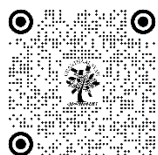


SARUKHETRI PITAL SARAI CLUSTER: ARTISTIC AND AESTHETIC SENSE OF FOLK ART FORMS ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Drabita Dutta ¹  

¹ ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007, India



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Corresponding Author

Dr. Drabita Dutta,
drabita1990@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Folk art and craft comprises art created by indigenous cultures, peasants, and other common individuals. It is frequently learned through rigorous apprenticeships or passed down from generation to generation within families. The patterns, themes, techniques, and materials of folk art and craft must have specific importance and convey a great deal about the culture or civilization to which they belong. In Assamese culture, brass metal articles, silk and bamboo articles are used for various purposes daily household activities, religious ceremonies, marriage gift items, musical instruments, etc. As an anthropological researcher when viewing folk art articles a careless inquiry occasionally pops into the researcher's mind out of curiosity. The question might be, How did this item come into existence? who are the people who make these craft items, how are they skilled and who trains them? It often focuses on the many concerns surrounding traditions influencing and enhancing their learning process. Using an ethnographic methodology and narrative analysis, it is believed that all of these and many other questions will receive proper answers. Many Assamese tribal and folk cultures' traditional arts and crafts are currently in danger of being extinct. This article is an effort to describe and exhibit the rich artistic and craft traditions of the Barpeta district, Assam, which are currently in danger of extinction. In particular, it focuses on the collection of dying arts and crafts made by the metal craft communities of Assam. This research focuses on brass metal craft groups in the Sarukhetri region of Assam through mapping the structure of craft communities and external bodies between which knowledge exchange occurs. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how knowledge has been transferred in Assam's craft communities and to subsequently identify and comprehend some underlying problem areas.

Keywords: Ethnographic Methodology, Narrative Analysis, Metal Folk Art and Craft, Etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Folk art signifies the large proportion of a group's members that determines the group's character and tends to preserve its distinctive type of civilization as well as its customs, arts, crafts, tales, traditions, and superstitions from generation to generation. Folk art and craft comprises art created by indigenous cultures, peasants, and other common individuals [Risatti \(2009\)](#). It is frequently learned through rigorous apprenticeships or passed down from generation to generation within families. The patterns, themes, techniques, and materials of folk art must have specific importance and convey a great deal about the culture or civilization to

which they belong. Folk art's appeal stems from the fact that its simplicity and ornamentation disclose a great deal about a society's fundamental values and traits. Anthropologists often study folk art as a means of learning about the past or as a creative window into the lives of ancient people. To convey meaning, a representation must emphasize some aspect of the something-that-is-not that resembles the something that is at least tangentially. The traditional view of artifacts is that the complete appearance of the artifact was in the maker's mind before he or she attempted to create it: "It is most commonly believed, in the study of both organisms and artifacts, that to ask about the form of things is, in itself, to raise a question about design, as [Ingold \(2013\)](#):343.

The 'art aspect' of an object, its semantic/aesthetic dimensions, can be used to make connections between objects in different functional sets, such as defining ceremonial sets or sets of objects associated with social groups or classes, or to link classes of objects with ideology or cosmology [Gell \(1992\)](#), [Munn \(1977\)](#), and [Scoditti \(1990\)](#).

As "cultural materialism," craftsmanship stands for creative labour that has developed into ingrained routines for identifying problems and using learned techniques to solve them. Craftsmanship is the hallmark of a decentralized system operating in a fully sustainable setting. Its operations and acceptable customer requests have little effect on the environment. The craftsman is a symbol of the determination to accomplish something thriving. The distinction between rote memorizing of technique and an in-depth understanding of how to apply what one learns is an essential aspect of all skill acquisition [Sennett \(2009\)](#).

The self-contained existence of the village was made feasible by the presence of the Indian craftsmen in the middle of a basic agrarian civilization. Within the commercial community, cooperative societies served as a continuation of the craftsmen guild system. With the effects of the importation of low-cost, machine-made replicas of antiquities, what's left is a faltering institution. The handicraft industry's development has been hindered by its incapacity to embrace modern manufacturing techniques and adjust to the evolving wants of customers. [Ghosal & Prasad \(2019\)](#)

Providing utilitarian products that fit in with modern urban planning and lifestyle is the problem facing crafts today. In order to do this, goods must be diversified via a knowledge of form, function, and society. Elite consumers value modern, vintage, ethnic, and preservation designs for their exquisiteness in addition to their functional appeal. A comprehensive understanding of the area is necessary to provide such aesthetics. The information about crafts, including its epistemology, methods, labour, ethics, etc. is retained in the communities as an understanding that is not spoken. The majority of this information has to be acknowledged for future bases since it is not recorded and is unknown to the relevant design groups [Das & Das \(2019\)](#). Hands with magical art can turn what seems simple into a masterpiece. Rural communities' ability to satisfy the needs of their local population has long been bolstered by their handicraft industry. India's native craftsmen and artisans are highly renowned for their longevity and distinctive applications in everyday needs.

Barpeta Districts are renowned in the historical map of Assam as the "Land of the Satras". Barpeta *Satra* and various other *satras* scattered around the district attract devotees from every nook and corner of Assam [Baruah \(1903\)](#). Baniakushi and Haldhibari are neighboring villages that are 2km away from Sarthebari. Both villages have the same historical significance in brass metal industries. One kilometer away from Sarukhetri in the North direction, five villages are there. They

are Banikuchi, Haladhibari, Lasimaa, Bengnapara and Kamarpara. During the 19th century, two great *kahar* (*brass metal artisans*) of Hadibari Late Bhedaram and Late Dhananjay were the first two people who worked on brass material after that brass metal became famous and with the phase of time with the help of a hammer, *niyari* beautiful work of brass metal like *sarai, japi, tray, duori, doba and dhupdani, and gosha* were produced [Das \(1992\)](#). No complex technique is used for the production of brass material, with the effort of hard work the *kahar* make beautiful art of brass metal with their own hand.

During 1950, brass metal was first produced in Haladhibari village and the credit goes to the work of Late Bhedaram and Late Dhananjay *kahars* some other *kahars* also worked and they are –Late Jeena, Ghena, Maura and Baniyai etc. The *kahars* of next-generation were - Manikanta, Bihuram, and Dhaniram. At present a well-known *kahar* is Bapuram Das is doing a lot of remarkable work for the development of the brass metal industry. Bapuram Das made Bhim's Gada, Duryadhan Gada and Sarai with brass metal and he was praised for his hard work. During 1959 an association "*Haladhibari Sarai Shilpi Samabai Samiti*" was established (registration number 305-1956-57 date 06-06-1957) and the members of the association were late Mahendra, Thaneswar, Guneshwar, Tarun Deka, Devisaran Deka but the association did not last long as there were lack of members for monitoring the association but the present day *kahar* are working hard for reforming the association which will be a ray of hope for the development of brass metal as well as for the betterment of the *kahars*.

2. SARUKHETRI BRASS METAL CRAFTSMANSHIP AND ITS ATTRIBUTES

The cultural value of handicrafts is influenced by various factors, including the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage, traditional skills, the forms those skills have taken, and the meanings those forms and meanings carry within the communities that make and use the handicrafts.

The drive to do something properly is represented by the artisan in each of us. An indicator of all skill development is the distinction between rote memorization of technique and a more comprehensive grasp of applying existing knowledge [Sennett \(2009\)](#).

In order for an artifact to be considered cultural, its creators must have had a predetermined vision for it and then produced an object to reflect that vision; and this vision must be part of a shared legacy. In the mind of a maker, the concept of an object may embrace more than just its shape [Sennett \(2009\)](#). According to Ingold, it might also involve a sense of purpose and meaning [Ingold \(2013\)](#): 340. It is essential to keep in mind that the idea may encompass a multitude of substances.

Within the commercial community, the craftsmen guild system persisted in the shape of cooperative groups. It is a very skill-based education that emphasizes years of apprenticeship and muscle memory. The fragmentation of the production process and the ability for artisans to choose and follow their own areas of specialization are made possible by the decentralized system.

The challenge for crafts today is to provide practical goods that adhere to urban architecture and lifestyle. Understanding the views of form, function, and society necessitates diversifying the goods. Elite consumers value modern, vintage, ethnic, and preservation designs for their exquisiteness in addition to their functional appeal. It takes an expert understanding of the area to produce such beauty. The information about crafts, including its epistemology, methods, labour, ethics, etc., is

retained in the communities as an understanding that is not spoken. The vast majority of this information is undocumented and unknown to the relevant design groups, necessitating acknowledgment for bases in the future [Das & Das \(2019\)](#).

Baniakushi and Haldhibari villages have a maximum number of brass metal production units and the other 16th villages have comparatively the same number of working units. The initiations of the Assam government towards the brass metal industry are not remarkable as a result the old *kahar* does not get any pensions which creates various problems. The present-day *kahar* is forcing the government to take some measures for the development of the brass material industry but the government till now has not taken any step in this area and as a result, the future of the brass metal industry is in the dark.

At present, there are around 350 brass metal units in Sarukhetri region and in each industry 800-900 *kahars* works for the industry. Approximately, 2500 people are engaged in brass metal production and their main occupation is brass metal production.

According to one informant, the outside village youth comes to learn the brass metal work under one expert *kahar* in Baniakushi and Haldhibari village and when they learn everything they go back their place and open their own unit. This is the main reason brass metal units are spread whole Sarukhetri region of Barpeta District.

The initiations of the Assam government towards the brass metal industry are not remarkable as a result the old *kahar* do not get any pensions which create various problems. The present day they are forcing the government to take some measures for the development of the brass material industry but the government till now has not taken any step in this area and as a result the future of the brass metal industry is in dark.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research article is to discuss the ideas of sustainable craft traditions and the economic viability of brass metal artisans. The present research is a modest effort to describe the variety of Assamese brass metal handicrafts that are manufactured and to shed light on how modernity has affected the brass metal culture, the socio-economic standing of the people living in the Barpeta District.

Objectives are as follows:

- 1) The present study's goal is to better understand the conditions that surround the brass metal industry in the Sarukhatri clusters.
- 2) To explore the function of the age-old metalworking industry in Assamese culture.
- 3) To investigate the relevance of the current state of affairs among the *kahars* of the brass metal cottage industries, identifying their viewpoint and level of belief in the craft of creating these objects.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Folk art and craft as a system of meaning and communication has been the primary focus of recent anthropology of art studies. Art and craft are impacted by society's standards, and the choice of salencies in depiction is influenced by culturally established topics. How did this item come into existence? who are the people who make these craft items, how are they skilled and who trains them? It often focuses on the many concerns surrounding traditions influencing and

enhancing their learning process. Whose job it is to build the right atmosphere for this sector to develop. Is it the Government's concern? Or is it simply a matter of supply and demand and the persistence of market logic leading to the fit test's survival? How they are attempting to adapt to the evolving nature of their indigenous culture?

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Sarukhatri of Barpeta districts in Assam. The research adopted an ethnographic methodology and narrative analysis, It is believed that all of these and many other questions will receive proper answers. Many Assamese tribal and folk cultures' traditional arts and crafts are currently in danger of being extinct. The study explores the current situation of the craft industry areas of Haldhibari, Baniyakuchi, and Byaskuchi, which come within the Sarukhetri Development Block in the Barpeta district in Assam, the numerous elements influencing the sector and how they affect artists compares these to the specific craft communities that were analyzed. Individuals involved in the marketing and sales of the craft were contacted in order to get information on the sustainability of the craft in the marketplace. To learn about their opinions on the market's current need and the necessity for changes to the handcrafted items made by the artists, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted. The holistic approach uses to understand the rich artistic and craft clusters of the Barpeta district, Assam, which are currently in danger of extinction. In particular, it focuses on the collection of dying arts and crafts made by the metal craft communities of Assam.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. OCCUPATIONAL SHIFT *KUMARS TO KAHARS*

During Ahom reign, artisanal crafts like as weaving, basketry, pottery making, and many more were mostly practiced inside households, but Ahom patronage also allowed for the coexistence of industrial production alongside artisanal production at the artisanal level. These cluster of the economy largely served the aristocracy and monarchy as well as the general population to a limited degree. However, the foundation of these ancient industry had been undermined by the war, the Burmese invasion, and British-instituted administrative reforms. Subsequently, the local industries had little chance of autonomously rebuilding themselves due to competition from imported items. It seems that the indigenous people industries did not reap the benefits of economic opening up until a century later, when a portion of the amassed commercial money was allocated into small-scale industrial manufacturing.

Traditional knowledge has passed down from generation to generation via practice as a traditional vocation. A small number of potters, known by various names such as *Kumar*, *Kumor*, *Kumarakar*, *Kumhar*, etc., reside in eastern India. In contrast to the '*Kumars*,' who produce clay objects for temples and other holy sites (Devagriha) using potter's wheels, the '*Hira*' communities artisans makes all of the home utensils (potteries) with no use of wheels. The "*Kamar*" or *Karmakar* employ iron to make household and agricultural items. This occurred even though there was no discernible commercialization of agriculture and because traditional industries experienced regular stagnation, local labor's occupational mobility towards the pottery industry remained extremely low due to low wages and a lack of suitable work opportunities. The key changes in employment was from conventional industry to full-time farming. Their forebears were skilled potters of enormous

earthenware's. Large clay pots are becoming unattainable for many households, however. They only create little *choru* (earthen pots). The difficulty of extracting Hira clay from the river is another important factor in the current decline of the pottery industry. In the past, the river contained Hira clay. However, finding this clay is becoming more difficult. A huge number of individuals have shifted their occupations towards other industries like brass metal craft making, business, agriculture, fishing, etc.

There is no special caste or sub-caste people involved in the brass metal industry. As far as the information gathered 90% of Hindu religion people and only 10% of Muslim religion people work in the cottage industry of Sarukhatri region. Basically, the *kahar* does not belong to any professional sub caste because it did not come through any single-family line. Brass metal occupation is open for everyone who wants to joint in this industry. One major occupational change had been seen in Baniakushi and Haldhibari village that the *kumar* occupation involved *Hira* community people who are famous for making all utensils devoid of using wheel. They left their own ancestral occupation moreover adopted brass metal product making as their new occupation. For making earthen pot they need special red colour clay and in Sarukhatri region and due to shortage of that clay they forcefully had to shift their occupation to brass metal industries.

6.2. PROCESS OF MAKING BRASS METAL PRODUCTS

Like any other artisans, the brass metal *kahar* also need raw material for the production. The Assamese brass metal cottage industries *kahar* are still following their tradition way of manufacturing article like as bell metal industries. Brass metal is alloy of copper and zinc. The mixed ratio of 70:30, where 70 percent copper and 30 percent Zinc. There are two rolling mills locate in the Guwahati used for transforming virgin brass metal to brass sheets and the process of manufacturing original raw material as same as like bell metal. Those scrap raw materials brought from outside of Assam and with the help of rolling machine it is converted into thin sheets. The brass metal *kahars* used to buy directly from the mills and also through local traders. Other minor and important items like acid, borax powder, burnt cola (coke), copper, charcoal, tin, zinc powder, etc. are also been used for producing some brass metal articles. The other materials needed are lacquer, borax powder, charcoal and light acid, zinc powder, etc.

An Instrument used for making brass metal products *neware*, *sara*, *fali chali*, *reti*, *bhor*, *hawa* machine, various sizes of a hammer, sand - A substance that consists of very small fine grains of rock -and others some instruments are used as same as like bell metal industries. The brass metal cottage industries *kahar* still follows their traditional way of making products from brass sheets. They use beating and hammering techniques and still now no machinery tools are used in brass metal cottage industries.

The process making products in a brass metal Unit

Figure 1

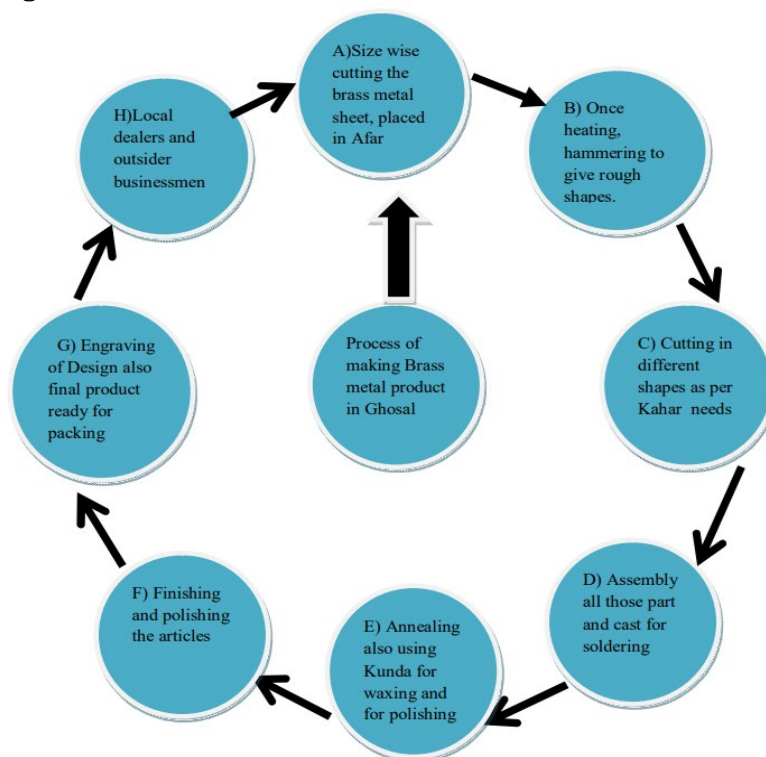


Figure 1 The Above Diagram Shows the Various Steps for Making any Brass Metal Product

1) Size wise cutting the brass metal sheet

The brass metal sheets are made from scrap metal or from virgin brass metal is an alloy of copper and zinc – with the help of a rolling machine all those brass metals are turned into a thin brass sheet, in circles in shape and various sizes. All brass sheets are provided by *kahar* by middlemen directly from the mill owner by cost or sometimes those unit members work under local traders they need not pay a cost for raw materials but in exchange, the *kahar* have to give the finished product to the local traders. The local traders only gave them the making charge of the product. The *kahar* basically choose thick brass sheets because the thin sheet is so good for work, but nowadays the brass sheet provided to *kahars* is becoming thinner day by day.

2) Heating, Hammering to Give Rough Shapes Then Cutting in Different Shapes as Per Kahar

The *kahar* of brass metal and bell metal use the same technique and the same instrument for making any product. The *kahar* used to heat brass sheet in *aafar*, when it become soft they put them in wooden moulds and the *kahar* give them rough shapes of different sizes. After that, they start beating and hammering continuously with various hammers and with other tools till that final shape is not given.

3) Assembling All Those Parts and Casting For Soldering

The next step is to assemble all final shape pieces and solder them. Both the cottage industries *kahars* themselves make the mixture for soldering and apply that mixture for joining the final shape part in assembling the order. In their local terms the solder means hand *zelai* or pan mixture with copper, zinc and borax powder. For some products copper iron is also used for Solder tighter

4) Annealing Using *Kunda* for Waxing and For Polishing Finishing and Polishing the Article

Once the brass metal is soldered then again it is placed in *kunda* saal. The base side of the product is fixed in *kunda* and the front side is put with some sealing wax for fixing then rolling the *kunda* saal. The base sides of items through spinning with *kunda* the *kahar* gives a curving ring shape on the front side of items using a sharp instrument.

The next and last step for making any product is polishing or cleaning the product. The most important instrument *chena* is used for polishing and cleaning the product.

5) Engraving of Design also Final Product Ready For Packing to Local Dealers and Outside Businessmen

Design means creative arts; any design looks beautiful or different from any simple article. It is in the mindset of the cottage industries workers that if any articles have a good finishing and beautiful design then the articles would be in high demand in the market. The cottage industries *kahar* doesn't get any professional training courses for the design they do not have any drawing graphs for design. Junior *kahars* only learn from their seniors. *Bhor mara* is one most important tools used by *kahar* for designing. It's like a traditional bow and arrow made from an iron sharp point. One side of the arrow is put into a small metallic bowl place for applying pressure while the other sharp side is used for curving or designing in the article. Sometimes the artisans use *bogi* a tool like a chisel for engraving the design in brass metal products. After completing the making process the product gets packed and *kahar* directly sells it to customers or those units who work under local dealers they give the finished product to the local dealers and *kahar* gets charged wages from the local dealers. Sometimes the outsider businessman directly deals with brass metal units they place an order for more pieces of product when it gets completed by the *kahar* they come and buy them from the units or the *kahar* directly sends them to their place.

6.3. SARUKHETRI PITAL SARAI SILPI SANGSTHA

Sarukshetri region of Barpeta district is one of the significant places for the brass metal industry. However, the industry had not hitherto structured itself to safeguard the downy ways. Late Bapuram Das, a social reformist leader had given his entire life to the improvement of the brass metal industry of Sarukhetri region. He remunerated and owed reverer to the brass metal *kahars* as '*Pital Silpi*' as a replacement for of '*Pital Kahar*'. His deliberation for the construction of a cooperative society amid the *kahar* to unfettered from mistreatment by the *mahajons* (non- Assamese traders). Therefore, the co-operative society named "The Haldhibari Samabai Sarai Silpi Sangha" was formed in 1957 and registered under the Co-operative Societies Act, 1912 Das (1968). Later than the construction of the society, the *kahars* were proficient in acquiring raw materials reasonably in alleviating ways. The society obtained reversed the goods once reimbursement of manufacture cost to the *garhal*. However, society turned dormant along with the death of Bapuram Das in 1972. Afterward in 1980's, endeavors had been through toward revitalizing the co-operative society. During 1983, the society was rejuvenated moreover renamed as "The Assam Samabai (co-operative) Pital Kahar Sangha". Its head office was at Baniakushi but the society was not registered. Nonetheless, the society was not capable of providing a recovered overhaul to the *kahars* society. In 2004 the co-operative society changed the titled to "The

Sarukhetri Pital Sarai Silpi Santha" with its head office at Baniakushi again the society still has not registered. The committee gathered 10 rupees from each member's *kahars* as an amalgamation charge. In 2005-06, the government of Assam approved an amount of rupees three crores for the upgrading along with the development of brass metal industries of Sarthebari area and Hajo, but it is not working yet. The government departments associated with the proposal invited the society to arrange the list of running production units and some admirable *kahars* who are vigorous for getting *Silpi* Pension from the government also similar had sited throughout DICC, Barpeta. Therefore, the members of the co-operative society equipped a list of production units and *kahars* furthermore submitted to the DICC, Barpeta.

6.4. A CASE STUDIES OF SARAI AND DULORI BRASS METAL PRODUCTION UNITS OF BANIAKUSHI AND HALDHIBARI VILLAGE

Those products are used for household purposes and other purposes like religious, marriage decorative items and musical instruments. Baniakushi and Haldhibari areas units are famous for various products like *sarai*, *duluri*, *japi*, *tray*, *koloshi*, *gosa*, *dhupdani*, *dhuna dani*, *saki*, *dobakanh*, spoon and decorative items and some others.

Following are the details of some of the article's process of making on their production units and its units case study.

1) *Sarai and Dulori*

Sarai and dulori are the same types of articles. Assamese society's *sarai* is used for felicitating, warmly welcoming a guest along with it gives regard, or sometimes it is used as a souvenir. In the marriage ceremony bride, generally uses *saria* to show respect and love by offering betel nut or mouth freshener to the guests. *Dulori* is only used by people of upper Assam for *toloni biwa* (Girls puberty ceremony) and marriage ceremonies and some people use it for decoration. *Doluri* has more art and design than *sarai*. *Sarai* and *doluri* have two parts without *sofura* (means head of *sarai*) or without a head.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Different Parts of Brass Metal Saros Sarai, Doluri and Japi.

Source Field work, 2022

Sarai have seven to thirty-seven parts with *sophura* or head *sarai* having 12 parts each piece is known as *daila*, *nakhe*, *kashi*, *koloshi*, *thogadhora*, *sula*, *poiera* and a maximum of 32 parts of *sarai*. All the parts are prepared separately and at the last soldering of all the parts is done together. Sarai also have different *soros sarai*, *bojoruwa sarai*, *soros sarai* charges high as compared to *bojoruwa sarai*, because *soros sarai* is heavy and fully decorated and *kahars* have to give more effort to make *soros sarai*.

Height wise part of pieces increases in *sarai*. Sarai and some other brass metal products have a range of prices that are increased in inch-wise or height-wise.

6.5. THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

Individual's position within the context of hierarchical social structure. Socio-economic status of a family depends on a combination of earners income, education and occupations. The socio-economic status depends on income, way of living, and others assessed of developing scenario of the important stakeholder of cottage industries artisans. For the shortage of agricultural land people had to change their occupation cultivation from cottage industries. Again, because of heavy rainfall in the whole pre-monsoon to monsoon period, 40% of the total land is affected by floods and damage the crops. Diversity in the occupational sector has not been seen in this industry. From the observation it comes out almost 80% families households are fully dependent on their traditional occupation work for their livelihood and they are the only wage earners of their respective families other 20% of *kahars* family wages came from other secondary, fields. Increase in the modern economic growth level, the cottage industries *have had* a few changes in their industries. Brass metal cottage industries workers are found to show interest in other government jobs and private jobs while some outside village youth people came to join this industry. The brass metal occupation requires extremely hard work and manual labor, low income, the standard of living is not good enough, scarcity of raw materials and amenities of any government facilities etc. [Medhi et al. \(2012\)](#) of all reasons the main reason that youth could not able to cope with their traditional occupation system. On the other hand, some aged groups of *oja kahar* thought that although they face lots of problems their occupation will be running till the day the sun rises in the east.

The brass metal cottage industries have their own traditional organized structure. It is slightly different from bell metal industries. A maximum of four to five members work together in a unit but brass metal unit members are lesser than bell metal units. Sometimes one unit has only two or three workers. Some individuals are self-taught in a particular field. The workers did not need to have any formal education before entering the brass metal unit. Any newcomer does not spend any money for learning under any experience *kahar* (*oja kahar*). He started working as a new member of a unit within seven years he learned all the techniques or art of making articles as well and he will become a brass metal *kahar*. If the man keeps himself deliberate on his work, a good physique practices hard work and manual working ability make them perfect. It has been observed that most of brass metal workers learn their work by observing and partly by being involved with their own family members like a grandfather to fathers after they become the owners of their family production units. Traditional occupational skills come from one generation to the next generation. These production units have their own arrangements for the unit members. According to their rule, any *kahar* contract with one unit for six months only. They can change their units or a new contract with any

other unit for the next six months. The *kahar* gets their wage share half in advance and the other half on a monthly basis. Sometimes *kahars* work further one year or else it relies on the tie as well as the working propensity of *oja kahar* or his co-partners. One month only 18-20 days will be possible for working and within the years of busy months for working August to December or February to May. The months of January, June, and July months are my free time.

The brass production unit *kahars* works with co-operative or partnership basic. In brass metal production units the 4 -5 members work together in units called *garhal* the *oja kahar* (main *kahar*) is the owner of the *garhal* and the entire instrument used for brass metal products is bought from his own economy. According to, their specific working skills the relationship between *oja kahar* and his co-partner are *kahar bhaiga*. *Bhaiga* have four different workers like *gurelia*, *maithner*, *kaitner* and *garhsika* (learner) who help *oja kahars* at their different stage of making any articles.

Depending upon their artistic skills again came under three categories skilled, semiskilled and unskilled. A good finishing product depends upon a unit of *oja kahar* and his *bhaiga* creative skills and their excellent manual work. *Oja kahar* is the main and most experienced worker in the units. He is responsible for the maintenance of whole units to buy raw materials for production and for marketing the finishing product, also has to manage minor items like char- cola, cola and along with other essential items. For the process of making any brass metal product, the *kahar* used to take *bhaiga* according to their skill and assign them for their work accordingly. *Oja - kahar* and *gurelia* sit together near to the *aafar* to melt the raw materials needed to acquire the shape with the help a hammer. The process of hammering goes on in a circular process, *gurelia* hold tightly the heated raw metal with the help of *reti*. In the next step, those shaped pieces came to *maithener*. His work is to give proper shape to any article using the hammer of various sides. With the use of a wooden tool *kund saal* the final shape and smoothing is done. The next step comes to *kaitner* who performs the work of polishing and smoothing the items. Generally, he use *khanta* iron sharp tool for polishing and cleaning the product. When the process of making completes it goes to *kahar and maithner*, *kaitner* decides to perform the artistic skill by drawing beautiful designs good looks of the product. *Garhsika* is the last working member of the production units. He is a learner which is why he has performed all techniques like using the *hawa* machine for fire in *Aafar*, hammering and helping to pull *kunda*, carrying raw material and finishing products from and to local traders, and cleaning the *garhal*.

The profit-making of a unit depends on the production only. *Oja kahar* deducts wages of other expenditures like minor items, food, day to day maintenance of *garhal* from the profit that comes from the product. The other half of the profit equally gets divided between the workers. The *bhaigas* receive an equal share of the half part and *oja kahar* gets the other half. *Garhsika* works free of cost and sometimes they receive small amounts of wages. It is also common for *oja kahar* to purchase raw material from own capital and sell the product to local traders or *mahajan*. However, some *oja kahar* do business by exchange. *Oja Kahar* offers his *bhaigas* monthly salary. The traditional process of managing the system of brass units is fully dependent on *kahar bhaigas* bonding. As there is no proper market for the brass metal the *kahars* are deprived of getting the actual price for the production of brass metal. In other places, modern technique is used to produce *sarai* so the local *kahars* faces various problems regarding this.

6.6. CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE ON BRASS METAL CRAFT PRODUCTS

An attempt has been made to comprehend how consumers see the brass metal manufacturing that is offered in the market, as the items and the modern market are based on the needs and desires of the consumer. Customers often favor less expensive brass metal products. As a result, factors such as product longevity, aesthetic appeal, cultural significance, and suitability for household usage as well as hygiene and health concerns were shown to be important when making a purchase. Other reasons, such as a preference for locally produced goods, price increases for scraped goods, awards for other ornamental applications, and coercion, are less useful when it comes to the buying process. Purchasing brass metal goods may be strongly motivated by a passion for native goods.

Modern marketing strategies are fundamentally ruled by consumer's experiment as well as their needs. Thus, an effort has to be made on the way to know the consumer's opinions towards brass metal goods accessible in the market. Usually, customers choose a lower price rate for articles made of brass metals. From their point of view, the importance of the metal craft in their day-to-day life their cultural relationship, healthiness and hygiene matter as well as domestic use are the major contemplation in purchasing brass metal products. Again, some are keener to keep traditional goods in their house also used for embellish sometimes for a gift, momentum or prizes etc, Individuals purchase the bell and brass metal articles. As per the gathered information from shopkeeper the buyers mostly choose some bell or brass metal products like *chariya*, *lota*, *ghoti*, *japi*, *sarai*, *dulari* etc, all of them considers these as for household and religious products in Assamese Society. The buyers used to purchase metal craft products from different corners of the state. A large amount vendors of town and city markets place of the state are linked with traders set of connections of brass metal products. Usually, trade centers for such goods are situated at towns and cities. Merely a handful of consumers personally get in touch with brass metal units. Therefore, those consumers buy new products otherwise sometimes swap over their old utensils from piece to unit to get new products. All over again, the trade fair or exhibition like *sobha mahotsav* where the local dealers or traders purchase bell and brass metal products directly from units or else artisans directly take part to sell their articles.

Current markets and products are driven by consumer needs and desires, thus an effort has been made to comprehend how consumers view the brass metal production that is offered on the market. Therefore, it was discovered that the most important factors in purchasing products were their usability in the home, durability, quality, and beauty, as well as their cultural connotations with health and hygiene.

The market system of the brass metal industry in Assam is mostly customer-oriented. Due to a lack of knowledge of *kahar* about the modern market strategy, advertisement and lack of capital the market system of such craft has been localized. The rise of raw materials over the course of time is another hindrance to the extent of the market of brass metal in other states. Assam has business relations with other neighboring states and supplies brass metal products to Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland. The advent of imitated products of brass by modern technology is another problem faced by the *kahars* in marketing their product and customers prefer those imitated products at are available in cheap price. In the brass metal industry the organization has no written records regarding the profit loss record of the industry. The illiteracy, lack of knowledge of modern techniques and lack of market strategy

have put them in limited scope and as a result the tradition is declining in the midst of changing patterns in the market system of the present time.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

The Brass metal cottage industries *kahars* equally have to face lots of complicated problems initially from supplying raw materials, energy, economics, health, manufacturing their goods marketing of finished products, etc. Following are some of the major problems that came to be known from the *kahar* of the Sarukhati region.

7.1. RAW MATERIAL AND ENERGY SOURCE PROBLEMS

All brass metal *kahars* mainly have to anguish in problems because of irregular and inadequate supply of the raw material. For that main reason of the crises of raw materials the *kahars* are not able to work for whole 30 days a month. Some *kahars* asserted that shortage of raw material connection with middle man, wholesalers, or mahajons. They illegally stockpile the raw materials in advance; while deficiency of raw materials gives hindrance in procuring at the market price and afterward traders' parties hike the price of raw materials as other energy sources like charcoal and fuel coke prices rise frequently. The chain system of supply and demand with the increased cost of charcoal or fuel coke in between the process directly harms local *kahar*. For the whole year, every bell metal production unit uses 300-400 bags of charcoal again the brass metal units use the same or less than 50- 60 bags. Over again, the price of wet charcoal as compared to dry charcoal bags, middle man wants to earn extra profit and mixing both of them and pack them and sell all those bags at higher prices. As a result the *kahars* face multiple losses. Fuel coke is used only in brass metal production units for melting brass sheets. The *kahars* mainly depended on the yielding process as their cost of energy had to abide price of the energy from their wages. The *kahars* economic condition is not having uplift as their income is very low and they have to spend a huge amount in other areas as a result cannot earn desirable wages as compared to their hard work involved in the process.

7.2. LOW INTENSIFIER LEVEL OF EDUCATION QUALIFICATION, PROPER TRAINING SCHEME AND LESSER INDEPENDENCE OF KAHAR

The Brass metal artisans are not highly qualified almost 70% of employers left their school because of financial problems. Most of the *kahars* are dropouts of school as a result they do not have enough knowledge regarding the use of modern techniques to enhance their skill in crafting and other sources of supplying their goods and expand their market like exporting their product to other countries as result from their development the area of this industries is in still standstill.

The Metal Cottage Industries come under M.S.M.E Government of India. Sarthbari and Sarukhatri region metal *kahar* 90% *kahar* never got hold in any training for developing their cottage industries or any other training to make use of new technical methods practiced inside their industry and only 10% are involved in training, while Hajo brass metal production cluster some members have received training program under M.S.M.E government of Assam and Hajo bell - brass metal cluster condition modestly enhanced to a certain extent than Sarukhatri region.

7.3. HEALTH ISSUES

All through in a peak time of high demand during February to July and from September to mid- January they have to work daily 11-12 hours, but earlier brass metal *kahars* used to work in morning from 5 am to 12 am at night. When they work for long hours they face many health complications and problems as a result it affects the work of the *kahars* although at present the *kahars* have fixed their working hour from 6 am to 5 pm. Earlier, *kahars* used to work for an indefinite time from early morning to evening and after restless work near the fireplace they faced many problems particularly vision problems because they did not take any precautions to protect the eyes. They started to face vision problems like Allergic conjunctivitis, corneal abrasion problems, cataracts etc. Another major sickness they commonly suffer is due to 12 hours in working in production units for hammering and cutting metal utensils created excessively clatter. On a daily basis, having a strident situation in every production unit it slowly hearing impairment leading to savior hearing impartment in early 50th age of *kahar*. At the same time production units are not hygiene. It has been observed that all *garhsal* encompass barely tin shade roofs with bamboo stakes or a few of them have thatched roof wooden post earthen floor open space for working. They of do not maintain cleanness within the *garhsal* viral rheumatic fever, dengue and yellow fever etc. The medical facilities have not highly developed in Sarthbari area there is only one C.H.C. and a very few chemist shops.

8. CONCLUSION

Brass metal *Sarai Silpa* was started in Haldibarih and Baniakushi and after that it is widespread in other 13 villages. In the brass metal industry the occupation is not on religion basis. Most of the *kahars* are not skilled in making the brass metal product. In the brass metal industry the competition among the *kahars* has increased as a result of which there is a more idiosyncratic nature among the *kahars* and the community contribution to the development of the brass metal industry is declining. *Kahar* monthly wages are not sufficient as compared to any other government jobs. The brass metal industries *kahar* are struggling with lots of problems like low income, *kahar* own families' expenditure is higher than their earning wages and for that reason the *kahars* did not even think about surplus for their future. It has been observed that, some brass metal *kahars* think of occupational shifts from their traditional work and prepare their children for competitive jobs rather than sticking to family business. Most of the youth of *kahars* families nowadays go for other occupations or any government jobs.

The prices of brass metal products are fixed annually and the price of the raw material keeps on increasing every year which affects the production of the brass metal industry. The condition of brass metal *kahars* are more deteriorating than that of brass metal industry and most of the youth are now engaged in other occupation as they are mostly concern about living a desirably which is very hard to get from the engagement in the brass metal industry. The customers around the production center have seized the opportunity to purchase goods directly from *garhal*. Owner *mahajans* has a direct relationship with the retail vendors. As a consequence of the cluster's lack of a comprehensive business plan or development strategy, there are several loopholes that make their predicament worse and enable intermediaries to profit from it. Due to the cluster's reliance on local merchants for its labour and raw supplies, they have negotiating leverage, which makes the cluster vulnerable to abuse. A barrier was usually built between them and the surplus market by enlisting

craftspeople to work on their orders. All of these elements demonstrate that the cluster lacks a suitable plan, a future strategy, and a market information system.

Due to their lack of consumer exposure and a clear path to market, artisans are unable to get feedback on their work and are unable to adapt their products to meet changing consumer demands. Due to the radical changes in modern life brought about by globalization, new designs, product diversification, and redesigns of classic items are required. Consumer tastes, perspectives, and purposes also change, which necessitates these changes in consumer behavior.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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