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## Dokra works in Bikna: The pinnacle of excellence of the ancient crafts.

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**Abstract:** Dokra or Dhokra is one of the important ancient craft in India. Like other crafts it also being practiced in some districts of Bengal. One of such important village i.e. Bikna village in Bankura district upholds this tradition from its ancient past. The craftsmen involved in this craft making process are now facing lots of problem to sustain their craftsmanship as well as their cultural identity. Family members of the village practiced these traditional metal sculpture processes by making figures of different things keeping in mind from its social concern. This technique was traced far as an ancient Chola Dynasty to make various Chola bronzes statues. First a figure was made of wax or other medium like dhuna. This was covered with clay and allow drying, a tiny hole was made on it. When it heated the molten brass replaced the original impression. Villagers involve in these craft making process, they neither have any agricultural land nor any other source of income. It becomes difficult to lead their lives depending totally on these product materials as they hardly get reliable prices and hold the demands throughout the year. A case study made on it tries to promote the product materials along with their socio-economic view point of lives and take an initiative to provide a better opportunity to strengthen their craftsmanship.

**Keywords:** Dokra Craft, Lost Wax, The Cire-Perdue technique, Craftmanship, moulding

The name 'Dokra' or 'Dhokra' was formally used to indicate a group of nomadic people scattered over Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in India and now is applied generally to a variety of shaped and decorated products created by the 'Lost Wax' processes. One of such important group of families are located at Bikna village in Bankura district. The traditional theme of these metal sculptures include images of Hindu or tribal gods and goddesses, bowls, figures of people, elephants etc. and also include various ornaments and decorated things. The project report here upholds "the pinnacle of excellence of the ancient crafts of Dokra" tries to promote the product materials along with the artisans' lives to draw government and other organizational attention to enlightening their craftsmanship, enhance souvenir industry and give better way of life to the people involved in it.

### Research Methodology

This study has been based on empirical work. In this regards primary data has been collected through questionnaire survey and for secondary information district hand book and census data has been consulted. I have been used some simple statistical techniques for handling the data.

### The demand of Dokra crafts:

- The demand of Dokra products crosses the state as well as the international boundaries.
- People demand for it to decorate their rooms.

- Sometimes people taken it into home from an enjoyable holiday have continuing power to evoke wonderful memories.
- It used to play a role as ornaments of various types to give an extra outlook of a person.

### The Cire-Perdue technique:

#### Stage-I

This stage is known as core making with clay and then mixed with uncrushed sand and some water for making suitable core-figures.

#### Stage-II

In this stage model is being prepared onto the core using wax or some other suitable medium like dhuna or pitch.

#### Stage-III

After covering the model with a very fine layer of clay one or more channels were created in the mould to allow the flow of molten brass.

#### Stage-IV

A cup-shaped structured was built around the flow channel and within it brass are kept for melting. At this stage several moulds could be combined sharing a single crucible.

#### Stage-V

A furnace is being made on a convenient open space and the moulds are laid in the fire with metal portion downward and allow it heating to go the molten brass through the channel and hold the

original impression as the wax or dhuna is being subjected to vaporize into heat.

**Stage-VI**

The finished goods are then taken off separately and become ready for marketed after polishing it both by hands and machines.

**Status of artisan’s family:**

- The artisans are not well established in finance and remained economically backward groups.
- From social scenario they have in many gods as Hindu like ‘Manasa Puja’, ‘Ganesh Puja’ etc.
- Their income level, housing type, dresses all of these are clearly indicate the picture of their economically deprived situation.

**Earning means of livelihood:**

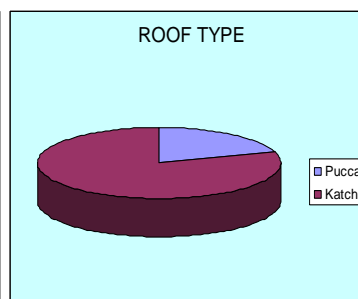
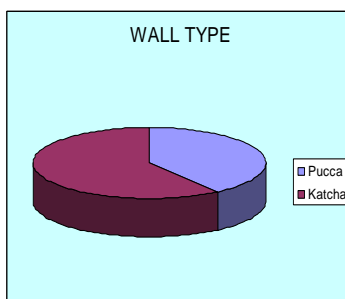
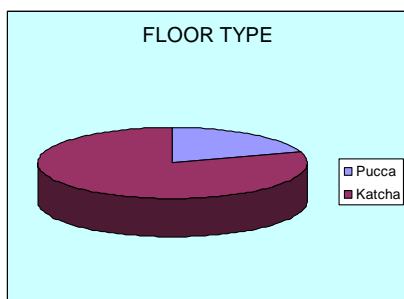
- They are totally depending on the craft alone as they have no means of agricultural land.
- They sold their products in local market or in some fair-festivals like ‘Santiniketan Poush Mela’, ‘Kolkata Arts and Craft Fair’ etc.
- They also supply their products to government organization, Manjusa.
- Sometimes they have borrowed money in high interest from local moneylenders.

**About the Dokra craftsmen of Bikna:**

- The residence of Bikna Karmakars has no well accommodated house with lots of furniture.
- Most of the roofs of the houses are made of tales and they are very close to each other.
- The housing conditions are not favor for well healthy atmosphere.
- Most of the families are in nucleated types.
- Numbers of children are maximum than aged persons.
- The children never treated as a burden of their families, as they involved with craft making process
- Though there is not possible to make a micro level survey on health condition but in general it has been assumed that they are not well fitted and get proper nutrients required for their bodies.
- The children and women are mostly in stage of poor healthy condition.
- Villagers are not well educated; most of them did not able to manage their elementary education.
- Among children the majority of school going is boys than girls.

**Table-1: types of house:**

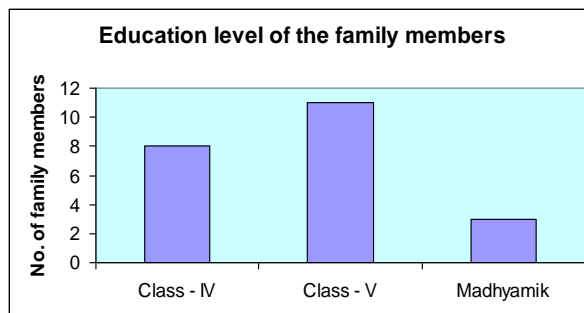
Item Name	Total No. of houses	Types of houses	
		Pucca	Katcha
Wall	10	4	6
Floor	10	2	8
Roof	10	2	8



Source: Sample Survey, nov.2014

**Table-2: Educational level of family members:**

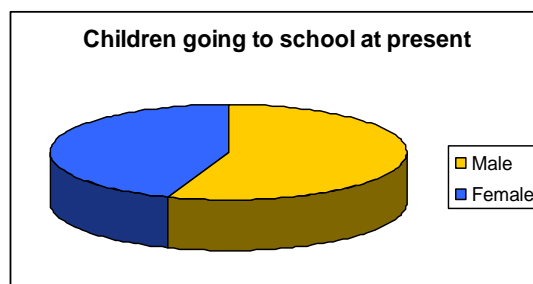
Education Level	Number of Family Members Passed
Class - IV	8
Class - V	11
Madhyamik	3



Source: Sample survey, nov.2014

**Table-3: children going to school at present:**

Total number of children	Male	Female
18	10	8



Source: Sample Survey, nov.2014

**Response towards government help:**

Various govt.organization like ‘Manjusa’ have stretched their helping hands to market their products. Apart from these, various govt.and non-govt. organizations have come forward for developed their socio-economic condition. But they are not fully happy towards govt. help. Senior renound artisan Juddha Karmakar, owner of President Award, remarks that govt. has doing nothing for him. He only gets a prize along with Rs.10, 000 at a time and nothing after that. Another famous artisan Chanu Karmakar gave his identity as a dead person to the outsiders of the village. The govt.certificate is now torn away by insects. They lost hope over D.I.C; they think Community Society was much more better to fulfillment their demands.

**Problems of artisan’s family:**

- Today, the Dokra craftsman’s are facing the problem of sustaining their cultural identity.
- There is no proper market for sales their products with a suitable and reliable price.
- Lack of facility to avail required loan in swift manner from government initiatives.
- Lack of high quality technological support for polishing in order to improve the quality of their products.
- Families have made no move to adopt the new technology. Even they do not know the proper use of high technological machines.

- Lack of permanent furnace which make their problem more critical, specially during monsoonal period.

**Corrective measures should be taken:**

- Supply of necessary information through making of their own community centre.
- Highlighting their work through liftlate, pamphlet or cassette in different exhibitions outside or within the state.
- To built up proposed cluster centre for their immediate development which is still on the way of processing since the last few years.
- To increase their active participation in various fair and exhibition through government initiation.
- To arrange workshop and provides some necessary information in their own language and make them identity with the use of modern technologies.

**Conclusion:**

Though controversy has present to the common belief that ‘Dokra’ is a primitive and low-tech craft, but in reality it is a high technological crafts and requires a lots of experience and high level of skills to give a perfect shape of the products. Members of the learning stage need under close guidance and supervision from the senior ones of the family and this is going on alternation of generations. In this way it becomes a family craft and the craft process is carried on with a daily routine. At present they do not work entirely with their own, receiving

many inputs from designers and buyers of outsiders. The situation become quite changed and developed after the introduction of Bangla natok.com in their social and economical life. It has been working from the last year and helped them to exhibit their products outside or within the state. Though Manjusa and DIC both have failed to work

upto the mark of satisfaction, Bangla natok.com is throughing a light of hope for their better and prosperous future. In last but not least both government and non-governmental organization should work hand in hand to overcome and mitigate their problems and help them to make a healthy future.

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En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bikna



Fig.1 Modeling



Fig.2 A fine clay layer on the model



Fig.3 Furnace on an open space



Fig.4 A final touch of the product



Fig.5 House types



Fig.6 A Dokra product