

Design Resource

Thathera - Jaipur

The Craft of Making Metal Vessels

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Anisha Crasto and

Anushree Kumar

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/thathera-jaipur>



1. Introduction
2. People and Place
3. Tools and Raw Materials
4. Making Process
5. Products
6. Design
7. Contact Details

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Introduction

Jaipur has been the hub of crafts and crafts people since ages. Metal vessels have been an essential household product since ancient times. These elements were necessary for storing water, food, cooking etc. It is believed that the food product stored in copper or brass metal is preserved well as compared to aluminium and steel. Copper and brass have certain kind of mineral content which is good for health. Therefore in early time people preferred utensils made out of copper or brass. Thathera Walon ka Rasta is located in the walled city near Chaura Rasta. The lane is filled with the constant sound of hammering on metal. The place was an accommodation for around 300 Thathera which today has reduced to 50-70. But the craft is still flourishing with the demands of new market.



Artisan involved in Kalash making.



Products are made using both manual/hand-tools and mechanised tools.

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Bowl made of copper metal.



Artisan giving form and texture to a product with the help of hammer.



Home environment at artisan's place.



Boy playing the traditional musical instrument.

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People and Place

Thathera is a Hindu community, found mainly in North India. They are traditionally involved in the production of household utensils primarily made from metals like copper and brass. In north India, many artisans are practicing the craft of making utensils out of sheet metal in several states like Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar etc. In Rajasthan, Thathera craft can be found in Jaipur and Jodhpur. These two districts being the hub of the craft have a good number of people belonging to Thathera community.



Artisan involved in Kalash making.



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The sheet is beaten before bending it.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools:

Tools used in Thathera metal craft are as follows:

Hatodi (*Hammer*) - Different sizes of hammers are used to shape the metal.

Wooden Mallet - Big size wooden mallets are used for initial shaping of big products.

Bangad (*Metal ring*) - It is a solid metal ring of iron on which the metal sheet is placed and beaten with the hammer along with simultaneously rotating it.

Thiya (*solid metal stand*) - Different shape and size of solid iron blocks are used for shaping the utensils. These act as a support while hammering the sheet.

Cheni (*Chisel*) - Different size and shapes of chisels are used to cut and shape the product.

Metal Scissors - Small and big metal scissors are required to cut the sheet.

Files - Round, half round, flat and triangular files are used to finish the surface.

Prakaar (*Compass*) - Used for marking.

Aari (*Saw*) - For cutting the product or the metal artisans used saw.

Grinding machine - Used to clean and finish the surface of the product.

Buffing machine - Used in finishing process to enhance the smoothness of the final product and also to obtain the glossy finish.

Welding Machine - Helps in attaching two pieces of metal.

Pakad (*Iron forceps*) - Used to handle hot metal while welding.

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Raw Materials:

The main raw materials used in Thathera metal craft are outlined below:

Pattar (*Metal Sheet*) - Metals like copper, brass, iron etc. are used to make utensils of different shapes and sizes.

Suhaga - A powder used for welding.

Metal rod - Thin brass rods are used to join two metals while welding.

Gas - LPG gas is used for welding.

Lac - It is sometime used to fill the hollow metal and then carving is done on the metal.



Brass metal sheet.

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Pakad (Iron forceps) and thin iron rods.



Welding machine/burner used to attach two metal pieces.



Hatodi-Small hammers used for hammering.



Bigger hammers used to make big products.

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Coal furnace used to produce heat.



Metal Scissors used to cut the thick metal sheet.



Cutting machine is used to remove the excess metal after welding process.



Prakaar (Compass) - Used for marking on the metal sheet.

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Cheni (Chisel) - Different shapes of chisels.



Solid iron blocks and metal rings.



Hacksaw blade.

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Making Process

The process of making utensils using Thathera technique is easy yet time consuming. The process includes following steps:

1. Cutting of sheet
2. Shaping the product
3. Joining of piece
4. Finishing

1. Cutting of sheet:

The sheet (brass, copper or iron), brought from the market is first straightened. After this with the help of scale, marker and compass markings are done on the metal sheet for the product to be made. In the next stage the sheet is cut either by chisel (if thick) or by metal scissor (if thin). The shape can be square or circular depending on the final product to be made. The thickness of the metal depends on the final product.

2. Shaping the product:

Once the sheet is cut it is placed on Bangad and hammering is done with wooden mallet or hammers. Traditionally Thiya is also used to shape the product or to make the neck of the vessels. While shaping the metal the sheet is rotate continuously for even treatment of the shape or the metal body. Vessels like pots or kalash are made in two or more parts and then joined together by welding.

3. Joining of piece:

The products are made in parts and finally joined either by heating or by gas welding. Sometimes artisans also join two pieces with traditional interlocking of the metals. These joints were converted into a design element by further heating and beating them. This process was carried by heating the metal pieces in Bhatti at high temperature. This made the metal more flexible and thus merged/blended into each other. Today artisans use gas welding as it is less time consuming and easy. For this process both the pieces are heated till they becomes red hot. On the surface suhaga is applied and a thin brass rod is melted which joins the two pieces. The gaps are filled by melting the brass rod on the product, thus helping in joining the two pieces.

4. Finishing:

Once the product is joined the excess metal accumulated on the surface due to welding is removed by grinding machine or files. Then these items go through acid wash to clean the surface. The product is then buffed using buffs of different grades/numbers.

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Sheet is marked as per the required shape/form.



Scale is used to mark lines on the metal sheet accurately.



The metal sheet is being cut with the help of metal scissor.



The sheet is beaten before bending it.

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Constant hammering is done to obtain the shape of the bowl.



Concurrent use of legs and hands is done while hammering the metal product-in-process.



Artisan creating texture on the metal surface.

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The parts of traditional Kalash are ready for welding process for joining purpose.



Article or different parts are being joined to make a whole product.



Two parts are combined by welding.

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The excess metal is removed after welding.



The product is finally polished.

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Products

Since ancient time artisans are making vessels to store water, food etc. The main metal products are lotas, large serving plates, kalash, paraat, paani ka ghada, mandir ka kalash etc. Today the a craftsmen also make products like, T-Light holder, vases, lights, bowls, platters, cutlery, jewellery etc.



Bakhaya is the traditional musical instrument.



Sieve-filter made with brass metal in floral motifs.



Part of a Kalash in floral motif.

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Traditional Kalash mainly used as temple tops.

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Design

Over a period of time the craftsmen have designed variously shaped hammers that give different impression on the metal vessel. The artisans also believe that these dents give strength to the vessel and prevent it from further damage. These hammer strokes also highlight the form and texture of the product. The most commonly used texture is called Matthaar. Apart from this artisans also do metal engraving, Chitai etc. to enhance the product.



Chitai done on a metal sheet.



A bowl with Matthaar done on it.



Sieve- filter made with brass metal in floral motifs.

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