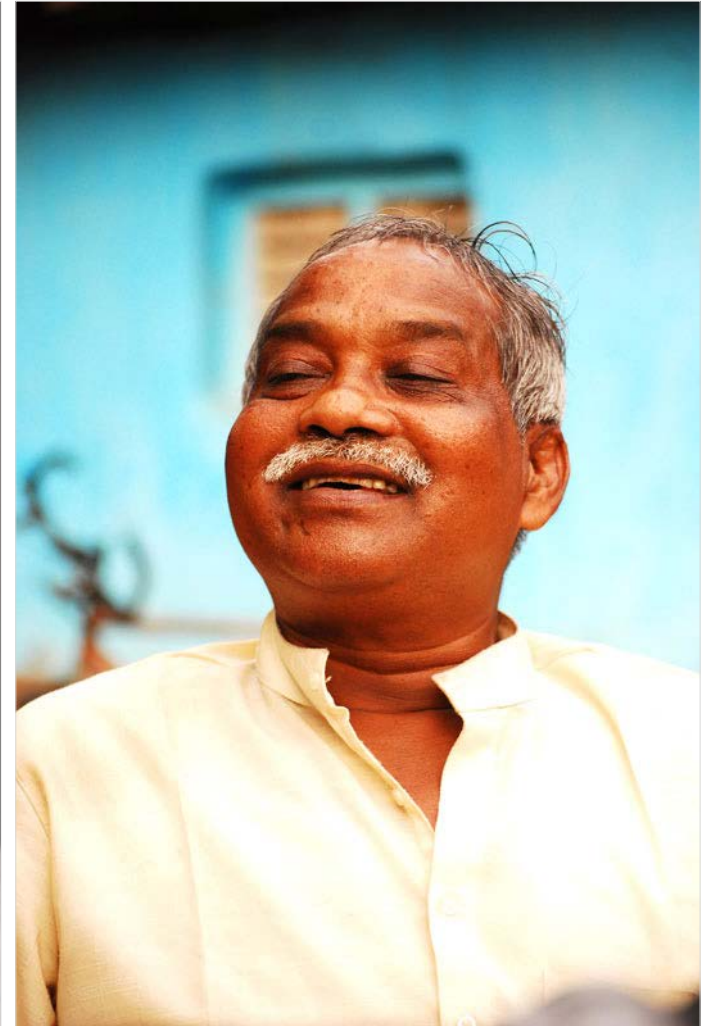
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Rajendra Bahgel.



Shilpguru Dr. Jaidev Baghel.

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Process



Raw Materials and Tools



Making of Wax



Lost Wax Technique in Current Form



Traditional Lost Wax Technique

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Raw Materials and Tools

• Raw Materials:

Brass:

The primary raw material is brass which is collected from brass scrap or used brass utensils. The scrap is available from local traders for Rs. 220/- to Rs. 250/- per kg.

Black Soil:

The black soil is collected from beds of the fields.

Rice Husk:

Rice husk is procured from mill. It is mixed with soil as clay tends to break while drying. It also prevents the cracking of mould during firing.

Riverside Soil:

It is obtained from the riverbanks. This red colored soil is soft & easy to shape & mould. It facilitates good final shape & finishing of the product.

Cow-Dung (Gobar):

It is mixed with river soil, which allows the wax to melt out of the cast.

Termite Clay:

The fine clay is collected from termite bills.

Bean Leaves:

Lima bean (sem patta) leaves picked up from the plants due to their water content.

Fire Wood:

It generally obtained from nearby forests.

• Tools:

The common tools used are:

- Chisel,
- Wooden Mallet,
- Hammer,

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- Phichki-Pharni (Hand-held press),
- Pliers,
- Tongs,
- Wire brushes.



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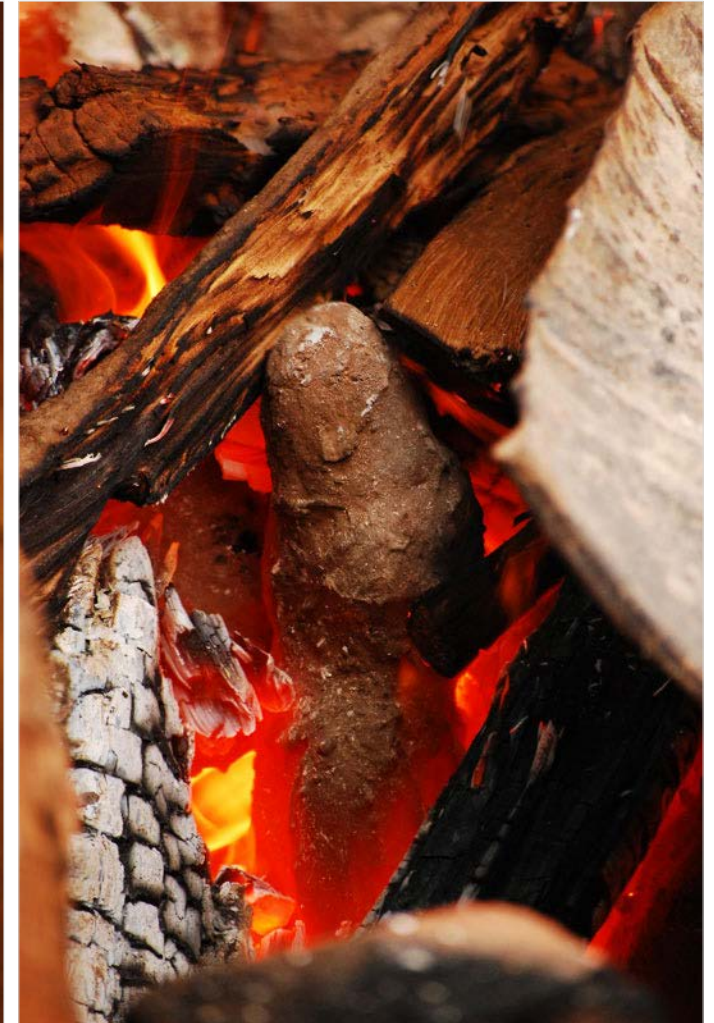
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Making of Wax

Wax used for making 'Dhokra' Products is of two types:

- **Bee wax:**

The Bee Wax is extracted directly from the hives available in the forests. The wax is heated in a pot over a fire. The molten wax is filtered through the cotton cloth into another clay pot filled with water. This wax is used in traditional wax technique.

- **Candle Wax:**

Other type of wax used is Candle Wax. As candle wax breaks easily, it is mixed with coal tar & incense stick powder.



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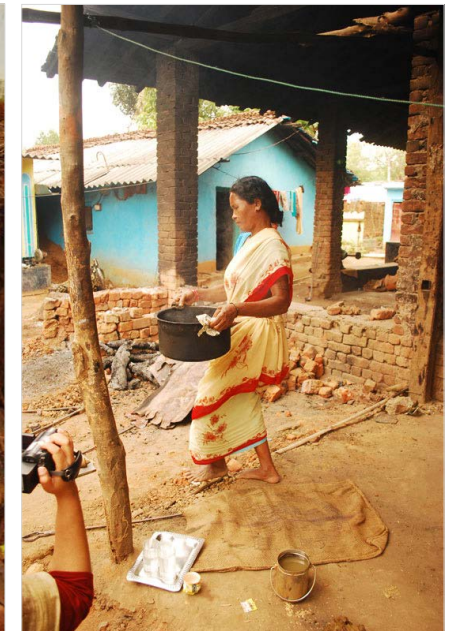
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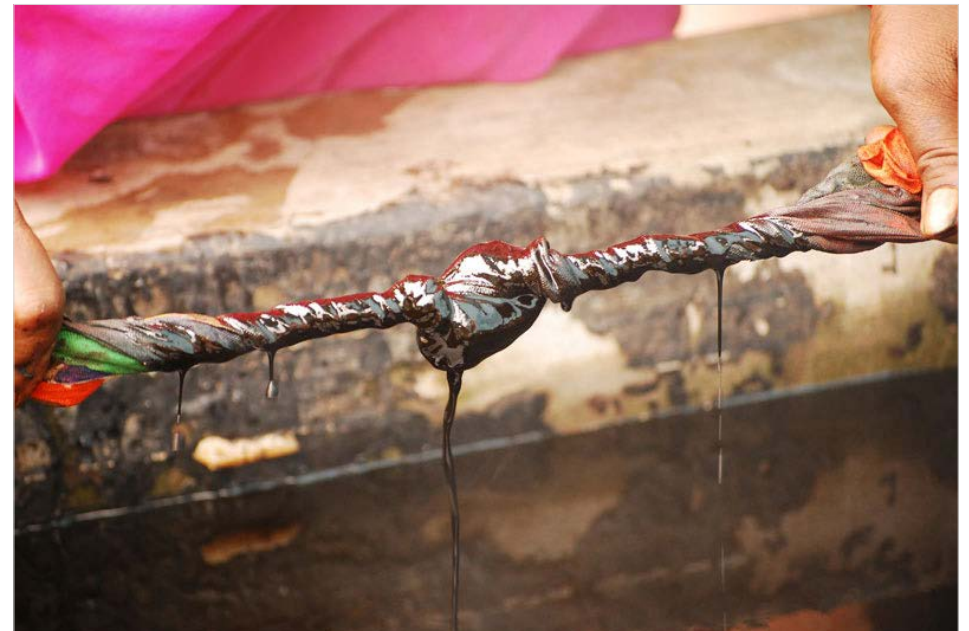
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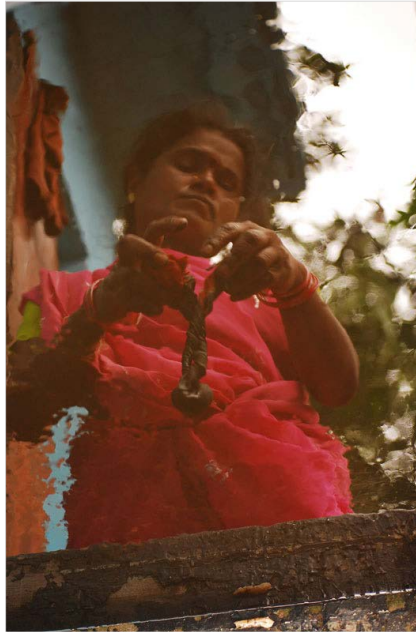
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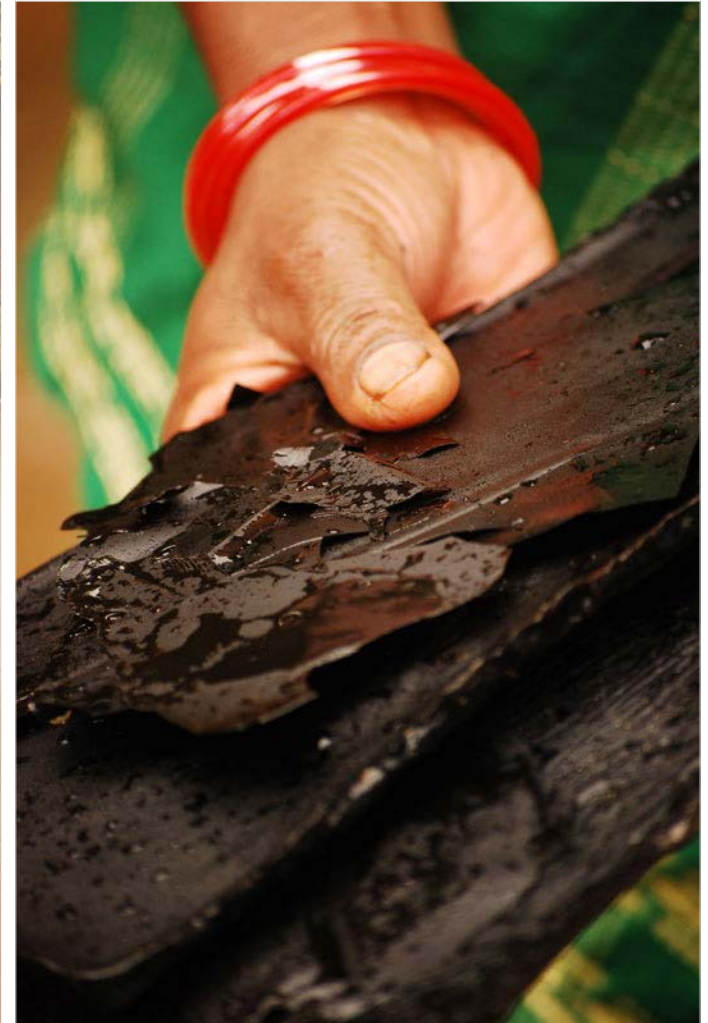
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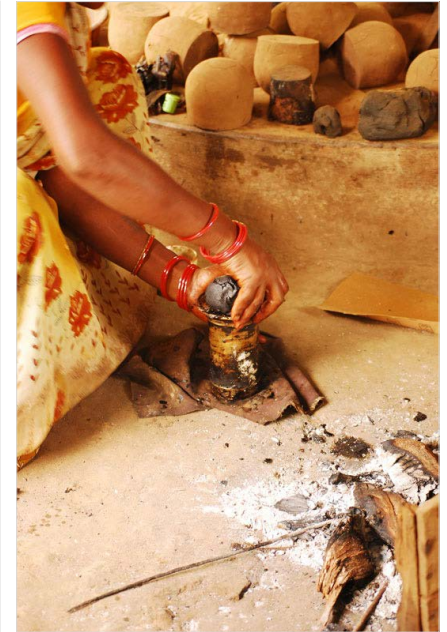
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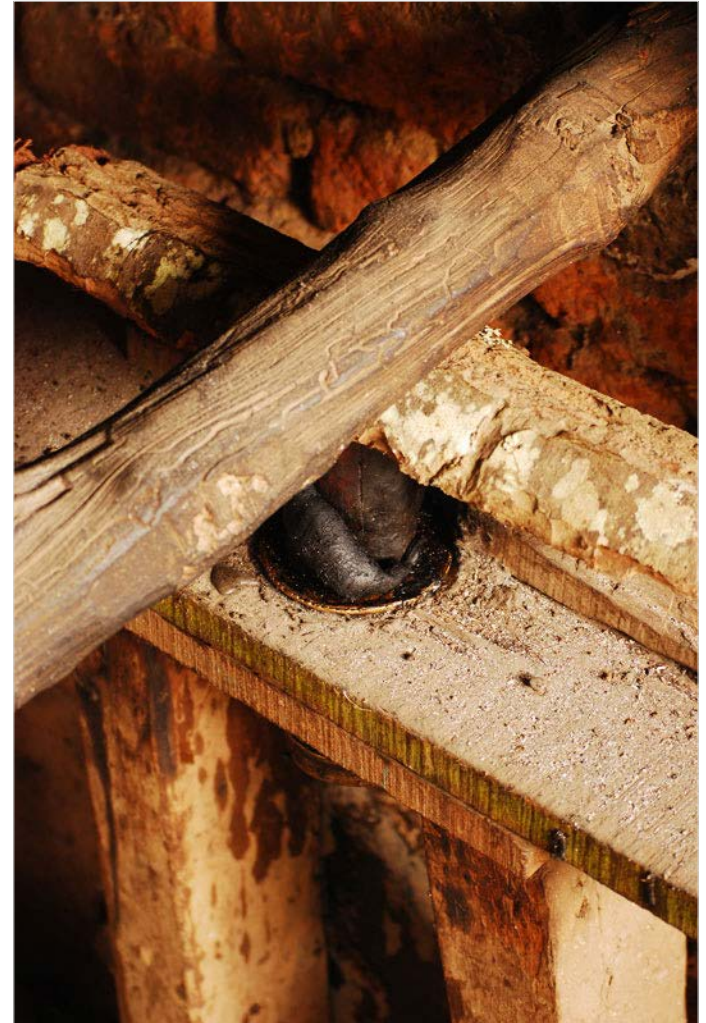
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Lost Wax Technique in Current Form

Dhokra - a non-ferrous metal is made using 'Lost Wax Technique'. There are two types of Lost Wax Techniques:

- Solid casting - Where a solid piece of wax is used to create the mould instead of a clay core.
- Hollow casting - It is more traditional method which involves the use of the clay core.

The Process followed currently for making products is discussed as below:

A basic model is prepared by using black soil mixed with rice husk in appropriate ratio. Soft pliable dough is made by adding water in it. A basic model of craft is made and dried in the sun.

For second layer, cleaned riverside soil is used. A powder of dung and water is added and mixed thoroughly for smooth dough. It applied all over the dry model & again left to dry in the sun.

The hard & dry model is filed & shaped with metal files to achieve a proper shape. When the model is ready, it is scrubbed all over with hands to remove dust. A very thin semi liquid layer of black soil is applied over the model and is left to dry.

The bean leaves are then crushed by rubbing them between the hands and applied over the model until it looks green. The purpose of applying green liquid to model is to prevent the soil from sticking to the model. The model is left to dry again in the sun.

Thin wax threads are then wrapped closely around the model. The wax threads are made using hand-held press, which is also known as phichki-pharni in Bastar.

A layer of riverside soil & powdered wood coal is applied over the model. A chamber is made at the bottom of the model, where the liquid metal has to be poured for casting. Final layer of termite soil is applied by adding bigger channel. This channel is added to the earlier chamber made at the bottom & covered with termite soil mixture to make the passage ready & dried.

The casting process starts with the preparation of furnace for firing & casting. The model is made wet with liquid mud and kept on the burning coals for firing. It is kept erect by giving support with wooden sticks.

Another furnace is made for melting metal pieces which are then placed in a vessel. This vessel is placed over burning coal. The fire is blown continuously. When the model in the first furnace turns red, it is ready for casting.

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The ready-fired model is lifted gently & brought near the vessel. The liquid bell metal starts emitting green blue flames, which is an indicator of the ideal temperature of its liquid state.

It is then poured in the channel, which is made at the bottom by keeping model upside down. The wax inside the model is replaced by molten metal poured through funnel. Then model is left to cool.

After cooling, the outer model is broken gently with a wooden mallet or small hammer. The actual shape of the craft is then rubbed & cleaned.



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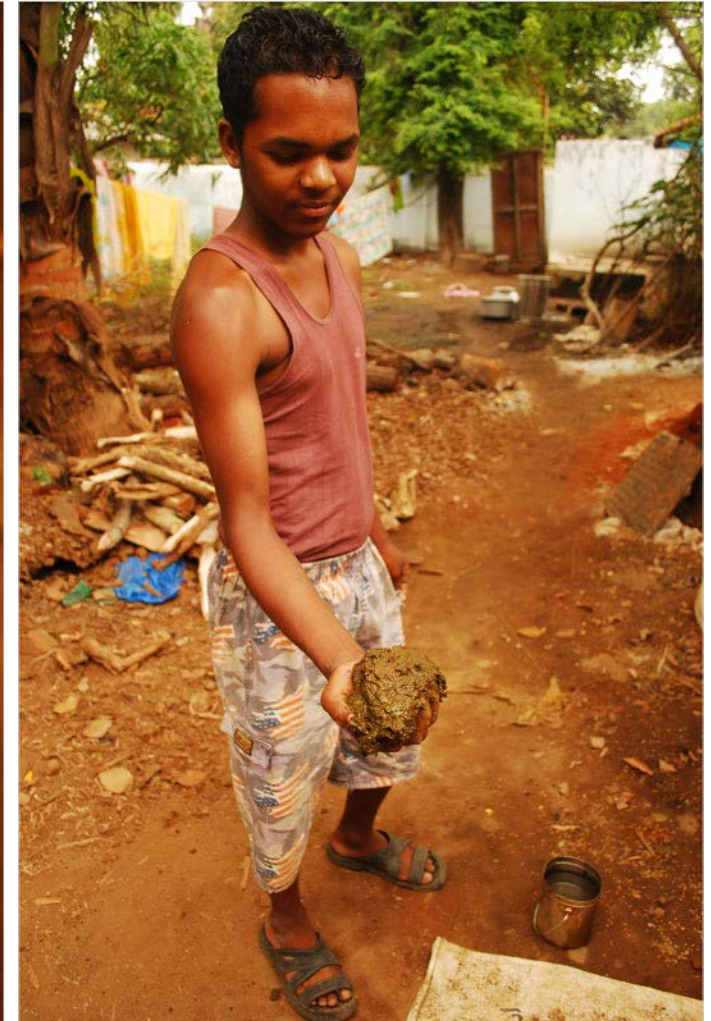
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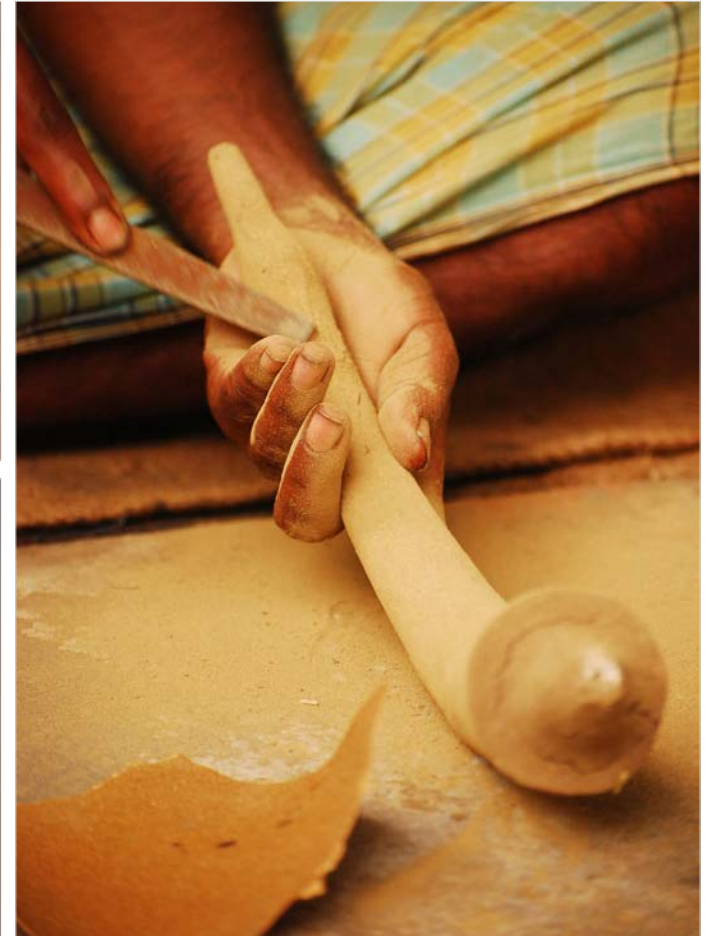
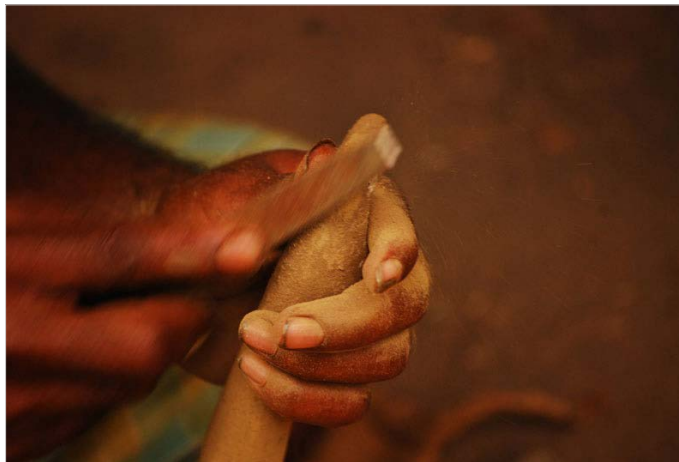
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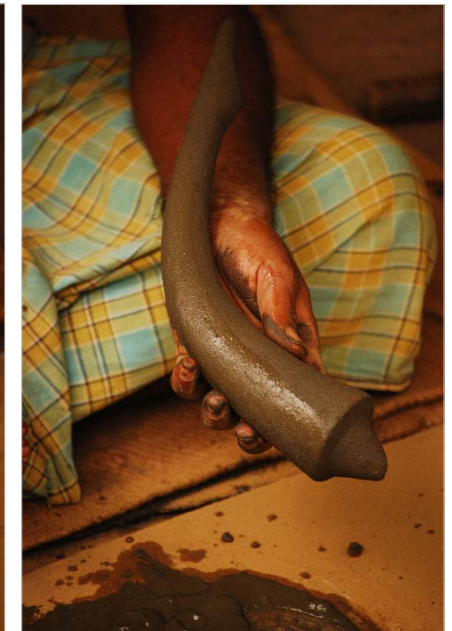
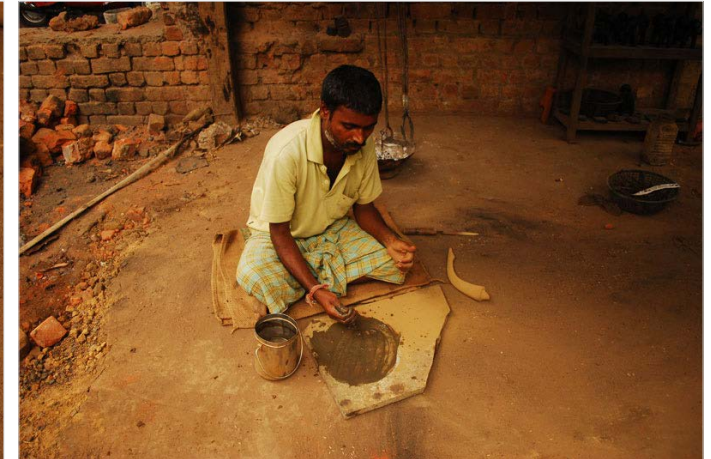
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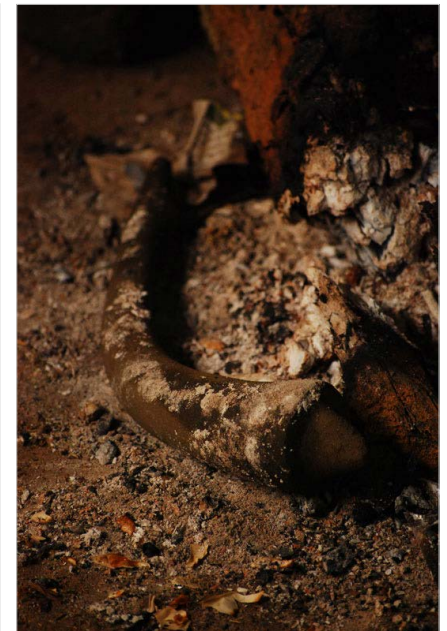
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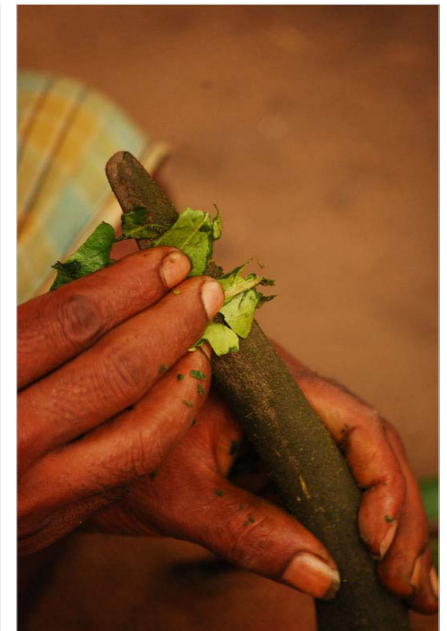
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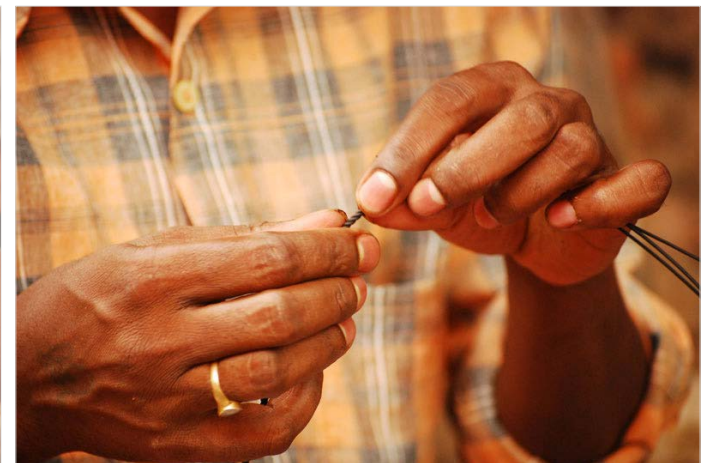
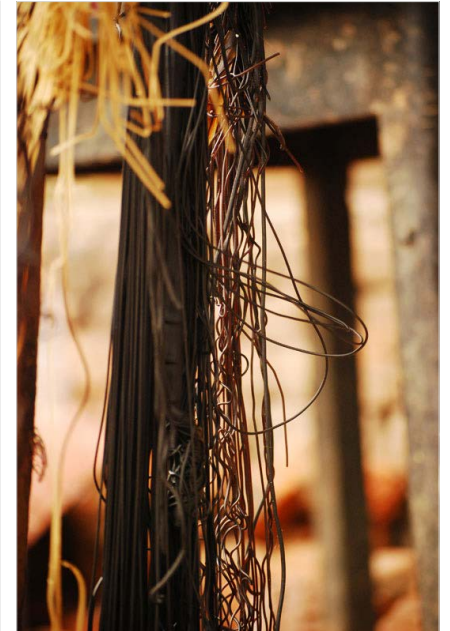
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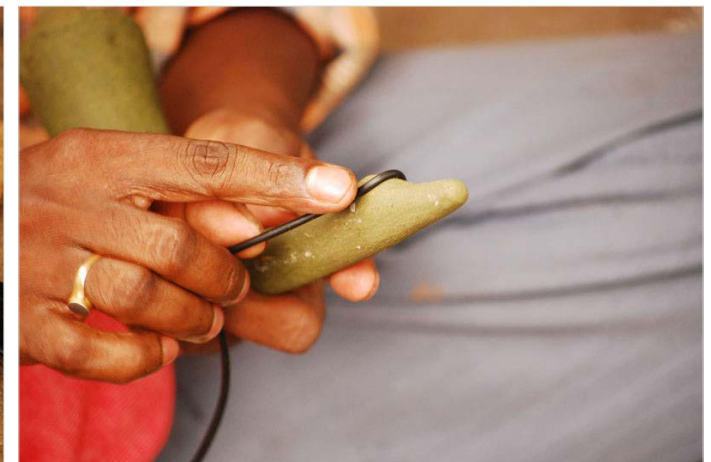
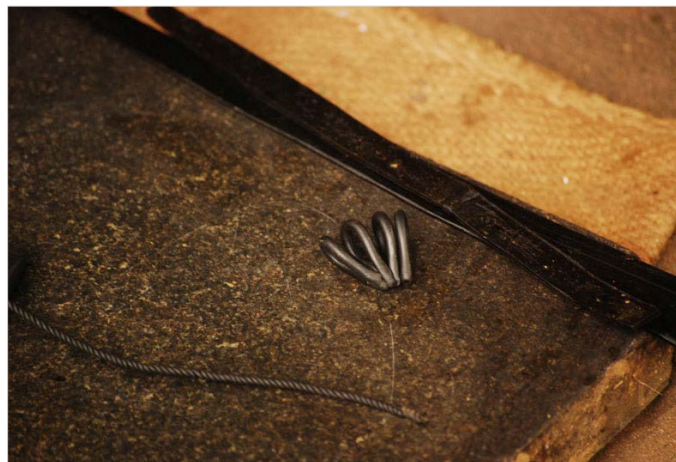
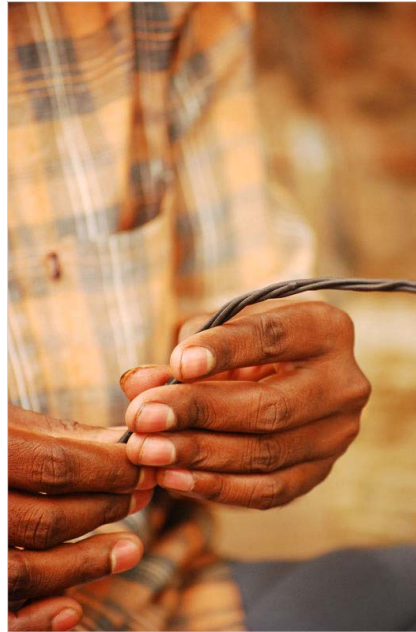
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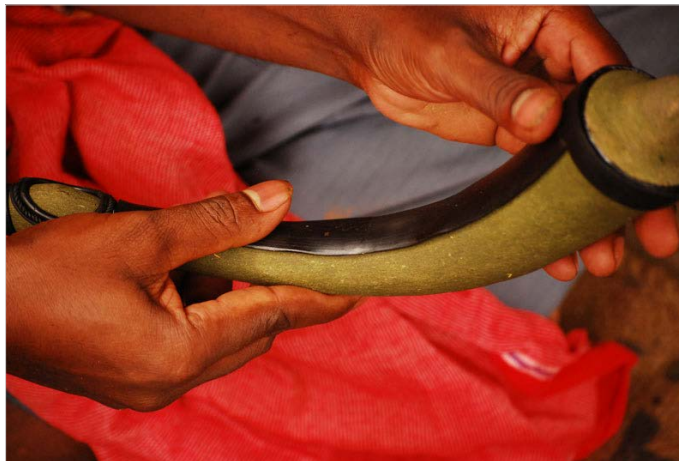
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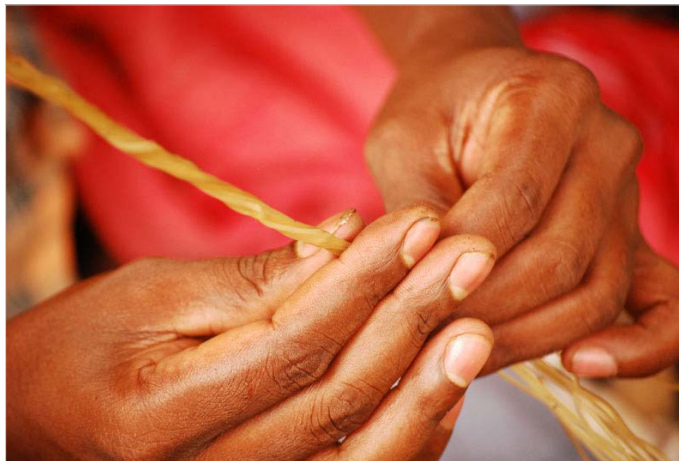
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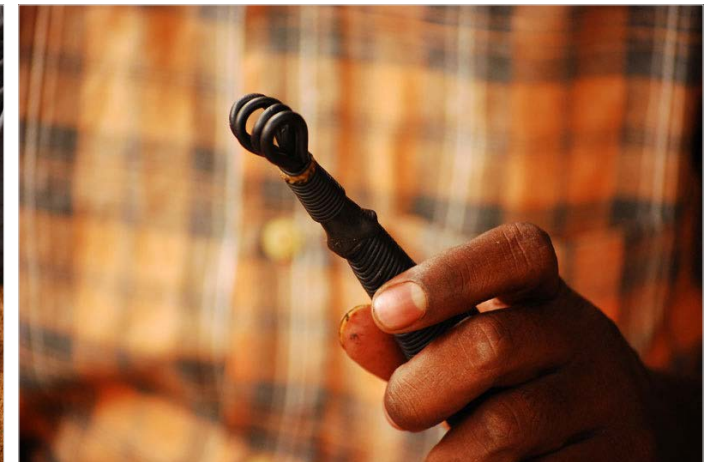
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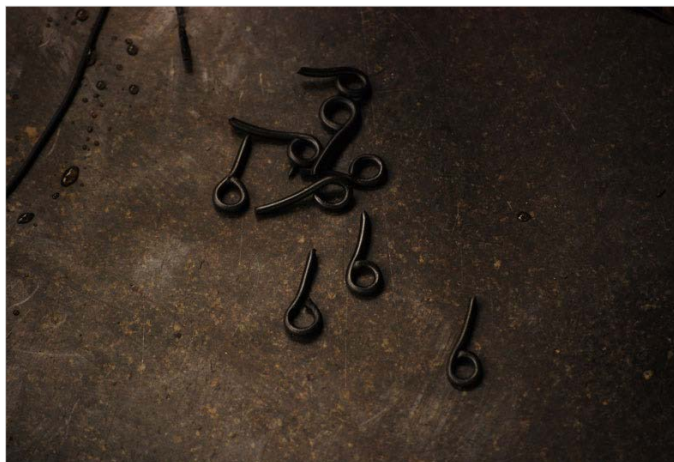
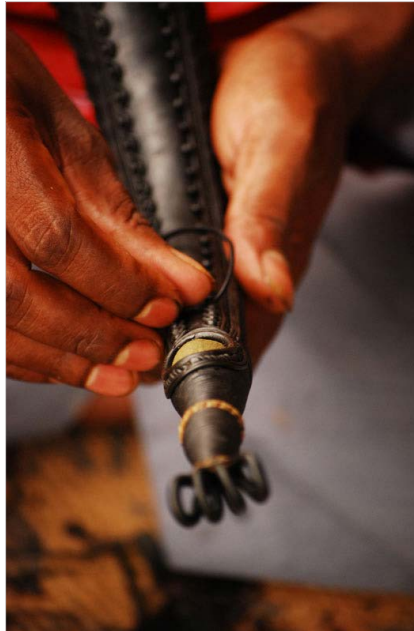
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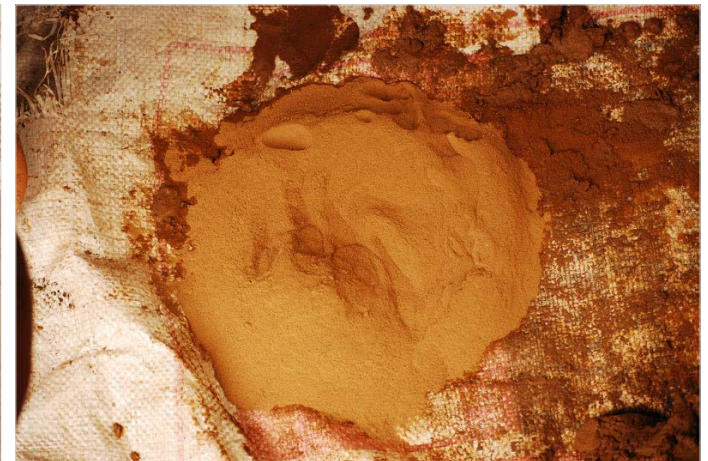
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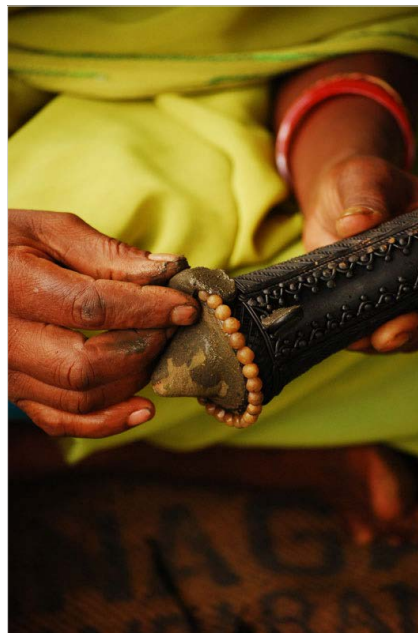
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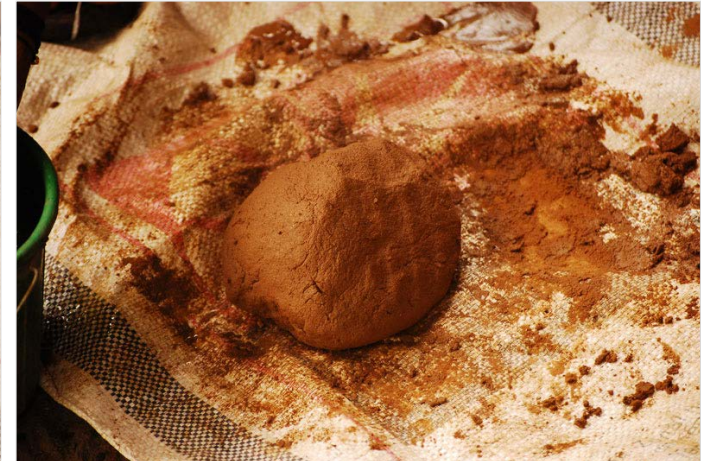
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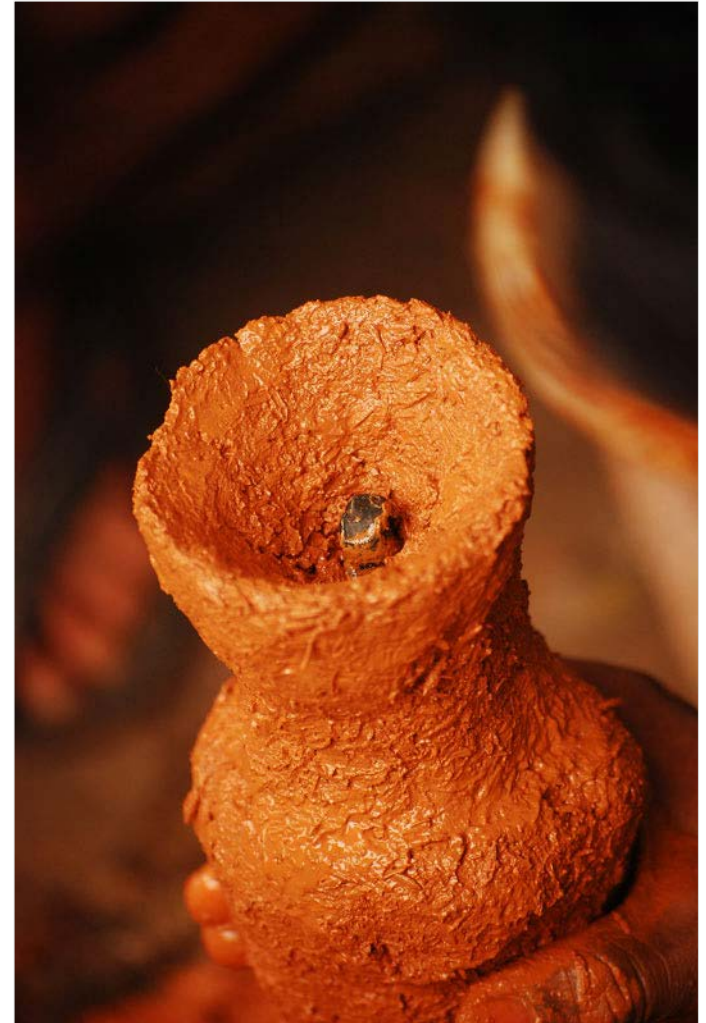
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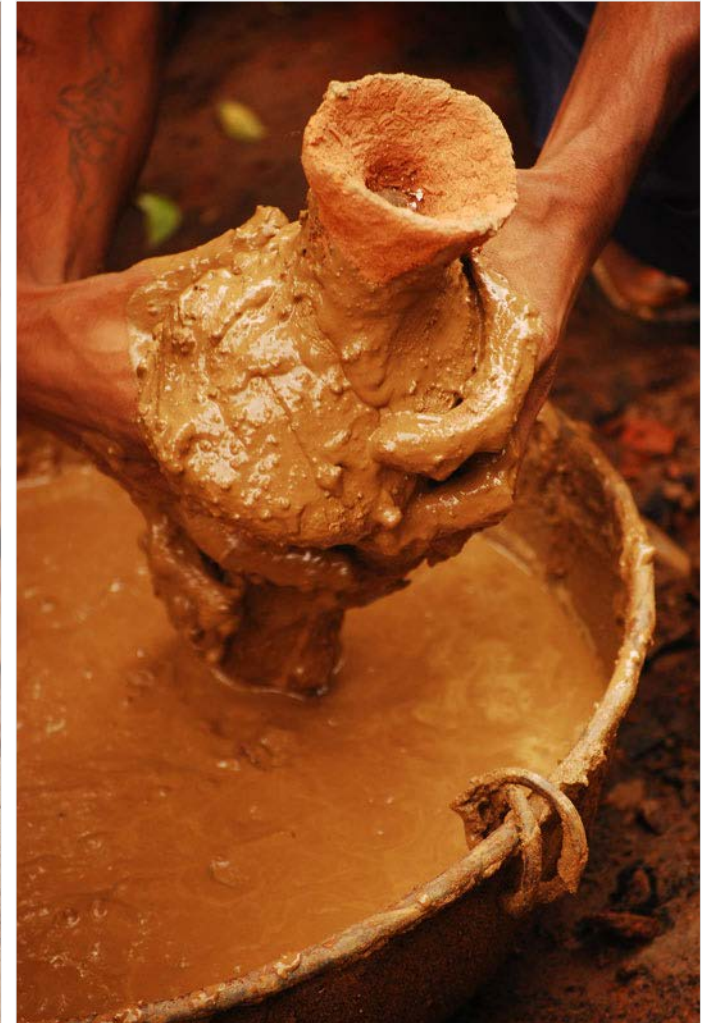
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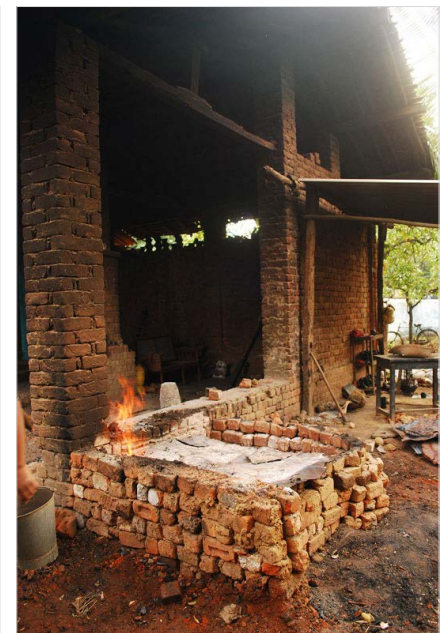
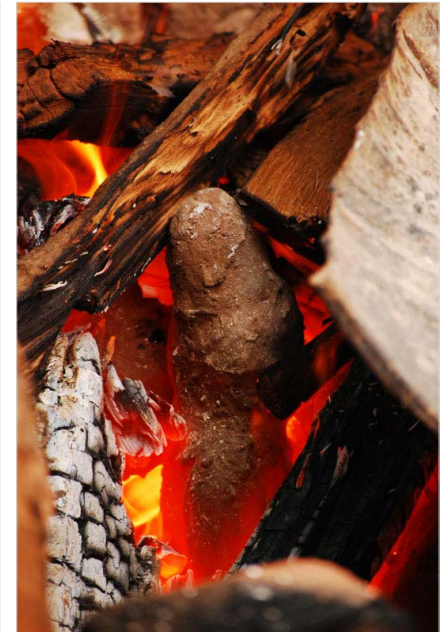
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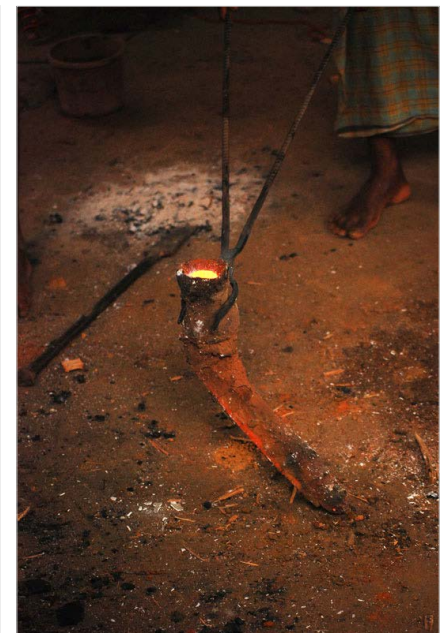
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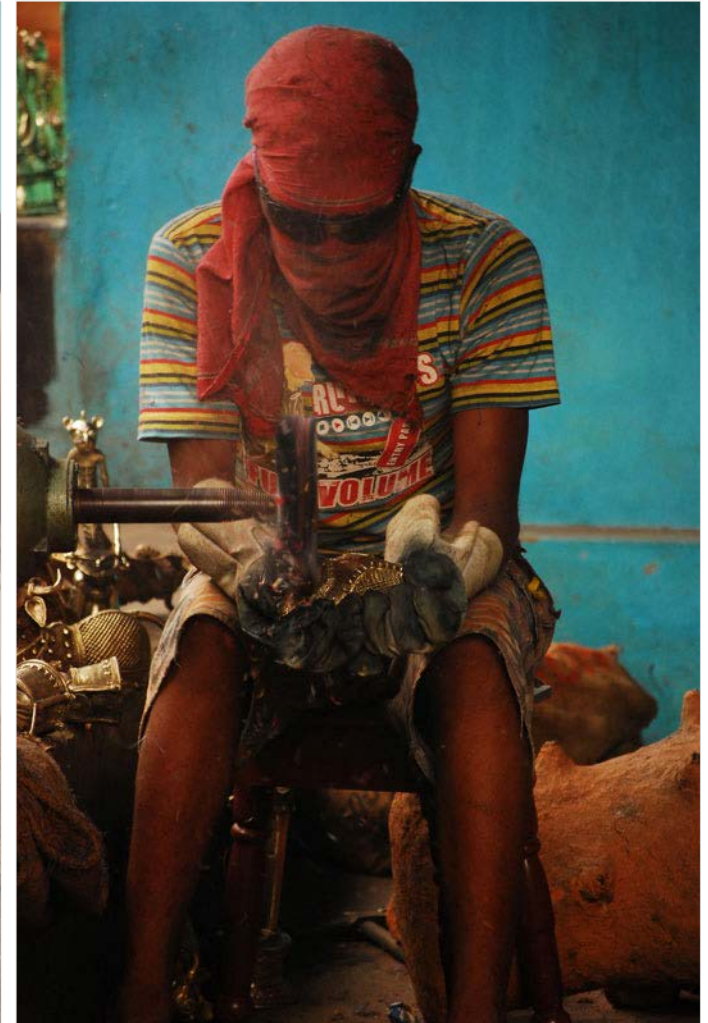
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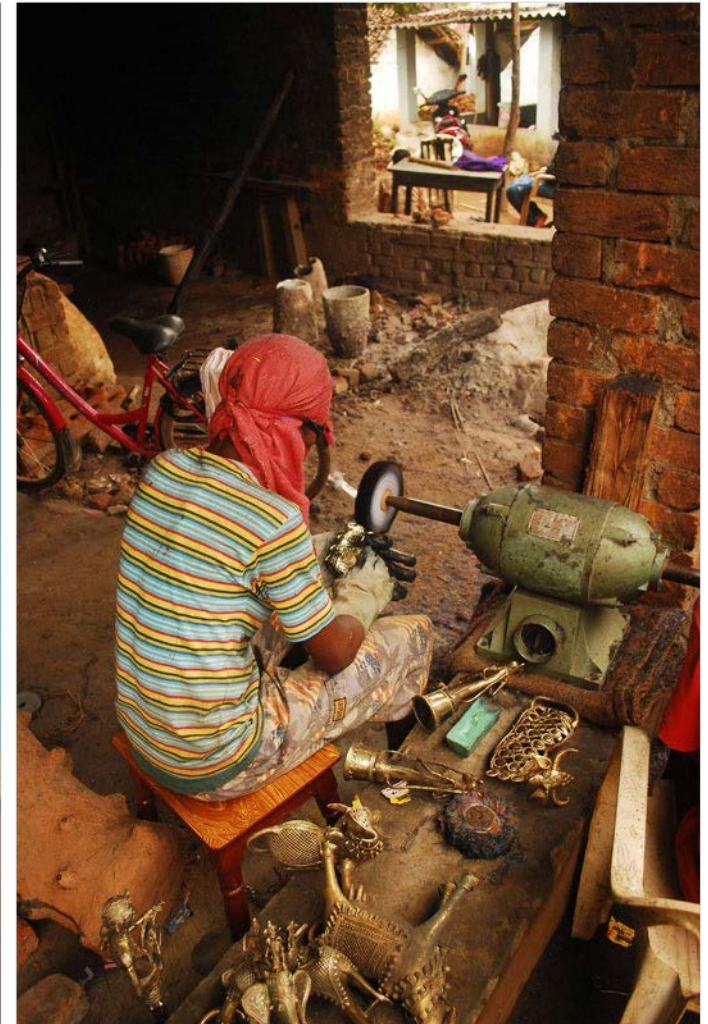
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Traditional Lost Wax Technique

Traditional Method:

When the craft was not in its present commercialized form, the method of pouring liquid metal was different. It's still followed at many places in the interiors of Bastar.

While making the model, a separate pot filled with a sufficient amount of brass scrap is made. One side of the pot is kept open, which is then joined to the channel of the model and is fixed permanently with clay. It is then kept in sun to make it dry.

It follows the same process of casting and firing. When the model becomes red hot, it is lifted from the wooden furnace and turned upside down, which makes the liquid metal flow inside the model.

It is then cooled, broken down and cleaned to give it a finishing look.

This traditional technique is supposed to give more intricate results than the commercial one.



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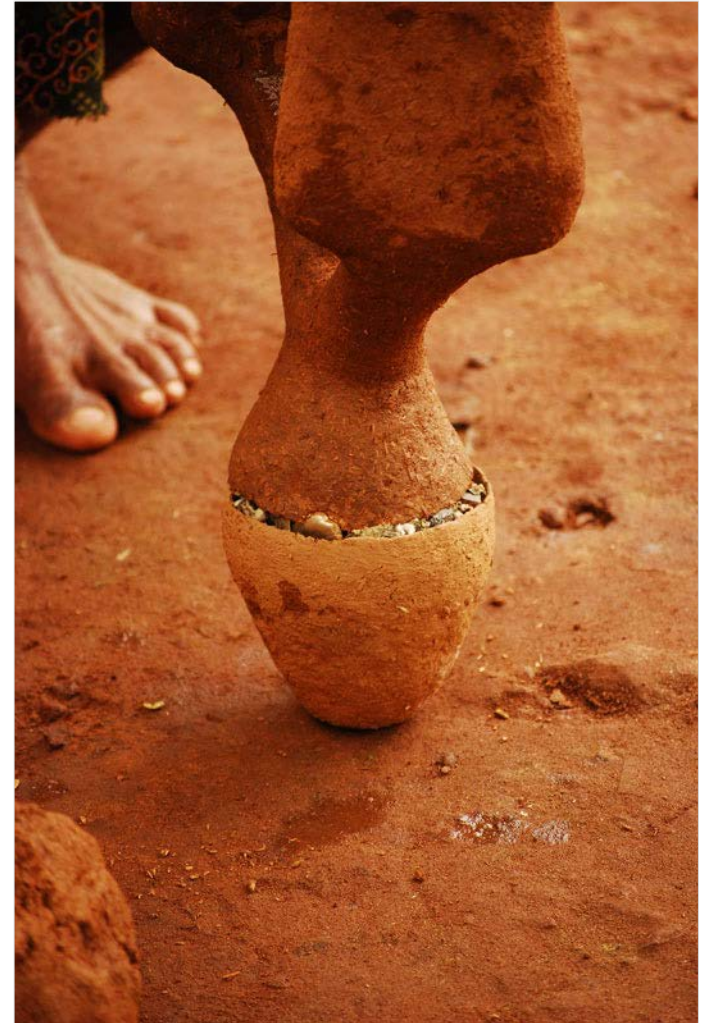
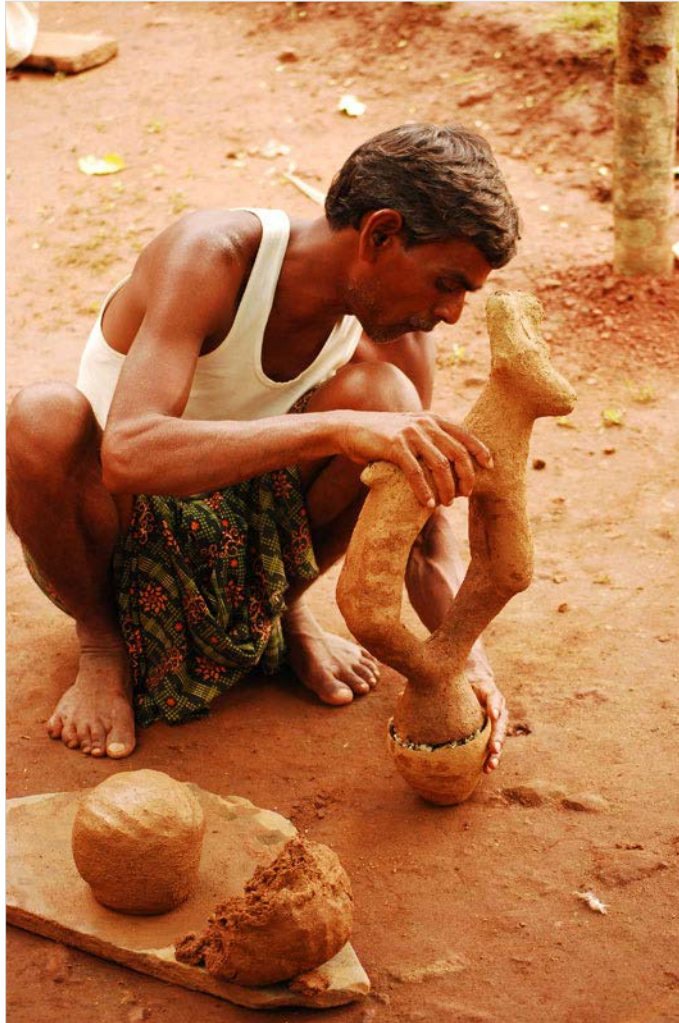
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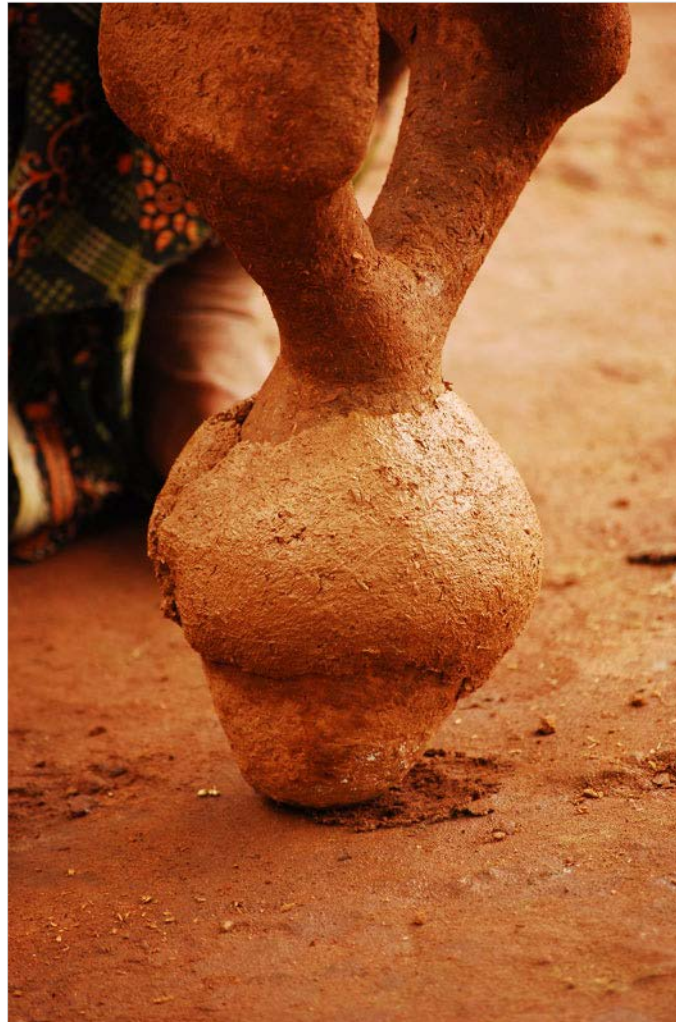
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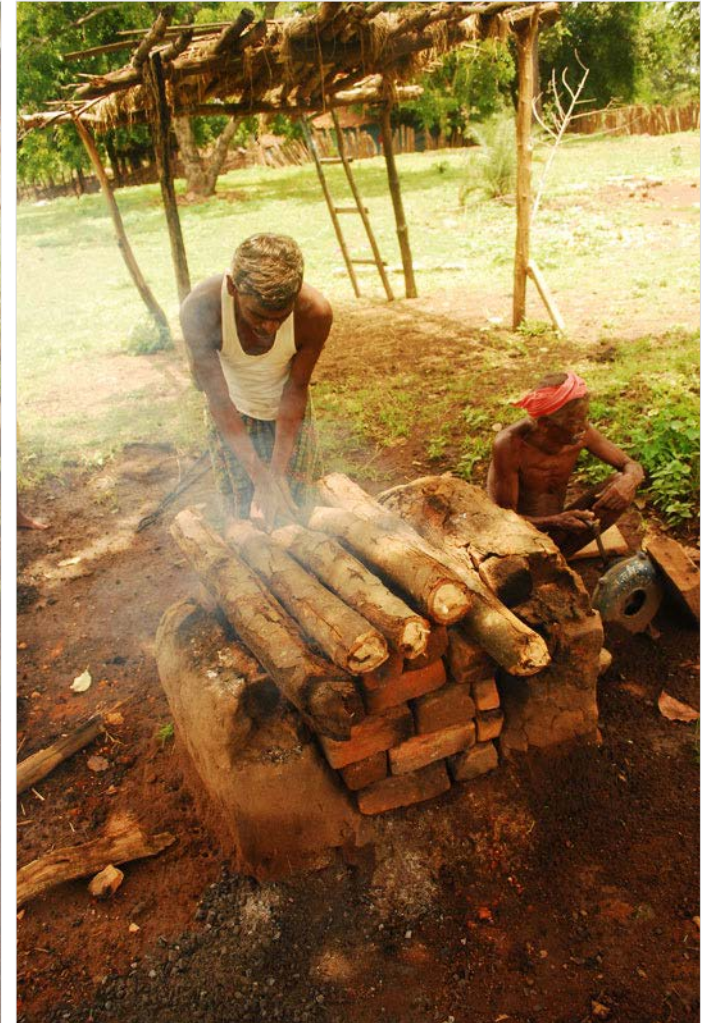
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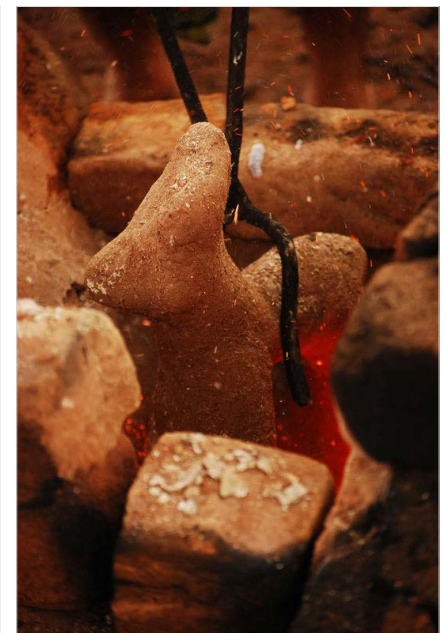
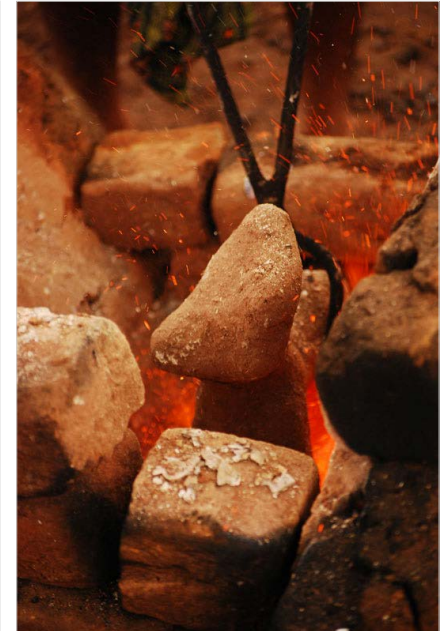
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The Bell Metal Craft of Bastar

by

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IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/process/traditional-lost-wax-technique>

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Products

Earlier bell metal crafts were used for ritualistic and daily use purposes only. Figurines of local deities in various sizes, lamps and utensils were made. Idol of Danteshwari Mata, most worshipped Goddess by the Gond tribal's of Bastar, was most the common product. Figurines of lovers "Jhitku Mitki", the local legend, are also amongst one of the favorites. Animal figures of horses, elephants and nandi are very popular amongst the craft lovers. Accessories like bell, oil lamps, incense stick holder and utility products like grain containers are the most saleable artifacts. Also intricately decorated necklace, anklet, bracelet and earrings can be seen in the craft market. Traditional ornaments are the most decorative products of Dhokra.



"Jhari ki Sira" for alcohol serving.



"Jhari ki Sira" for alcohol serving.

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"Bela" for serving madhia pech, a local drink.



"Bela" for serving madhia pech, a local drink.



"Kundhri" for making food.



"Kundhri" for making food.

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"Kasira" for filling water.



"Kasira" for filling water.



"Urki" for serving alcohol.



"Urki" for serving alcohol.

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Bigger utensil is called “Pehli” and smaller is called “Suli”. Its used for measuring food grain.



“Thari & Batki” which serves as plate and bowl for eating food.



“Madhia ghati” is wore on the waist while performing tribal dance.



“Arti ghati” is used as bell while worshipping God.

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"Anghati" is tied with the idol of Anga Dev, a local God.



Bell metal jewelry.



"Suta" to be worn on the neck.



"Khilwa" and "Bari" as earrings (big and small).

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"Chimney".



"Pandki Chimney".

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"Hasapai mala" is derived from the Bell metal artifacts. shape of a duck foot.



Local deities.



Bell metal toy.

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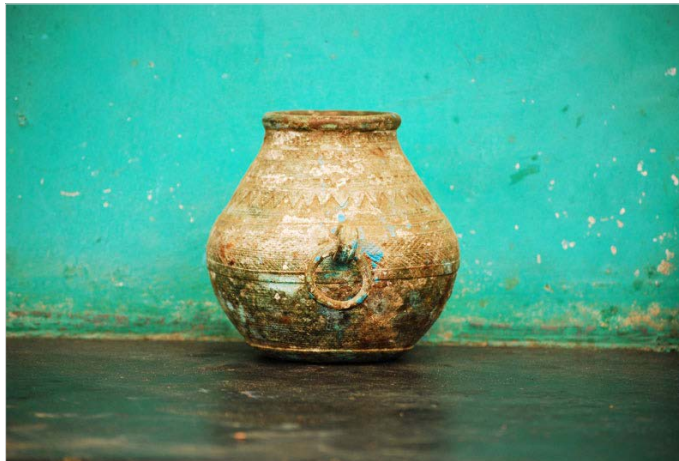
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Lamp.



Lamp.



Pot.



Artifact used in rituals.

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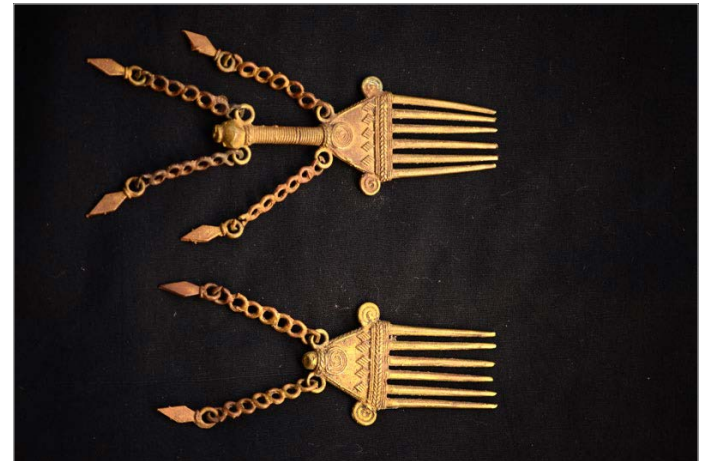
Jewelry worn on the arm.



Balance.



Comb.



Comb.

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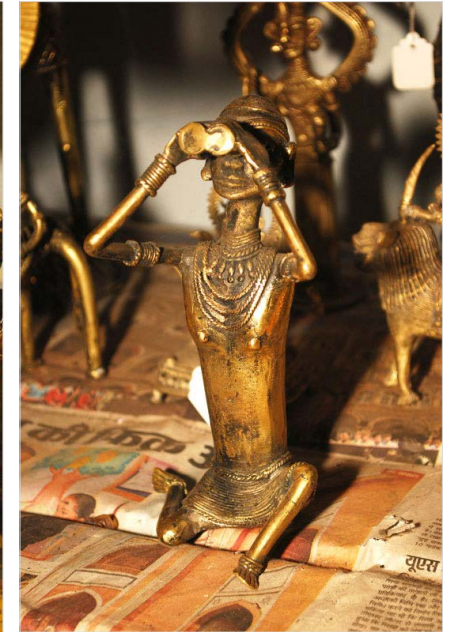
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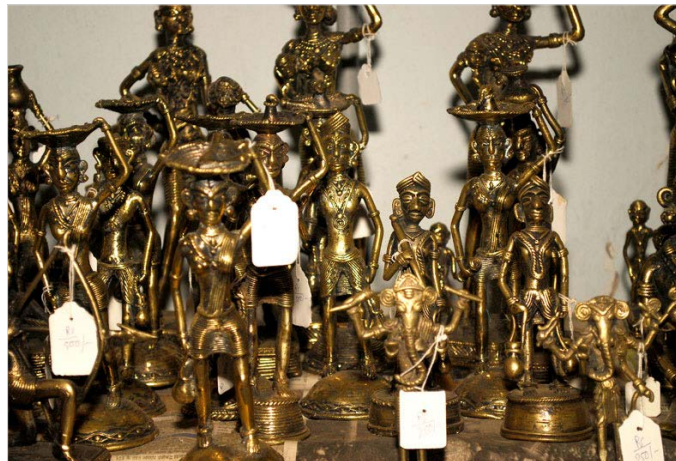
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Bell metal artifacts.



Bell metal artifacts.



Bell metal artifacts.



Bell metal artifacts.

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Bell metal artifacts.



Bell metal artifacts.



Bell metal artifacts.



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“Jhitku Mitki”.



Ganga Devi Mata – worshipped by people near water bodies.

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Ganga Devi Mata – worshipped by people near water bodies.



Banjarin Mata – worshipped by the nomadic tribes of the region.

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Basu Ga - priest for the King of Bastar.



Ghondin Dev – Worshipped by the “Gond” tribe.

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Local Goddess.



Ghutal Dokra – A local god holding his weapon.

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Local God.



Mhadin Mata – worshipped by the people of Mhadia community.

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Khodia da.



Jadibuni Mata.

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Pardesin Mata – Goddess believed to have come from another country.



Danteshwai Mata – Most worshipped Goddess of Bastar region.

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Jyoti Mata – surrounded by lamps.



Mogabudin Mata – believe to reside under Moga tree.

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Jaya Vivek



About



Making of a Sculpture

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Sculptures by Jaya Vivek

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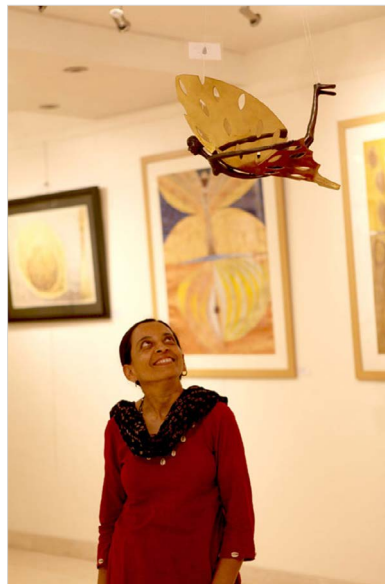
About

“Alacrity is life to me. I try to capture the very moment of life. Moving wheels, children at play or the rustle of leaves – all inspires me to capture the forms of kinetic energy in silent forms” are the words of the Sculptor Artist Jaya Vivek.

Famous for her unique styles in bell metal sculptures, she has a lot to say through her art. With her artwork, she tries to bring movement to the still sculptures. One finds in these sculptures a constant play between the lightness and gravity, of metal losing its property and becoming lines. Nostalgic in her approach and a constant play between dreams and real also connotes a tragedy, of lost memories and innocence. Jaya does not only look for temporary balance in forms but also in a way of time, of times present and times past.

Her interest in the bell metal craft started with her various tours to Bastar, while collecting tribal artifacts for Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal. Apart from well-known figurative work, now a gradual shift to non-figurative forms can be seen in her work.

“Oasis” is the latest example of her non-figurative work, where she tries to show movement of water in a still piece of work. She has been honored with National Award in 2006 for a beautiful depiction of water in “Oasis”. Her work has been awarded many a times and also showcased in various national and international events. She presently resides in Bhopal and has been actively involved in the art and craft sector of the country.



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Making of a Sculpture



Boy and a Wheel



Oasis

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Boy and a Wheel



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The Bell Metal Craft of Bastar

by

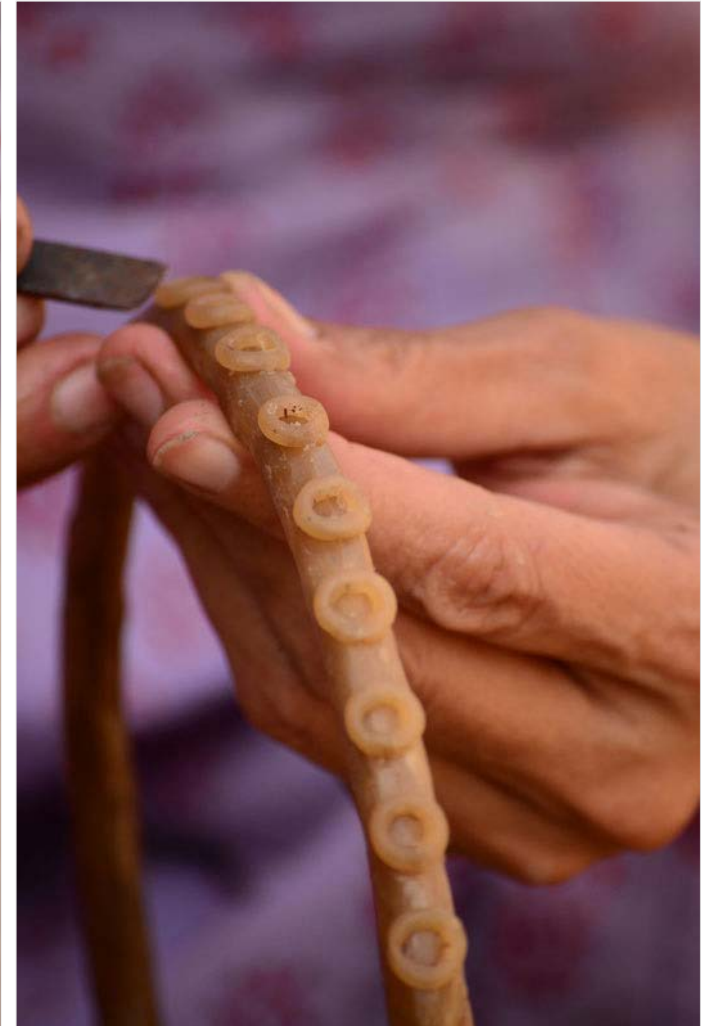
Palash Vaswani

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/jaya-vivek/making-sculpture/boy-and-wheel>

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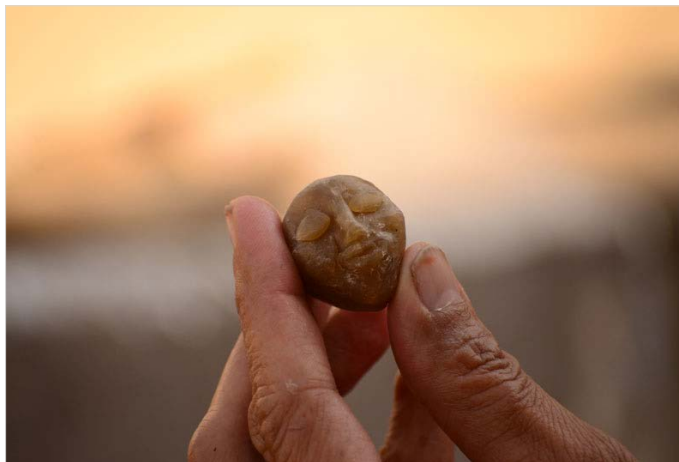
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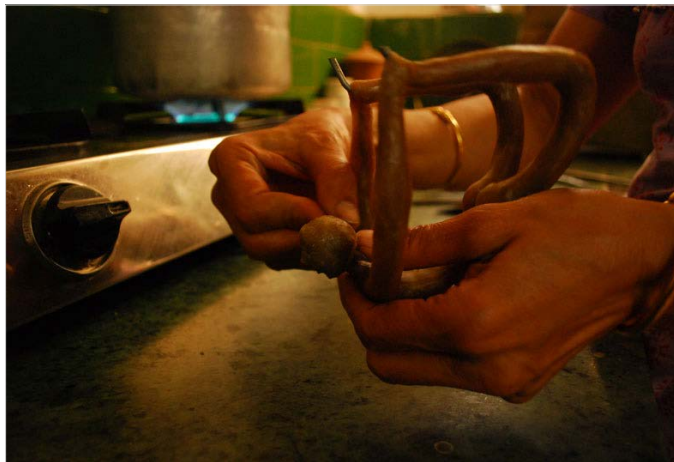
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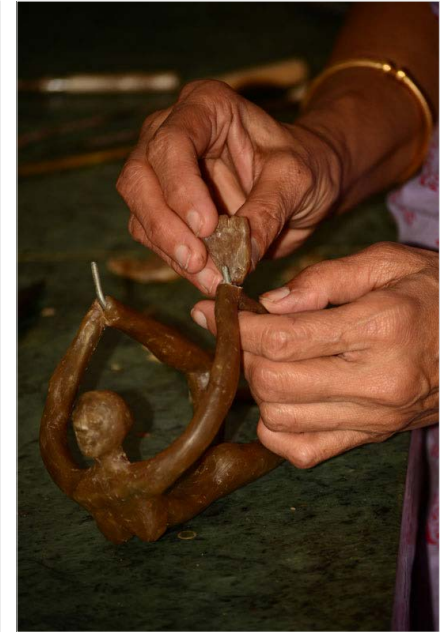
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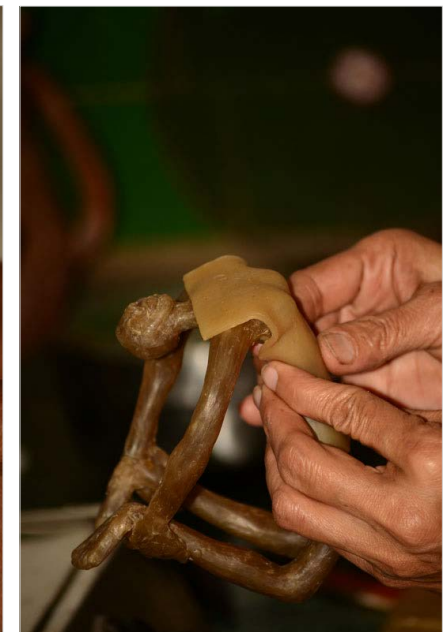
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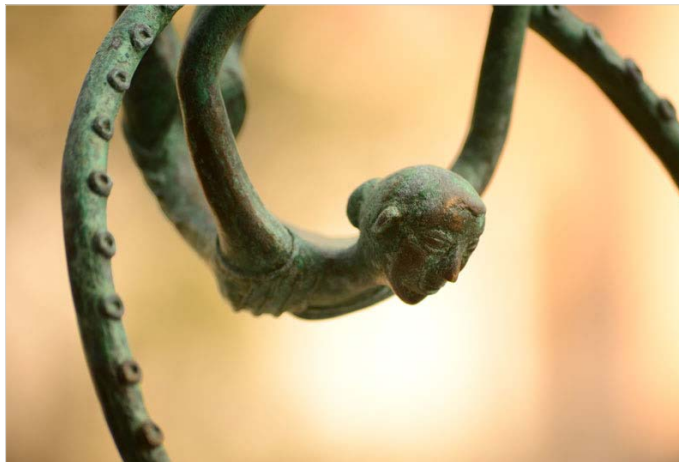
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Oasis



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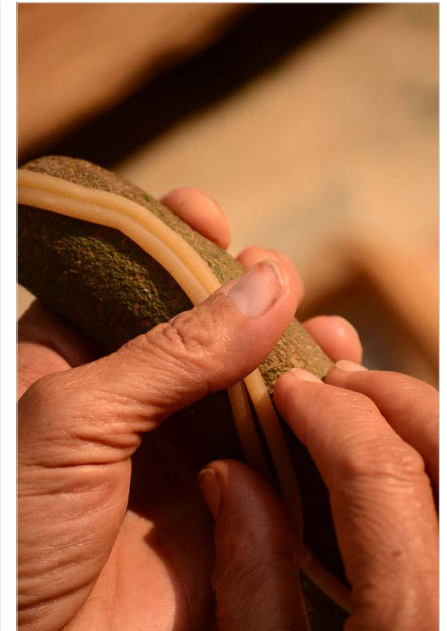
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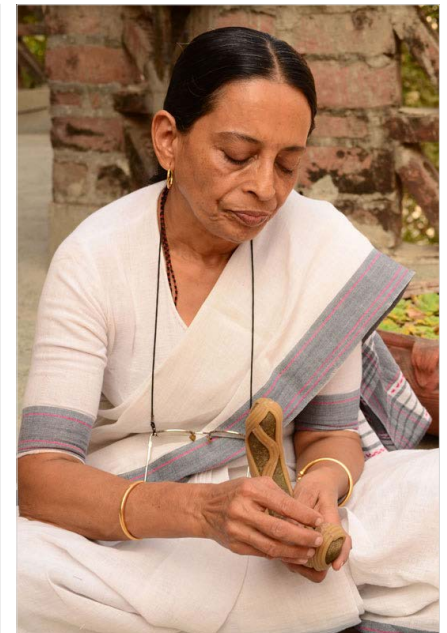
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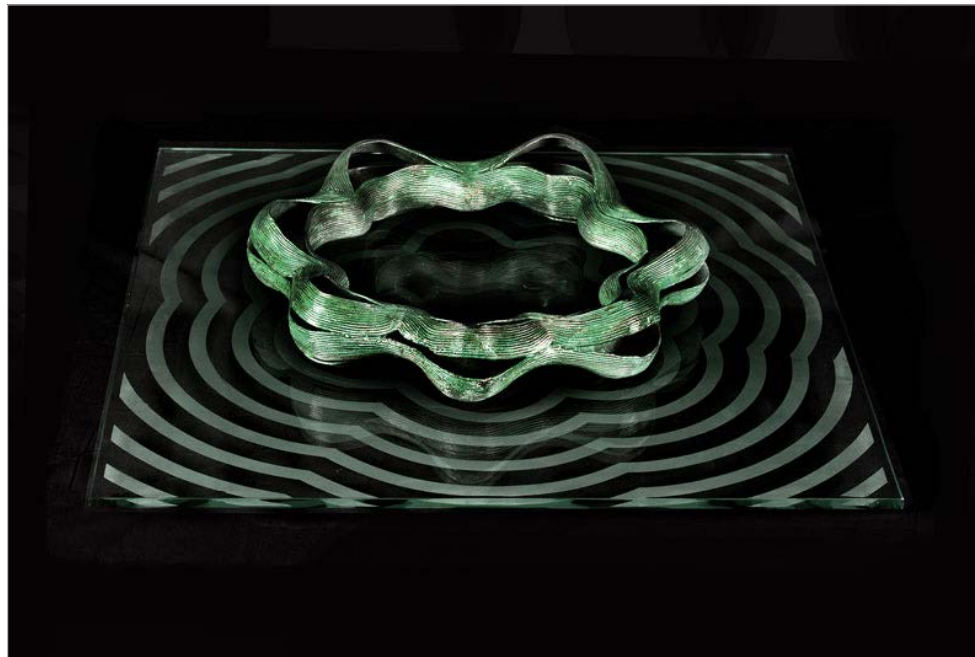
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<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/jaya-vivek/sculptures-jaya-vivek>**Sculptures by Jaya Vivek**

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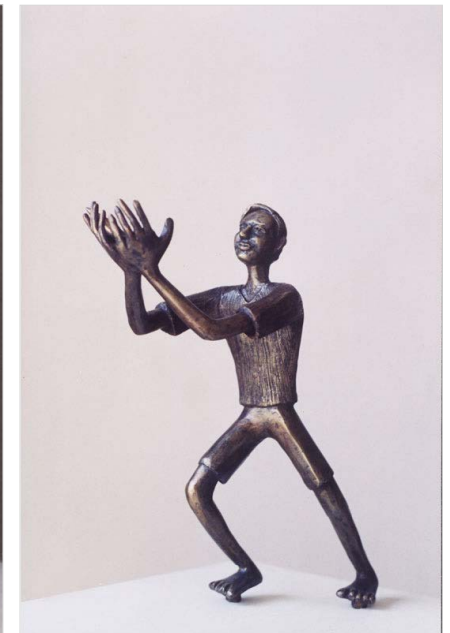
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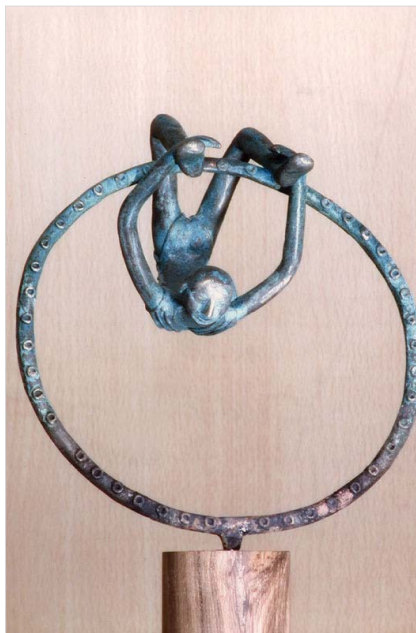
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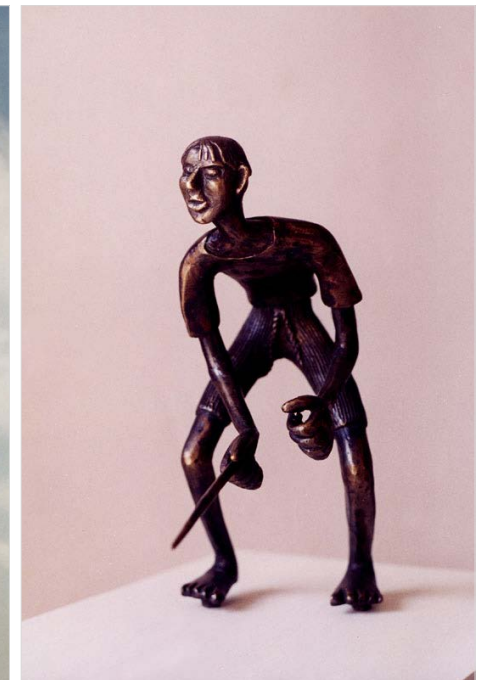
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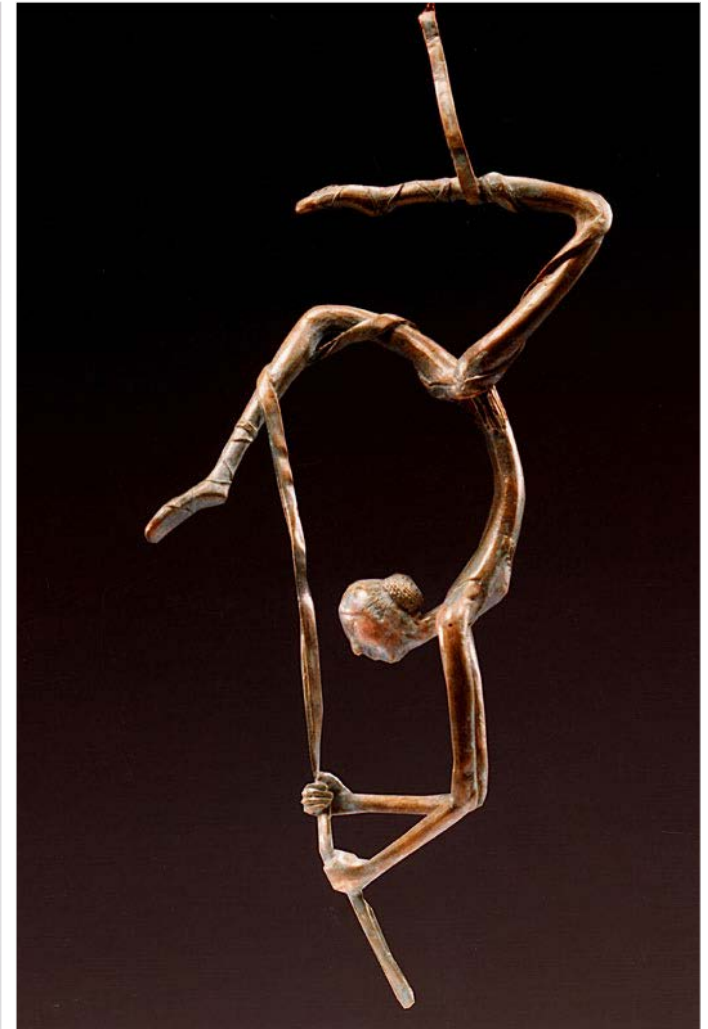
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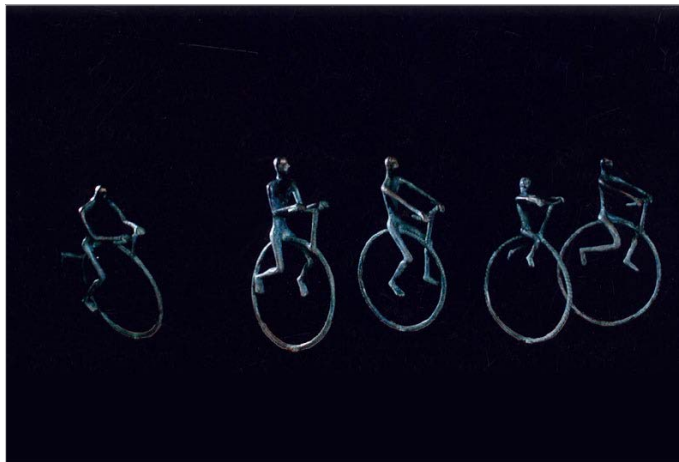
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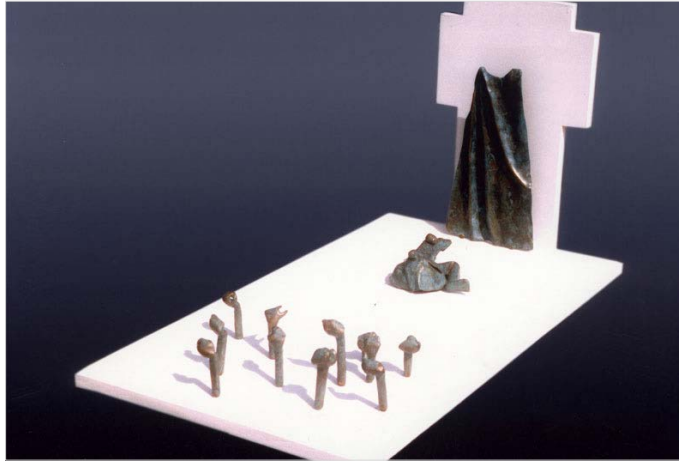
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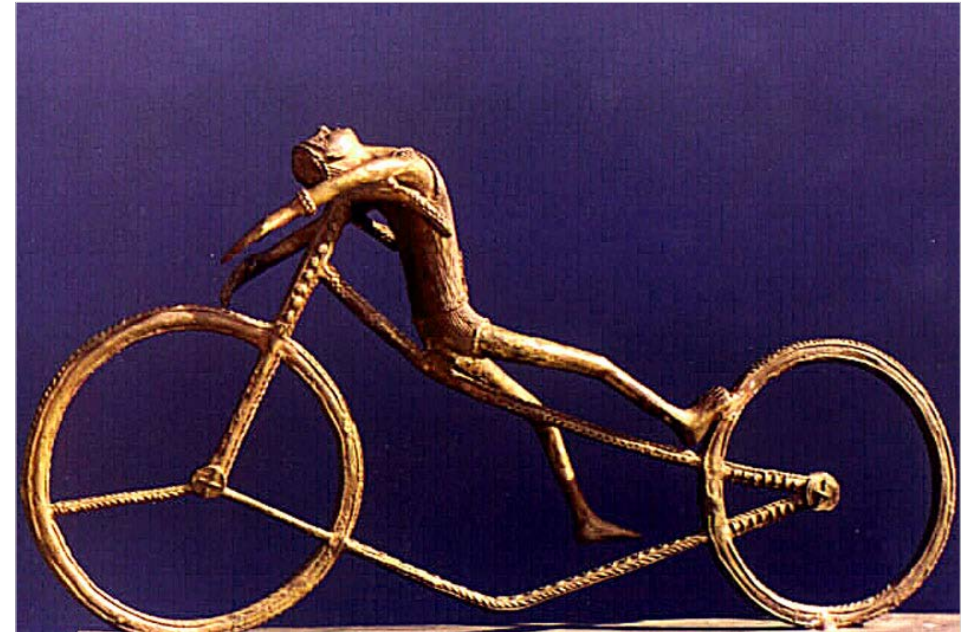
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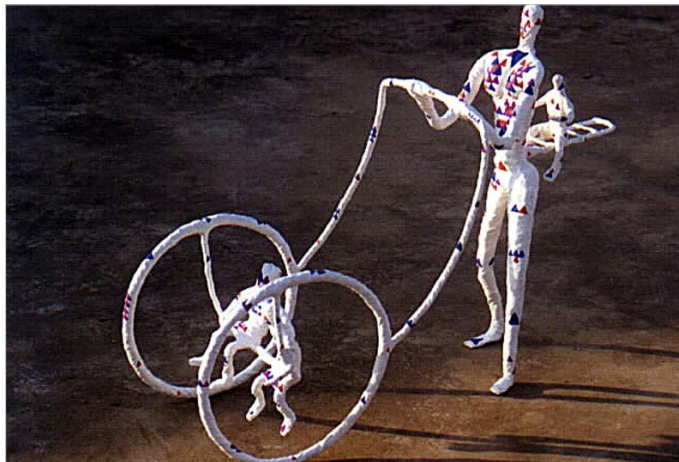
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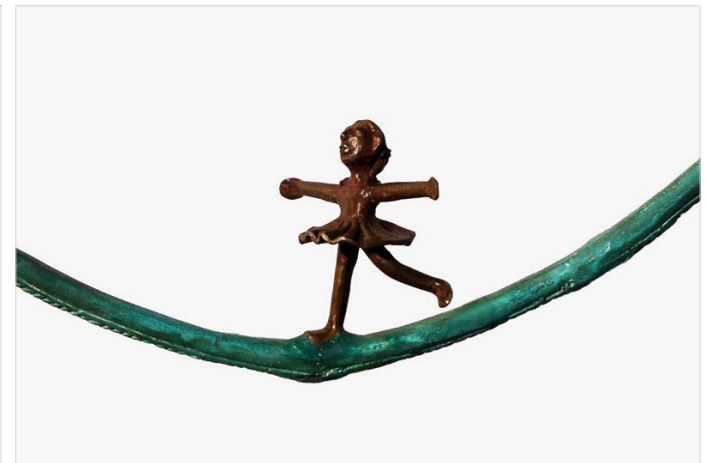
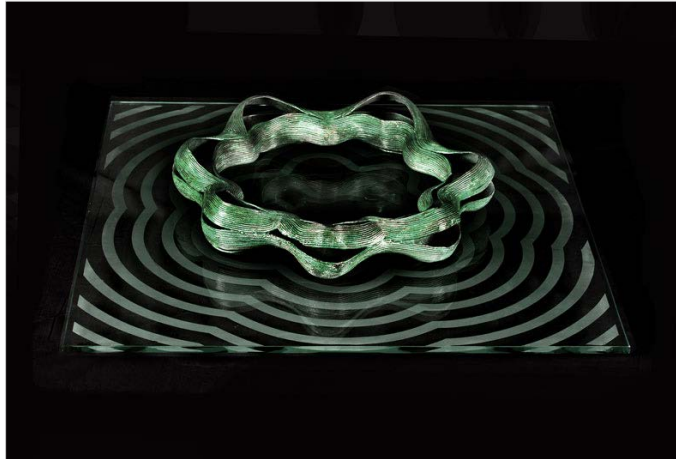
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Saathi Samajsevi Sanstha

Earlier bell metal crafts were used for ritualistic and daily use purposes only. Figurines of local deities in various sizes, lamps and utensils were made. Idol of Danteshwari Mata, most worshipped Goddess by the Gond tribal's of Bastar, was most the common product. Figurines of lovers "Jhitku Mitki", the local legend, are also amongst one of the favorites. Animal figures of horses, elephants and nandi are very popular amongst the craft lovers.

Accessories like bell, oil lamps, incense stick holder and utility products like grain containers are the most saleable artifacts. Also intricately decorated necklace, anklet, bracelet and earrings can be seen in the craft market. Traditional ornaments are the most decorative products of Dhokra.



Terracotta workshop.



Terracotta workshop.

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Terracotta workshop.



Terracotta workshop.



Bell metal showpieces at the store.



Bell metal showpieces at the store.

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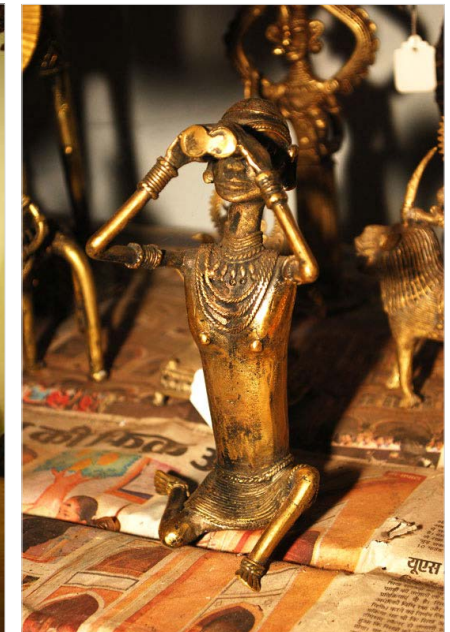
Bell metal and wrought iron showpieces at the store.



Bell metal and wrought iron showpieces at the store.



Bell metal and wrought iron showpieces at the store.



Bell metal showpieces at the store.

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Design Resource

Dhokra Shilp

The Bell Metal Craft of Bastar

by

Palash Vaswani

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/saathi-samajsevi-sanstha>



Bell metal showpiece of Nandi.



Penholders made of bell metal.



Tigers made of bell metal.



Local instrument 'Turhi'.

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Bell metal showpieces.



Local Gods 'Jhitku Mitki'.



A potter at Saathi Samajsevi Sanstha.



In conversations with Bhupesh Tiwari.

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Saathi Samajsevi Sanstha.



Saathi Samajsevi Sanstha.

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Tree decorated with terracotta masks and elephants.



Bhupesh Tiwari, Co-Founder, Saathi Samajsevi Sanstha.

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<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/video>

Video



Dhokra Shilp in Making



Traditional Process

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IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/contact-details>

Contact Details

This documentation was done by Palash Vaswani, at IDC, IIT Bombay.

You can get in touch with him at [palsonline\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:palsonline[at]gmail.com)

You can write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

Key Contact:

Chhattisgarh Handicraft Development Board

(A Government of Chhattisgarh Undertaking)

Chhattisgarh Haat Premises,

Pandri Cloth Market,

Raipur - 492004

Chhattisgarh, INDIA

Tel: +91 0771 4016500

Fax: +91 0771 4016500

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

Website: www.cghandicraft.com

www.shabari.cg.gov.in

Saathi Samajsevi Sanstha

Village Kumharpara,

Post Girola, Kondagaon – 494226,

Dist. Bastar, Chattisgar

Phone: +91 07786 242852

Jaya Vivek

G-1/8, Gulmohar Colony, E-8,

Shahpura, Bhopal (M.P.)

Phone: 0755 2568395

Email: [jaya_vivek\[at\]rediffmail.com](mailto:jaya_vivek[at]rediffmail.com)

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by

Palash Vaswani

IDC, IIT Bombay

Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator

Project e-kalpa

Industrial Design Centre

IIT Bombay

Powai

Mumbai 400076

India

Phone: 091-22-2159 6805/ 091-22-2576 7802

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

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/dhokra-shilp/contact-details>

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