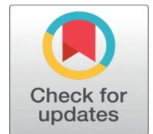


LACQUERED CRAFT OF SHEOPUR- A SUSTAINABLE CRAFT OF MADHYA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The world of arts and handicrafts represents a great saga of culture, traditions and historical legacy associated with each particular region. India, in general and Madhya Pradesh, in particular are known for the impressive range of hand-made artifacts that enthrall onlookers, buyers and collectors of art.

The innate are honored with the characteristic specialty of cutting and make extremely appealing things. There are wooden chowkies made for estimating grains. Wedding mainstays of Bharia and wooden entryways of Gonds and Korku's are extremely appealing and unordinary. Machines turned and lacquered toys in splendid hues and at moderate costs are famous everywhere throughout the state. Cut wooden toys, dolls and elephants displaying the abilities of the craftsman are likewise made.

The Woodcrafts of Madhya Pradesh are self-viable and have contributed to maintaining the environment healthy by using all the natural colors and polishes. Moreover, it generates the employments to the artisans, which encourages them to design and produce the products as per the market demands. And as per the demand it encourages the social distance which is much need in present scenario.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Taking an excursion along the core of India we go over entirely saved medieval urban communities, invigorating and captivating natural life havens, and probably the holiest and most venerated traveler habitats that pull in the pioneer profound into its reality. Madhya Pradesh is the core of India, and geologically involves conclusive spot in the nation's gather in territories which are creating different items like handloom fabric, silk, and fleece. Woodwork and finish product of Madhya Pradesh are likewise extremely acclaimed. Coal and iron are generally significant of the minerals found in Madhya Pradesh. For the creation of concrete, limestone is required which can be found in excessive sum in Madhya Pradesh. In a few regions of the state, Marble is likewise accessible.





Figure 1 Madhya Pradesh (District Map) <https://www.rccat.gov.in/organization/cat/mpMap.html>

1.1. ART AND CULTURE

Madhya Pradesh is the home ground for most of innate populace of India which by and large, live away from the standard India. Traditional village crafts such as Chanderi sarees, leather, clay toys make it famous. It is especially known for its lacquer-ware products. Being centrally located amidst a vast span of forest covered land some of the areas like Sheopur, Reiwā and Gwalior have exposure to a wide range of the available wood, which nurtures the art of lacquer-ware in these areas. In spite of the infringing impact of twentieth century urban life, the clans have to a great extent figured out how to hold their own specific manner of life, generally immaculate by modernization. [District Sheopur \(2020\)](#)

2. ABOUT THE CLUSTER

2.1. HISTORY

Sheopur town likewise called Sheopur kalan, is situated in the northwestern part of Madhya Pradesh state in central India. The town and stronghold were established in 1537 by gaur Rajput's and filled in as capital of the previous Sheopur regal state. A street intersection and rail end, it is a significant market known for its lacquered woodwork and playing a game of cards. [Jeffrey Y \(1991\)](#)

2.2. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Sheopur is situated at the northwestern part of Madhya Pradesh. The region is all around associated by Road and Railway Network. It is associated by normal transport service with Gwalior, Morena, and Kota. Sheopur is 210 km away from

Gwalior and 230 km away from Morena. The significant streams like Chambal, Seep and Kuno are famous in the area. Jeffrey Y (1991)

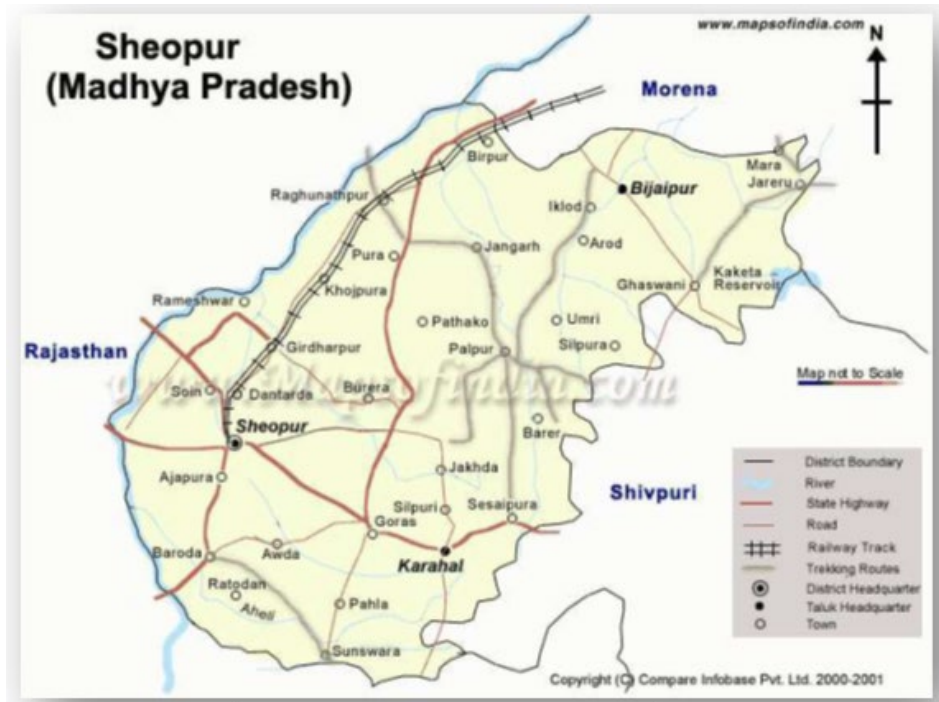


Figure 2 Sheopur (Madhya Pradesh) <http://www.brandbharat.com/english/mp/districts/Sheopur/map.html>

2.3. ARTS AND CRAFTS

The specialty of woodcarving has prospered in the area of Sheopur and the wonderfully decorated wooden roofs, entryways and lintels with finely cut plans are quiet tributes of its greatness. The wood carvers of Sheopur, with extraordinary affectability and aptitude change various assortments of wood. The specialty people of Sheopur make pipes, covers, toys, entryways, stands, windows, wooden remembrances, blossom jars, bedposts, and support posts etc. Madhya Pradesh (2020)

2.4. ABOUT THE CRAFT

Lacquer-craft is the utilization of enamel on wood in satisfying shades to make a particular allure. This art creates an enormous assortment of beautifying just as utility things. Lacquering is done on a machine, hand or machine worked. For turning thin and fragile things, the hand-machine is liked. Lac is applied in a dry state. The lac stick is squeezed against the woodenware to be lacquered. As the last continues spinning the warmth from erosion mollifies the lac, empowering the shading to stick. Plans are painted with a brush on figures, protests, and toys.



Figure 3 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

For its application lac is warmed to get a semi fluid state then it is worked and colors are added, at that point attracted to be made into sticks and afterward covered over the wooden articles. It is a reasonable or shaded covering that dries by dissolvable dissipation and frequently a restoring cycle too that creates a hard, tough completion in any sheen level from super matte to shiny and that can be additionally cleaned as required. [Madhya Pradesh \(2020\)](#)

The specialty delivers a huge assortment of improving just as utility things including little models of kitchenware, toys, seats, table lights, etc. Mathematical and botanical examples are usually utilized in the plans. These plans are painted in a few blends as indicated by the craftsman extravagant. Among the most well known veneer product are the lac bangles. Heretofore studded with gold and valuable stones, today they are likewise accessible with dots, glass, stones, mirrors and that's just the beginning.

Colored lacquer ware is made in Sheopur, *Rewa Budhi, Bhopal, Gwalior, Ratlam and Sabalgarh* in Madhya Pradesh. Etikoppaka in Andhra Pradesh is one of the most important centers of this craft. The lacquerware of Savantvadi, once a princely state, is a traditional craft. Chennapatna [Venkatesh \(2020\)](#) in Karnataka state holds an honored place in the lacquer ware world.

2.5. DIVISION OF LACQUER WARE INDUSTRY

The lacquer industry can be divided into:

- 1) independent workshop units,
 - 2) small scale enterprises and
 - 3) medium scale industries.
- 1) Number of family members which incorporates men, ladies and kids may create polish product. They have around 2-3 machine worked either by hand or lathe machine in their homes or little workshops developed close by. The vast majorities of them are independently employed and are showcasing their items to neighbourhood market or obliging greater brokers.

- 2) Limited scope undertakings are set-up in specialists' houses with a base 5 machines. The recruited specialists deal with per piece rate premise. These limited scale undertakings sell their items straightforwardly to exporters. These limited scale ventures don't have an enormous edge of benefit as the specialists are generally government driven organizations which utilize weighty charges and manipulative commissions.
- 3) Medium scale ventures are set up or possessed by exporters as it were. Significant urban communities like Bangalore possessing colossal edges of benefits as the transportation and work charges are exceptionally less. There are a couple of exporters in Bangalore who have contracts with craftsmen for the ideal amount of creation of the given things. Exporters give particulars depicting the ideal items with a severe spotlight on quality. These ventures are available to new and innovative thoughts of plan and imaginativeness as they take into account a lot higher objective market. [Venkatesh \(2020\)](#)

2.6. ECONOMIC STATUS OF CRAFTSMEN

The craftsmen are solely dependent on this art for their livelihood. The women in the housework as bidi makers to support the house financially. When these craftsmen source their products to the neighbouring villages, they get a much higher amount of work than the amount they get after selling the products in main cities as there is no taxation taking place during the transport and handling of the products. Due to their one-track traditional designs, they have been following since a long time their products have not yet reached the corporate market or the main arena of creative lacquer design. Fare items should meet and satisfy to new requests and particulars. These new items need to keep up all the more demanding principles of value and may require more mind boggling and complex work of art or completing than different items which are sold in nearby business sectors. There were 15 families following the tradition of making lacquer-ware products. These families have been inheriting this art as their hereditary trait and all the boys in the families are presumed to do the same. [Craft Processes and Other Details of 32 Crafts \(2020\)](#)

3. MATERIAL AND TOOLS USED

3.1. LAC

Lac is the resinous discharge delivered by the insect *Technadria lacca*. It is found on a huge number of the wood's trees, especially in Kusum (*Schleichera oleosa*). At present, it is gathered in different states like Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra

There are three distinct assortments of lac that are being utilized in the enamel product measure. The exceptional quality lac is referred to as catch lac for what it's worth in the catch structure. It is light and brilliant in hue and can cost up to Rs. 450/kg. The second is in medium earthy coloured tone and accessible in Rs. 300/kg. The third and the least fortunate quality lac is in dull dark tone and is Rs 250/kg.

Lac sticks are manufactured on a domestic basis by the women folk or the craftsmen themselves in the village. They buy the raw lac that is in the form of crystals according to the requirement of the work. The crystal material is usually light brown in colour. Water is boiled at a very high temperature in a pot and the crystals are then put into it for melting. The crystals melt into a sticky elastic

substance which is then handled with the help of long wooden sticks. When the lac becomes soft, it is taken on the ground and with the help of wooden sticks is stretched and batted on the floor till it turns into a thick lac stick. This takes a time span of 15-20 minutes.



Figure 4 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

3.2. COLOUR PIGMENTS

The lac with no extra colour pigment gives natural colour to the wood. For obtaining different colours, oxides of iron, zinc and magnesium are added during the process of batting the lac on the floor. Colours like turquoise, red, green, black, white, and purple are obtained.



Figure 5 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

3.3. MEDIUM OF APPLICATION

Talegiri (*Pandanus odoratissimus*) is otherwise called screw pine and privately known as "keware ka patta" among the neighbourhood specialists. This evergreen tree has palm-like leaves which can either have lots of long thick leaves or have an unmistakable bole up to 6 meters in stature. The screw pine frequently has flying roots and are horse regularly found on the coast and along banks of waterways, trenches, fields and lakes, The leaves are the significant embellishment in enamel product creation and are chiefly utilized for cleaning and give reflexive completion to the item. A heap of 100 leaves costs around Rs. 20. [Jeffrey Y \(1991\)](#)

3.4. HAND LATHE MACHINE

Many of the craftsmen still engage in traditional methods, evolving suitable kinds of hand lathes called *parties* in their local language. This consists of a heavy block of wood and stone which act as the object holder and the rotating shaft which is made by a bow string. This prevails as a popular method as the older craftsmen find it more convenient, easier, and faster to work on hand lathes rather than the fast-moving modern lathe machines, as hand lathe gives them the freedom of speed of the work according to the art on the object and they can adjust it easily according to their sitting positions.



Figure 6 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

The hand lathe arrangement is very precisely calculated and then developed, the distance of the stone holding the object is manually adjusted according to the size of the foot from one of the corners of the supporting wood. The angles are kept such that the object does not fly off while the rotation process, this analysis helps them work more efficiently and creatively.

3.5. ELECTRIC POWER LATHE MACHINE

With the expanding market for polish product the electric force machine has been presented. A force machine has a head stock that comprises of a rotating pivot connected to two belt pulleys. The belt runs over a pulley mounted on a spinning shaft that is driven by an electric engine.



Figure 7 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

The creation time impressively lessens on the power lathe machine, as both the hands are allowed to work turning devices. Force machines are for the most part situated in little processing plant settings, where there is no or less issue of power. Also, the modern lathe machine helps the young craftsmen of the community to mass produce the products at a much faster speed. The craftsmen in Sheopur had been trained by a professional craftsman in Bangalore about the proper use of the machines. The young members of the community use the lathe machines to produce more commercially viable and intricate designs which helps them take their craft one step further from the traditional designs and techniques. [Jeffrey Y \(1991\)](#)

4. WORKING PROCESS

4.1. WORKING STYLE

The work is carried out in a workshop and in places where the artisans have turned one part of their house into a workshop. Their workshops are so small that it can only adjust at the most 2-3 people inside apart from the person working on his machine. Working space per worker is 2 X 3 ft. The same condition is in the entire workshop. The space is very less yet it has every possible thing required by them in that area.



Figure 8 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

Every worker has his own set of tools which is spread on the ground at an arms distance. The lighting condition is bad as they have only one source of light that is placed wrongly in many cases. So, when the natural light is not strong it become darker and hence difficult to work with perfection. This happens mostly between evening hours.

Those workshops which are situated in the market get affected by the other activities in the surrounding. The work also gets hampered in the workshops which have a retail counter in front of the workshop. This is due to the fact that craftsmen would be required to attend to the customers.

They do not have any recreational or entertaining activities taking place around them as the only source of entertainment is to keep talking to the person beside you or the women of the family who keep sitting beside and making bids. [Z. Hussain, personal communication, December 16, 2020](#)

4.2. PRODUCTION PROCESS

The production of lacquered items consists of a series of processes. This work is accomplished on a hand or mechanized lathe machine placed within the house and is turned into a workshop. The arrangement of log wood for lac-turnery starts with preparing.



Figure 9 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

- 1) Logs are cut into little pieces (billets) and put away in a airy spot away from warmth and daylight for around ten days to a month, contingent on the dampness substance of the wood.
- 2) The edges of the prepared billets are then etched until a chamber is framed. Presently the wood is fit to be turned on a machine.
- 3) Cutting instruments are utilized to the rotating wood-piece with the goal that undesirable flimsy ceaseless chips are scratched off. Gifted specialists can eliminate uniform and dainty layers of wood to frame it into wanted shapes.

- 4) Once the ideal shape is accomplished, it is sanded with sandpaper on pivoting machine, until the surface is smooth and uniform.



Figure 10 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

- 5) At this stage the article is fit to be lacquered. The nature of the eventual outcome relies upon the ability with which finish is applied to the turning wood. A lac stick of the picked shading is squeezed to the spinning wood. The contact makes the lac dissolve and spread consistently over the region on which it is applied.
- 6) Final completing is finished utilizing a screw pine leaf to help spread the lac on the turning wood and finish the article. Polishing by kewra leaf loans a clarity to the completed item.
- 7) The lacquered article is isolated with a cutting instrument and eliminated from the machine. Now, a few articles are additionally ornamented with paint. [S. Ahmed, personal communication, December 16, 2020](#)

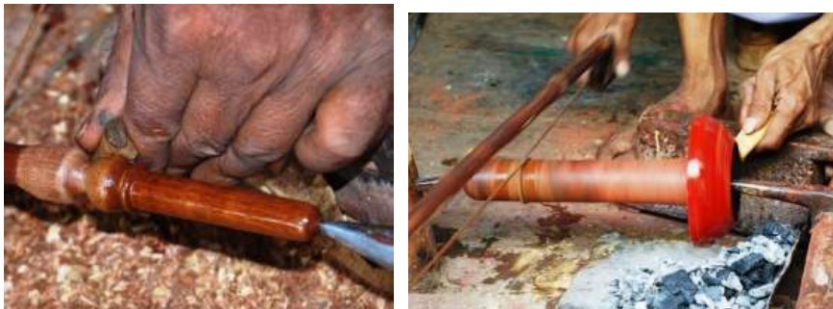


Figure 11 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

5. PRODUCTION OF LACQUER

- 1) The process of preparation of enamel from lac starts with warming and mellowing.
- 2) Lac is adhered on to the finishes of two wooden sticks which are warmed until the lac gets plastic and pliant.
- 3) The warming cycle is sometimes rehashed to look after versatility. A particular measure of lithophane is then added to the mellowed lac and is constantly beaten until a white colour shows up.

- 4) A little part of powdered colour is blended in with a little bit of water and this is added to the warm white lac.
- 5) The blend is then beaten until the right shade develops. The lac at that point starts to expect the consistency of elastic.
- 6) The lac is warmed and is taken out from the splinters before it sets. A long flimsy stick of coloured lacquer of 1 cm thick and 3 cm wide is moulded and afterward cut into 15-20 cm lengths.
- 7) Around Four to five sticks of one tone can be set up at an equivalent time. These sticks have a time span of usability of just a single month before they become hard and unsuited for lacquering.

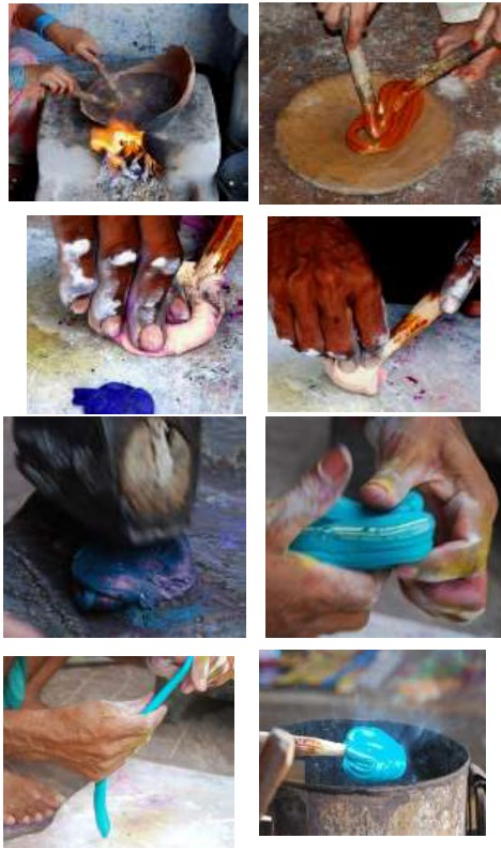


Figure 12 Picture by Mitali Pandey Minare

6. ABOUT THE MASTER CRAFTSMEN

The design development program was conducted in the direction of Mr. Sarkar Ahmed. He was the master craftsmen of this program. He is 65 yrs. old and is associated with this traditional craft sector since 45 yrs. He is continuing the heritage art of his forefather which is 500 yrs. old. He also encourages his sons to take forward this craft.

He has registered himself with MPHSVN, DCH and many other Govt. organizations and attended many workshops and training program organized by them. He also has showcased his craft in many exhibitions held at Bhopal, Jaipur, and Delhi. He himself had made various products according to the market demand

and change but his best works out of this craft is Corner table, dolls, saras lamp, wall plate (painting), and cannons.

The products which are now seen in the market were very different as compared to the previous ones. Mr. Sarkar Ahmed adds to this that earlier they made products which were widely used like toys or kitchen items or decorative stuff. Which includes *Itradaan, Kamal ka pool, shatranj, chaupad, shahnai, surme-dani, fan, in toys- aeroplane, chidiya gadi, jhunjhuna, tricycle, bat-ball*, in decoration stuff they made- *lantern, flowerpot, doll lamp, keyring, peacock. dancing dolls, bangle stand etc.* At this age also he is very proactive and attends workshops being organized and participates in exhibitions.

7. CONCLUSION

Sheopur has a vast potential in lathe-turned wood craft. Since ages this craft is flourishing in this area and has gradually astonished the potential buyers of handicrafts. Craftsmen have evolved this craft from the basic household items like chair, table, and toys for kids to the home-décor and souvenir products. On my field work, I figured out the challenges and the strength of the craft. The kind of patience it demands and the way it portray its uniqueness in terms of self-sustainability. Many Govt. organizations are coming forward to promote and uplifting this craft as it is eco-friendly and has no hazardous impact on the environment; furthermore, it provides employment for the craftsmen and Wood-turned craft is therefore attracting not only the Indian craft lovers but also the foreign buyers from different countries. Moreover, in today's context it promotes the new campaign started by the Govt. called "VOCAL FOR LOCAL"

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