

"Post COVID Challenges posing to Bidriware Artisans (GI Tag) in Bidar District of Karnataka: Implications for Geographical Indication and Cultural Preservation"

Dr. Someshwari Mudda¹

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,
Karnatak Arts, Science and Commerce College, Bidar, Karnataka.
Email: someshwari2408@gmail.com

Dr. Shashidhar Patil²

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,
Karnatak Arts, Science and Commerce College, Bidar, Karnataka,
Email: patilshashidhar99@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The art forms are a reflection of our society and thus the artisans play an essential role in the equation of Indian society and culture. The current state of artisans India is a matter of serious concern. Government has been framing policies (Geographical Indication, Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat etc.,) for taking up traditional arts and craft for sustainable livelihood, but this sector is severely ignored. The labour market crisis appears to be one of several concerns that have captured the attention of policymakers and academics during the tough times. Bidriware is an ancient metal craft of Bidar in Karnataka state constructed from copper and zinc alloy that is distinguished by its distinctive black patina. Artisans of bidriware are part of those affected community whose life and livelihood conditions have raised serious doubts over its revival after covid-19 pandemic with markets shut, shrinking demands and tourists flow, disruptions in transportation. In this context, the proposed research aims to identify the Issues and Challenges faced by the Bidriware artisans after COVID-19. The proposed research adopted mix of descriptive and empirical method, based on the primary data with structured questionnaire and secondary data as well. The collected data have been analyzed and the conclusions drawn.

Key words: Bidri Craft, Bidriware, artisans, Bidriware, Geographical Indication, Cultural Preservation, Bidar

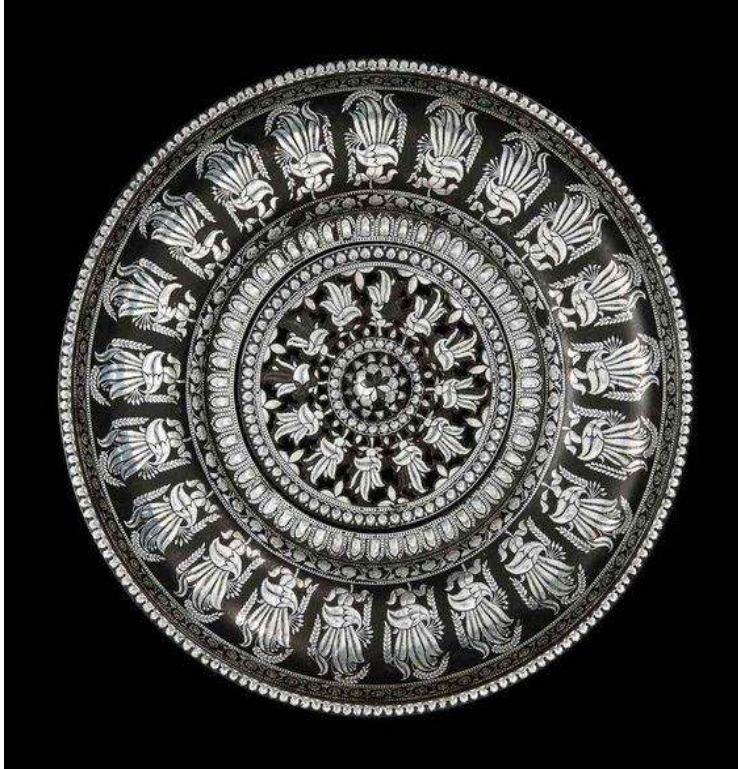
"Post COVID Challenges posing to Bidriware Artisans (GI Tag) in Bidar District of Karnataka: Implications for Geographical Indication and Cultural Preservation"

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian state of Karnataka has the city of Bidar in its northeastern region. It serves as the district headquarters for Bidar, which is bordered by Telangana and Maharashtra. Situated almost 700 kilometres away from Bengaluru (state capital) it has long been disregarded by the state administration. Nonetheless, the city is well-represented on the archaeological map of India because of its rich history and culture. The Bidar fort is beautifully located on the Deccan plateau is almost 500 years old and still intact. Museums and Heritage and Tombs are situated in and around the city of Bidar. According to the book "Bidar Heritage" bidar has got its name as "The City of Whispering Monuments". The historical landmarks in and around Bidar have recently emerged as the main draw for movie productions.

Bidriware or Bidricraft is an attractive metal handicraft work in Bidar district of Karnataka, where the perfect integration of the region's rich culture, beautiful craftsmanship, and unique geographical characteristics resulted in a spectacular product. The Bahamani Sultans introduced this skill to Bidar during his period of rule from 14th to 15th centuries. Bidriware is well known for its distinctive look, which is the result of a painstaking multi-stage process. An antique metal craft known as bidri craft is created from a zinc and copper alloy and is distinguished by black patina. The eye is drawn to the striking artwork of pure silver inlay on a charcoal surface. In the last phases of the production

process the soil that is used to adorn the art pieces is what makes Bidri craft so distinctive. Artists from the interior regions of the Bidar Fort gather this soil, which hasn't seen rain or sunlight from generations.



Source: Discover India Program 2016-17 (<https://dip.flame.edu.in/pdfs/reports/2016-17/Bidriware.pdf>)

The artisans adhere to both contemporary and classic designs. The products that use Bidri the most frequently include wall plates, lamp shades, and hookahs. Other products include ugaldan, boxes, spherical containers with dome-shaped tops, flower vases, shehnai made with Mughal and star themes, and surai-type vases in various shapes and motifs. Alongside birds like peacocks and swans, images of animals like elephants, horses, and camels are produced.

Though it is beautiful craft's but future is uncertain. The majority of the artisans have been out of work since the COVID-19 lockdown. The handicrafts industry has been damaged by a falling economy, unemployment, reduced expenditure, a pandemic, and a consequent lockdown. Artists and weavers are the poor's third largest occupational group. The majority of their products are "non-essential" which could be the reason why their terrible situation is receiving little attention, despite calls for "vocal for local" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat." Production has been completely stopped since the lockdown. A enormous volume of unsold inventory has gathered and they do not have any funds to reinvest.



Source: <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/155303887725304485/>

Despite having a highly sought-after geographical indication tag, there are a certain set of challenges faced by artisans and industry as well. The Geographical Indications Registry has certified Bidriware as a Geographical Indication due to its unbreakable connection to the historical town of Bidar. It is an effort to protect GI items by issuing a registration certificate under the law. The Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection Act) was passed by the Indian Parliament.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

A geographical indicator (GI) is a label used to identify products that have their origins in a particular area and are known for features or quality that are exclusive to that area. For a product to function as a GI, it must bear a sign designating its exclusive source. The product ought to have the reputation and characteristics of its original location. GI are typically registered on goods made over many generations by marginalized, rural, and indigenous populations that have gained enormous recognition both nationally and internationally for some of their distinctive characteristics. Only registered users are granted the ability to use the product name under GI tag, which also prohibits anybody else from using the name if it does not adhere to the guidelines.

Geographical Indications – Law in India

The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act was passed by the Indian government in 1999. This act came into effect in September 2003. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) have passed numerous regulations and agreements to protect Geographical Indications. 361 Geographical Indication Products have been registered in India as of March 2020; 15 are imported from nine different nations: Italy, France, the UK, the USA, Ireland, Mexico, Thailand, Peru, and Portugal.

Geographical Indications – Product Categories.

Examples of products are the ones that use GI tags.

Handicrafts: Madhubani paintings and Mysore Silk, Bidri works are the examples

Food items: Tirupati Laddu and Rasgulla are the examples.

Wine & Drinks: French Cognac, Champagne, UK Scotch Whisky, and Mexican Tequila are a few examples.

Industrial Goods and Products of Agriculture: Example -Basmati Rice

In India, Karnataka has the highest registered GI products i.e. 42 GI products, Bidri Work from Bidar District of Karnataka (State in India) is one among them.



Source: <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/gi-tagged-products-of-karnataka--706220785313015670/>

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

It is essential to protect and preserve cultural legacy in order to guarantee its survival for future generations. It means preserving important and priceless cultural artifacts, traditions, languages, and pursuits. Preservation of cultural traditions, rituals, and languages allows communities to maintain ties to their heritage, strengthening their sense of self and strengthening the social fabric. As a result, this bond promotes mental wellness and a stronger sense of community. Preserving culture and handicraft traditions is vital for several reasons such as, Preserving Identity and Heritage, Cultural Diversity, Economic and Tourism Benefits, Environmental Sustainability, Empowerment and Social Cohesion, fostering Creativity and Innovation. In summary, safeguarding cultural and handicraft traditions sustains identity, promotes diversity, empowers communities, and contributes to economic and environmental resilience.

In this context the proposed research aims to identify the Challenges and Issues of Bidriware artisans after pandemic and impact of COVID-19 on the Social and Economic conditions of Bidriware artisans in Bidar District of Karnataka. The study will also investigate the efforts of the government, various non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in the preservation and promotion of Bidriware.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature is required for the purpose of determining the smooth contours for finding the right direction for carrying out the research. The literature review gives a picture of overall problems and challenges faced by the artisans in India from different researchers; **The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) (2017-22)** has estimated that roughly 7.3 million people depend on handicraft and related activities for livelihood. **Dr Manjusmita Dash, Prof BidhuBhusan Mishra May (2022)** the research paper investigates many issues concerning craftspeople who produce handicrafts in India. **Ramaiah Intellectual Property Rights Cell (2019)** this exploratory study is explored detailed information about the aspects which are requisite for keeping Bidriware alive as a craft form. **Subhamoy Banik March (2018)** this paper provides broad summary of financial aspect of rural artisans in India. **Amisha Shah and Rajiv Patel June (2017)** This study examines into how unorganized production, a lack of knowledge, a lack of capital, a lack of exposure to new technology, and an ineffective institutional framework all have a negative impact on handicraft workers. **P. Abirami and M. Velavan (2017)** this study uses the secondary data and suggested that the government should take the required steps to educate and raise awareness among the artisan community about artisan welfare schemes and other financial assistance programmes. **The Geographical Indication for Goods Act (GI)** Since the

enforcement of the **Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**. The Government of Karnataka has been trying to register the Geographical Indications of Karnataka through the efforts of various departments like the Department of Handicrafts, Department of Textiles to extend protections to various prospective geographical indications from the state. **Nalini Avinash Waghmare, May (2016)** the objective of this study was to know the process of Bidri works in bidar. Paper argues that, it is high time for art lovers, marketing firms, and handicrafts promotion organisations to band together to save and elevate this beautiful art form. **Dr. Anjali Pandey March (2016)** this paper discuss that it is our responsibility to save this art for the sake of art and the life of the Bidriware artist. Education for Bidriware artisans, encouragement of fine craft work, and propaganda about Bidriware among the younger generation.

3. RESEARCHGAP

Despite the fact that numerous government and non-government projects, research studies, training programs, and financial and marketing aid schemes are involved to preserve the interests of artisans and the preservation of India's handicraft tradition, the outcomes remain unsatisfactory.

Research Gap Identification:

1. Focus on Demographic Issues and Challenges

A survey of the existing literature reveals that most of the researchers focused on the other parts of the country. There is gap in identifying the issues related with Bidar district of Karnataka. Bidar comes in the first place of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. This region is the least developed and the most backward division of the state and the people of KK region have suffered the worst because of regional imbalance in all walks of life.

2. Impact of COVID-19

No study has been done so far to address the issue of impact of COVID-19 on Bidriware artisans at Bidar district of Karnataka. There is a research gap to identify the challenges and issues faced by the Bidriware artisans after pandemic.

3. Special Emphasis on Artisans of Bidriware

Most of the existing literature focused on all type of artisans of Karnataka in general, there is a gap in understanding specific problem faced by the Bidriware artists in Bidar District of Karnataka.

4. Lack of Empirical Study

Several studies have highlighted on the conceptual aspects of the Bidriworks and most of the studies were based on the secondary data. There is gap in understanding the issues and challenges faced by the artisans through empirical study.

5. Support to Local Craft and Culture

The concern about local craft and culture and the issues related to that are very important gap found in the literature survey.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The following are the objectives of the present study:

- To identify the artisans who are practicing Bidri craft in Bidar District of Karnataka.
- To identify the problems and challenges faced by the Bidri craft artisans in Bidar after COVID-19 Pandemic.
- To identify impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Socioeconomic conditions of Bidri craft artisans
- To address the efforts of the government, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in the preservation and promotion of Bidri craft.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study has addressed the following important questions:

- What are the major problems and challenges artisans face during pre and post pandemic?
- What are the Economic conditions of Bidriware artisans after COVID-19?
- What type of Raw material required for the production bidri crafts and its availability
- Is government helping these Bidriware artists to market their products in local and global market?
- What type of support Bidriware artists are getting from local Government.
- Whatefforts State and Central government is putting to promote and protect Bidriware artists in Bidar.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the present study researcher had used both descriptive and empirical research method to address the Issues and Challenges of Bidriware artisans after COVID-19 based on the primary data with structured questionnaire as well secondary data .The present study had considered the whole population of150 Bidri artisans for the survey and interview out of that 144 filled questionnaire received. The techniques used for the collection of data were interviews, surveys method closed group discussions etc. with artisans, Government departments and other stakeholders. The collected data wereanalyzedand conclusions were drawn.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Showing the Demographic Features of Bidricraft artisans

Sl. No.	Variables	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	135	93.75
		Female	9	6.25
		Total	144	100%
2	Age	25 to 35 years	21	14.59
		35 to 45 years	74	51.39
		45 to 55 years	35	24.30
		Above 55 years	14	9.72
		Total	144	100%
3	Education	No formal Education	121	84.03
		Primary	23	15.97
		Secondary	Nil	--
		Pre University	Nil	--
		Graduate/Postgraduate	Nil	--
		Total	144	100%

Table 1 depicts the demographic features of the artisans. The information gathered from 144 artisans from Bidar city, in that 93.75% artisans male and 6.25% are Female who isengaging the work of Bidri Craft. As far as their age is concerned 14.59% artisans belong to the age group of 25 to 25 years, 51.39% artisans come under the age of 35 to 45 years, 24.30%come under the age of 45 to 55 years, and 9.72% artisans belong the age group of above 55 years. As far as their educational level is concerned most of the artisans i.e. 84.03% are not having the formal education.

Table 2: Showing the Socioeconomic status of Bidricraft artisans

Sl. No.	Variables	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Monthly Income (Before Pandemic)	Less than ₹5,000	19	13.20
		₹5,000 - ₹10,000	42	29.17
		₹10,000 - ₹20,000	71	49.30
		More than ₹20,000	12	8.33
		Total	144	100%
2	Monthly Income (after Pandemic)	Less than ₹5,000	32	22.22
		₹5,000 - ₹10,000	64	44.46
		₹10,000 - ₹20,000	41	28.47
		More than ₹20,000	7	4.86
		Total	144	100%
3	Living Conditions (Type of Housing)	Own House	98	68.01
		Rented House	46	32.00
Total			144	100%

Table 2 shows the economic status of the bidri artisans, monthly income after Covid pandemic is as follows: 22.22% artisan's income is less than 5000, 44.46% artisan's income is in between 5000 to 10000, 28.47% artisan's income is in

between 10000 to 20000 and only 4.86% artisan's income is more than 20000. As far as living condition of the respondents in concerned 68.01% of artisans live in own house.

Table 3: Showing the Impact of COVID - 19

Sl. No.	Variables	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Impact of COVID - 19	Severely affected	120	83.33
		Moderately affected	24	16.67
		Slightly affected	Nil	--
		Not affected	Nil	--
		Total	144	100%
2	Major problems faced after pandemic	Lack of Material	27	18.75
		Market closure	72	50.00
		Health Concern	14	9.72
		Financial constrains	31	21.53
		Total	144	100%
3	Facing difficulties in procuring Raw material after pandemic	Yes	116	80.56
		No	28	19.44
		Total	144	100%
4	Demand for Bidri products after pandemic	Increased	18	12.05
		Deceased	96	66.68
		Remain the same	30	20.85
		Total	144	100%
5	Faced financial difficulties during and after pandemic	Yes	139	96.52
		No	5	3.48
		Total	144	100%
6	Faced any challenges in selling products after pandemic	Yes	121	84.03
		No	23	15.97
		Total	144	100%

Table 3 depicts the impact of COVID-19 on the socioeconomic condition and the challenges faced by the artisans after pandemic. 83.33% of artisans have severely affected from pandemic. More than 50.00% of the artisans faced major problem after pandemic was market closure. Financial constrains was the other problem faced by the 21.53% of artisans. 80.56 % artisans also faced the problem of Raw material, and the demand for bidri products had also decreased after pandemic, they also faced the problem of financial difficulties and marketing of the bidri products.

Table 4: Support from Government and Non-government organizations in promoting Bidricraft

Sl. No.	Variables	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Are you aware about the role of government in promoting bidricraft?	Yes	135	93.75
		No	9	6.25
		Total	144	100%
2	Is Government helping you in promoting and selling your products	Yes	96	66.67
		No	48	33.33
		Total	144	100%
	Financial support	Yes	56	38.89

3	from Govt., NGOs and others during and post pandemic	No	88	61.11
		Total	144	100%
4	Which type of assistance you received from the Govt.	No Assistance	12	8.33
		Financial support	37	25.70
		Promoting/Marketing	84	58.33
		Training	11	7.64
		Total	144	100%
5	What kind of support do you expect from government in order to support bidricraft and recover from the pandemic's impact	Financial Aid	62	43.05
		Access to raw material	9	6.25
		Promoting/Marketing	41	28.47
		Training and skill development	24	16.67
		Health care support	8	5.55
		Total	144	100%

Table 4 depicts the support from Government and Non-government organizations in promoting the bidricraft. 93.75% of artisans are aware about the role of government in promoting bidricraft. 66.77% of artisans agreed that government help them in the promoting and marketing of bidri products after pandemic. 58.33% of Bidri artisans expect that government should support them the in promoting/ Marketing of the bidri products it leads to the higher production and higher sales.

8. KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The Bidricraft required hard work but their income is very low compare to other labour class. Low pay was the main causes of the decline in the number of bidri artisans. Because their wages is insufficient to meet their expenses, however, because of the low pay they either quit their skill or went into better-paid industries.
- It has been observed that the decline in interest among younger generations in continuing the traditional craft of Bidri work due to several factors such as Economic Factors, Lack of Infrastructure and Support, Educational and Skill Development Opportunities, Changing Values and Interests.
- It's becoming difficult for artists to sustain their previous profit margins due to poor sales and rising expenditures. Due to the increase in the price of silver, even while the Cauvery showroom (Showroom run by Karnataka State Handicraft Development Corporation Ltd under Government of Karnataka) offers subsidies for purchasing materials but they are insufficient to reduce production costs.
- Cauvery Emporium, a prominent government-run organization in India, has played a significant role in the promotion and preservation of Bidri work. Cauvery Emporium provides a platform for Bidri artisans to showcase and sell their work. By offering a retail outlet and an online presence, the emporium helps artisans reach a broader market, increasing visibility and potential sales for their products. Cauvery Emporium can offer support to artisans through training programs, workshops, and resources. This support can help artisans refine their skills, learn new techniques, and adapt to changing market demands despite of this Cauvery alone cannot support for development of 150 artisans
- An NGO called Sahayog is based in Bidar and works to support social initiatives that support rural development, women's empowerment, and the preservation and advancement of diverse arts and crafts. According to Mohammed Shafiuddin's personal interview, the NGO has been working with the Bidri craft for past 15 years. Bidriware's development has been vigorously pursued by Mr. Shafiuddin, President of Sahayog. He plays the crucial role in the allocation and supervision of the Karnataka government's Department of Handicraft's operations. This section examines the organisational work the NGO did to address the issues the NGO itself faced as well as the obstacles faced by the craftsmen who made the bidri. The NGO reported the primary findings of the surveys as evidence that the craftsmen were facing difficult marketing and financial issues. This actually caused it harder for the craft to flourish, which was hurting the artists' earnings. To remedy these issues
- Unfortunately, despite the efforts made by the Sahayog Organisation and government programs to satisfy their needs, the artisans still struggle to meet their basic necessities financially. High expenses and poor sales are the primary causes of these issues (Mohammad Shafiuddin, Personal interview).

- Mohammed Saeed Khaja, president of the Bidri Association, believes that urgent actions are needed to preserve the handicraft and its cultural significance. He said that those who were unemployed during the pandemic are looking for alternative sources of income, and that unless the government intervenes by giving loans and training artisans, bidriware manufacturing will gradually decline.

9. SUGGESTIONS

- Bidar's younger artisans must be made aware that working in this traditional skill is an indicator of national pride. They must be encouraged to acquire knowledge, practice, and pass on the skills provided by their ancestors.
- Despite the fact that government (Cauvery) gives them subsidies to support their output, the craftsmen ought to be autonomous and accountable enough to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to expand their clientele and boost revenue.
- The primary objective of the government in supporting the craft sector is to give artisans welfare possibilities and a stable source of income. The individuals who participate in Bidriware are offered a reliable source of income and beneficiary assistance programs that properly reach the skilled artisans.
- Regular workshops with experts can introduce artisans to advanced techniques and contemporary designs, helping them stay updated with industry trends. Provide access to modern tools and equipment that can enhance precision and efficiency in crafting.
- Government should develop a strong brand identity and use digital marketing to reach a wider customer. Social media, e-commerce platforms, and a professional website can boost visibility.
- Government and Non-Government organizations should provide training in financial management to help artisans budget, manage expenses, and plan for growth.
- The government should prioritize measures to protect craftspeople from economic exploitation. They should make an effort to organize the artisans into groups and associations. In these categories, the government strives to train and educate craftsmen on their market and soft skill requirements. They should— organize training classes and workshops to encourage women to participate in bidricraft.
- Nonetheless, in the handicraft industry, all committees require coordination, irrespective of the type and volume of work they perform to ensure the wellbeing of the craftspeople. For the purpose of preserving the craft, all relevant departments, including the Zila Panchayat, the DC office, the Handicrafts office, and the local administration, should collaborate.
- The initiatives such as creation of mega cluster programs, exhibitions, subsidy schemes, and the like should be their main priority in order to improve the state of the craft. Only then can Bidriware and its artists' lives improve if these programs receive significant attention.

10. CONCLUSION

The Corona virus pandemic is going to bring about an ocean full of changes in the near future of bidriware in the city. Though the economy is growing in spite of the pandemic, the sector is still flexible and ever ready to accept and adjust to changes and challenges. In view of the changing operations, businesses, the world is busy re-aligning strategies to adjust to the new normal. The bidriware sector is not left behind; resulting with emerging new trends that have refreshed the interests in craft. The fact that more than 300 artisans were engaging the production and trade of this elegant craftwork before pandemic, but only about 150 artisans are continuing to pursue this work now, Addressing these areas through targeted interventions and support can empower Bidri craft artisans, preserve this unique art form, and enhance its recognition and value both locally and globally. With strategic efforts and collaborative support, Bidri craft can continue to flourish and contribute significantly to the cultural and economic landscape.

REFERENCES

WAGHMARE, N. (2016). Bidriware: a Glory of Bidar District. *HistoricityResearch Journal*, 2(9), 1, 2, 4, <http://historicity.in/Administrator/UploadedArticle/230.pdf>

DR. NALINI AVINASH WAGHMARE, Scientific and Technical Study of Bidriware, 3rd International Conference on recent developments in Science, Humanities and Management, ISBN: 978-93-87793-35-4, 22nd July 2018.

“WELCOME TO BIDAR DISTRICT”. *Bidar.Nic.In*, 2016, <http://www.bidar.nic.in/bidarwebsite/about.html/>

A report on The Black Metal Magic of Bidar: Bidriware, Discover India Program 2016-17, Flame University, March 2017.

DR. ANJALI PANDEY, Bidri Ware: A Unique Metal Craft of India, *International Journal of Research – Granthaalayah*, ISSN-2350-0530, Vol.4 (Iss.3): March 2016.

SYEDA SAMEEHA MARYAM, SRISHTI SRIVASTAVA, Translating bidri craft to interiors, *International Journal of Advance Research, Ideas, and Innovation in Technology*, ISSN: 2454-132X, Volume 7, Issue 1, 2021.

SHILPA RATHOD, Challenges Posing to Geographical Indication in India, *IPR Journal of Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur*, Vol 1, Issue 1, June 2023, pp 16-25.

DIVYA DINESH ANVIKAR, Implementation of Bidri art motif on fabric assurface ornamentation technique, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)* ISSN: 2349-5162, Volume 10, Issue 5, May 2023.

N.NARAYANAN, HEMA. "The Black Metal Magic". *Deccan Herald*, 2015,

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/464496/black-metal-magic.html>

<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/155303887725304485/>

<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/gi-tagged-products-of-karnataka--706220785313015670/>

<https://dip.flame.edu.in/pdfs/reports/2016-17/Bidriware.pdf>