

Art is not a handicraft, it is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced.

- Leo Tolstoy

Bidriware

Metal Handicraft





Identifying good quality of soil from the fort or graveyards is done by tasting it with the tip of the tongue and this knack is passed on from generation to generation. It is supposed to be slightly pungent.)



Bidriware

Bidriware is a metal handicraft that originated in Bidar, Karnataka, in the 14th century C.E., during the rule of the Bahamani Sultans. The term 'Bidriware' originates from the township of Bidar, which is still the chief centre for the manufacture of the unique metalware. Due to its striking inlay artwork, Bidriware is an important export handicraft of India and is prized as a symbol of wealth. The metal used is a blackened alloy of zinc and copper inlaid with thin sheets of pure silver.

Origin:

The origin of Bidriware is usually attributed to the Bahamani sultans who ruled Bidar in the 13th–15th centuries. Abdullah bin Kaiser, a craftsman from Iran was invited by the Sultan to work on decorating the royal palaces and courts. According to some accounts, Kaiser joined hands with local craftsmen and gave birth to Bidriware. Since then, the craft has been handed down succeeding generations mostly among the local Muslim and Lingayat sects.

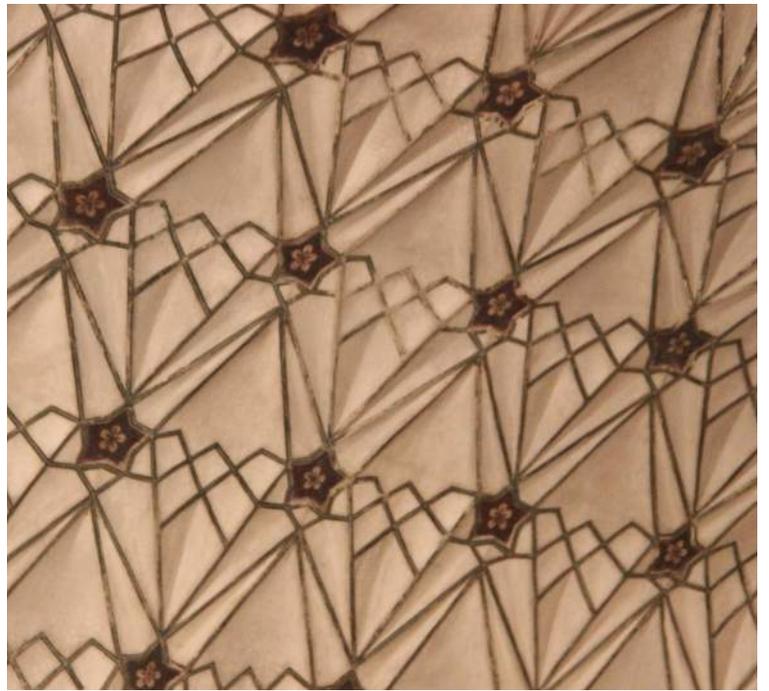
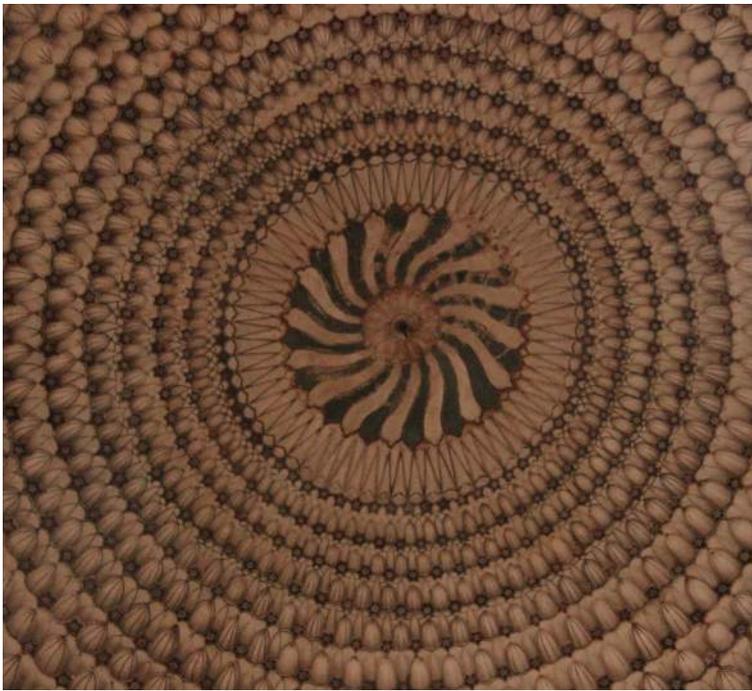
The design sense involved in the making of Bidriware is vastly inspired the designs etched into the ceilings and walls of the Bibi ka Maqbara, a mosque commissioned by the sixth Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the late 17th century in the memory of his first wife, Dilras Banu Begum.

Geometricals designs, florals inlays, criss-cross patterns, roses, et ectera are heavily influenced by the architecture of the monument. Having orginated in Karnataka, the Bidriware seen in Auranagabad thus displays its own spir-its through design elements incorporated in the craft after the construction of the regal structure.

On the facing page, several images taken at the Maqbara are placed. These showcase a striking resemblance to the surface design seen in Bidriware.



In Bellori, a village near Purnia, local craftsmen known as the Kansaris are engaged in molding and turning bidri vessels. The sonars (goldsmith) then do the engraving and polishing. Also found here is the gharki a less sophisticated variant of the Bidri. Another variant of the bidriwork can be seen in Lucknow's Zar Buland, where the ornamental designs are raised above the surface.



Manufacturing



Bidriware is manufactured from an alloy of copper and zinc (in the ratio 1:16) by casting. The zinc content gives the alloy a deep black colour. First, a mould is formed from soil made malleable by the addition of castor oil and resin. The molten metal is then poured into it to obtain a cast piece which is later smoothed by filing. The casting is now coated with a strong solution of copper sulphate to obtain a temporary black coating over which designs are etched freehand with the help of a metal stylus called a 'kalam'.

These kalams come in a variety of sizes with varied sharpness. All the Bidri design are made freehand straight on article. But simple aids such as a compass help in the correct positioning and

arrangement of intricate design. Fine wire or flattened strips of pure silver are then carefully hammered into these grooves.

The article then is filed, buffed and smoothed to get rid of the temporary black coating. This results in rendering the silver inlay hardly distinguishable from the gleaming metallic surface which is now all silvery white.

The bidriware is now ready for the final blackening process. Here, a special variety of soil which is available only in the unlit portions of the Bidar fort is used. It is mixed with ammonium chloride and water to produce a paste which is then rubbed onto a heated bidri surface. The paste selectively darkens the body while it has no effect on the silver inlay.

The paste is then rinsed off to reveal a shiny silver design resplendent against the black surface. As a finishing touch, oil is applied to the finished product to deepen the matt coating. The finished product appears black with brilliant silver inlay.

Bidri artisans tell that identifying good quality of soil from the fort or graveyards is done by tasting it with the tip of the tongue and this knack is passed on from generation to generation. It is supposed to be slightly pungent.

The different kinds of Bidri work in the past are Tar Kashi (inlay of wire), Taihnishan (inlay of sheet metal), Aftabi (cut out design in metal overlay), Zar Nishan (low relief pattern) and Zar buland (pattern in high relief).

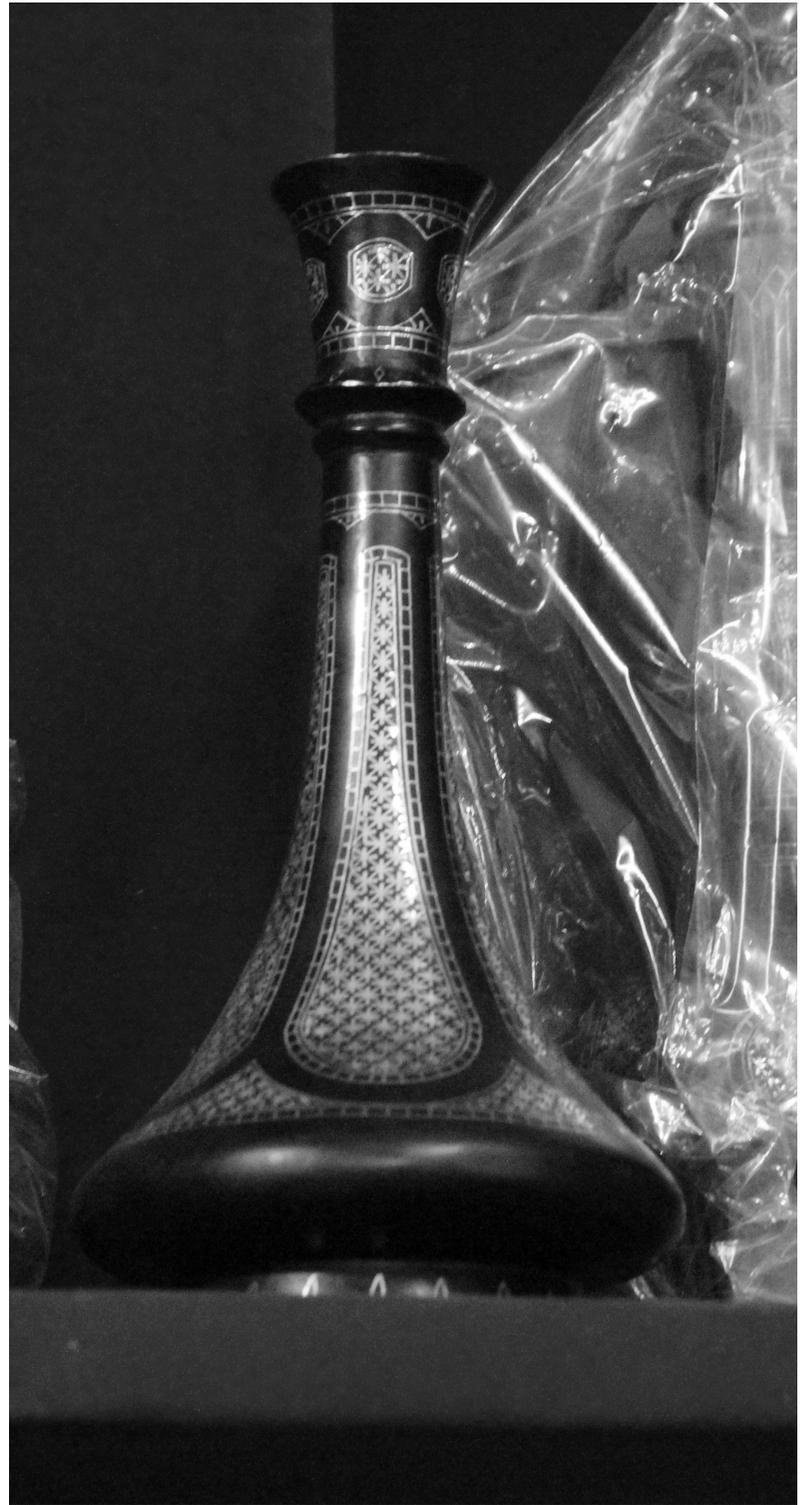
Today, mostly Tar Kashi work is seen, sometimes with Taihnishan; most Bidri work done today is a combination of these two techniques. Occasionally, Aftabi is also used.

Design:

The Bidri designs are usually patterns such as the Asharfi-ki-booti, stars, vine creepers and stylized poppy plants with flowers. Traditional designs include the Persian Rose and passages from the Quran in Arabic script.

A collection of Bidri articles form a part of the dowry of a daughter in a wealthy Muslim home, and the articles were collected for over a period of years, more for their finely executed designs than for their utility.

Today Bidri is produced for the tourist market and leans heavily towards cigarette boxes, small hinged



boxes etc. Larger objects such as lamp stands or tall vases are now collector's items.

Traditional designs are still very popular such as the Lal jungle, the intricate pattern of leaves and flowers which is reminiscent of the background of the frescoes in Ajanta and finds a parallel in Himroo work. Phool Jadi, another design showcase closely clustered stars. The lotus, rose and poppy in stylised forms are also popular. Sometimes calligraphy is seen when a verse from the Koran is used to embellish an article.

The Greek or Chinese key design is used in bands and other articles like trays. Geometric designs using an inverted 'V' combined with wavy lines are very effective.

If a man loves the labour of his trade, apart from any question of success or fame, the gods have called him.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Cluster

- Work-force
- Hotspots of Activity
- Government Support



MSSIDC

Paithani Production Centre, MSSIDC is a Maharashtra government initiative. The Maharashtra Small Scale Industries Development Corporation looks after training, production and distribution of the Paithani sari. A 5 acre land has been taken up for the initiative, 3 acres of which houses 204 handlooms. Weavers are trained annually in Nanded, near Nasik and Latur. Seasonal training is taken up at Paithan.

High quality Paithani saris are made here, approved by the Silk Mark Organisation of India. Paithani saris woven here are either silk on silk, silk on pure zari or silk on mixed zari. Saris made of pure silk and pure zari are made only on order, as pure zari is costly. Earlier the zari used was made of pure gold. Today, gold-plated silver zari is used. It takes 16 months to weave a pure zari sari, 8 times the time taken to weave a regular Paithani.

MSSIDC supplies Paithani saris to various places including, Marhati Emporium (WTC, Mumbai), Opera House Weaving centre (Mumbai), Maharashtra Emporium (Baba Kharak Singh Marg, (New Delhi), trade fairs and exhibitions. Their clientele includes Marathi tele-serials, designers working on the Paithani like Bela Sanghvi and Gaurang Shah, and the film industry. The Paithani sari has now become an item of tourist interest. Traditional paithanis are higher in demand as compared to contemporized versions. In fact, sales have increased in the last 2 decades as awareness and demand of authentic handloom products has grown. Demand rises in the months of October through May, Diwali and the marriage season. Weavers: Weavers at the MSSIDC are mostly locals and come from a variety of communities. 104 weavers work (99 female and 5 males) at the Paithani weaving centre and about 120 work independently at home.



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Weavers are paid by work, not by time. Each weaver is paid approximately Rs. 4000 per sari. Extra incentives include Diwali bonuses, medical insurances, daily tea. Bank loans are provided to help set up handlooms in the weavers' houses to facilitate extra income. Work timings are from 10 am to 5:30 pm.

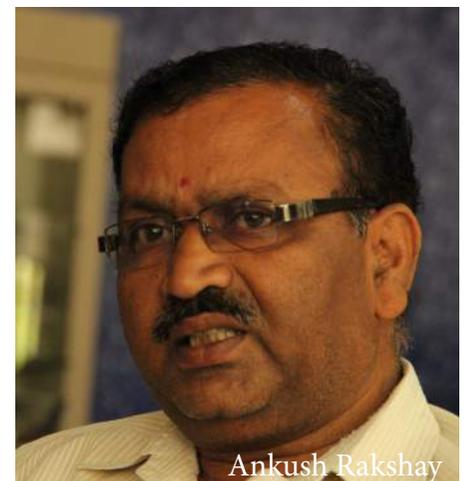
Work is delegated according to ability. Master craftsmen weave pure zari saris which sell up to Rs. 5 lakhs, as dexterity and delicacy is required. Female weavers often bring their children to work, as they are the sole caretakers and their husbands are at work.

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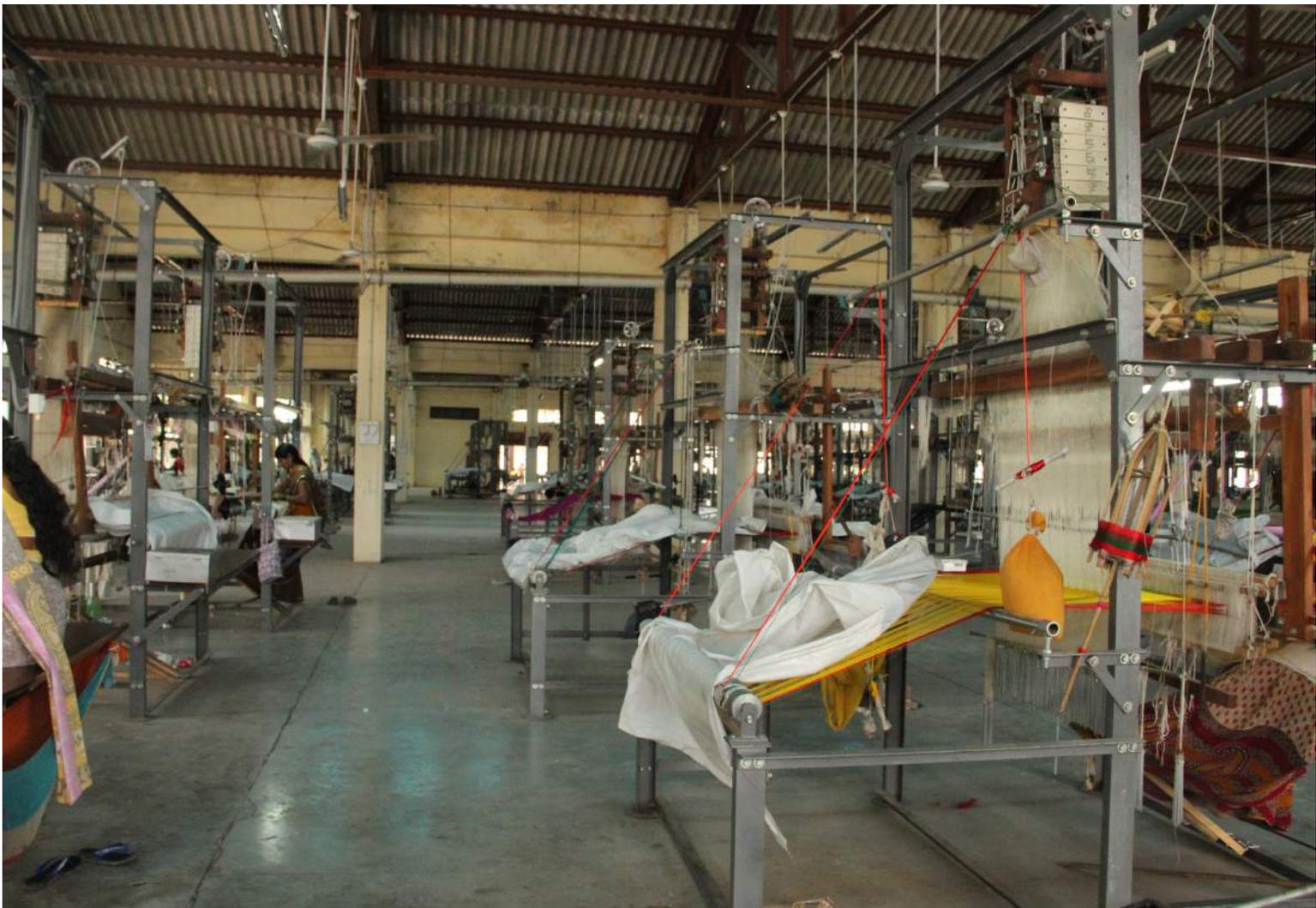
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Ankush Rakshay



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The store Dulha- Dulhan is in the midst of the local market and keeps their wide variety of sarees on the second floor surrounded by numerous women folding sarees and suits and lehengas and arranging them properly on the shelves.

The store manager Mangesh Kulkarni explained how the Paithani sarees were among the most prized possessions of the store. So important that they were not even kept along with the other merchandise of the store and had a special cupboard which was locked unless a customer came to buy the saree. The cupboard was full of sarees wrapped in brown paper to keep safe.

One by one they were unfolded and showed the beautiful expanse of silk and zari work with heavy 'pallavs' and borders. Magenta or 'gulbakshi' is the traditional colour of paithani saree but is today available in a wide variety of colours.

These sarees are handled with utmost care and hence the mannequins draped in paithani kept outside for show are covered in cloth to protect from the harsh rays of the sun and are uncovered during the evening. The sarees have recently gained a lot of popularity and people come from all over Maharashtra to buy them including the T.V. serials in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

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mannequins draped in paithani kept outside for show are covered in cloth to protect from the harsh rays of the sun and are uncovered during the evening. The sarees have recently gained a lot of popularity and people come from all over Maharashtra to buy them including the T.V. serials in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Most of the craftsmen are the very old ones with no successors ready to take over their legacy.

The traditional paithani saree was a 'navwari' or a 9yard saree but since most of the women have resorted to a 6yard saree now since it's easier to handle, a 'navwari' is custom made for the few buyers.

The prices for the paithani sarees vary according to the quality of silk and the amount of zari used. The shopkeeper did not make much profit per saree. It is a meagre Rs500. Since paithani is very precious, they only kept 5-6 pieces at a time. Originally, paithani was only made in handloom but now with the coming of technology and the need for speed, they are constructed in power-loom.

Dulha-Dulhan
Pankesh Agrawal
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Tilak Path,
Aurangabad - 431001
Ph. No.: 0240 - 2332841
0240 - 2241652

Paithani Silk Weaving Centre, CIDCO

Paithani weaving centre, CIDCO is situated in Jalna Road in Aurangabad. The centre deals in hand woven paithani saris and himroo products. It also has a great variety of Bidriware articles ranging from pots, vases and display pieces.

It is run by Mr.Ramesh Khatri(Manager). He explained how hard it was to find a pure paithani sari since most of the stores sell copies or source inexpensive versions from Yeola.

They not only specialize in Paithani and Himroo but also have a collection of traditional products from all over India including Kashmiri products.

They have an inhouse loom setup with more than 200 weavers working under them producing a wide variety of

indegenuous products.

The centre also specializes in making con-temporarized version of both Paithani and Himroo products.

The centre is one of the very few that produce paithani products other than saris. For example: wall hangings, shoes and waist-coats.

Ramesh Khatri
Paithani Weaving Centre, J
alna Road,
Aurangabad - 431001
Ph: 02402482811





Workforce



Name: Jitender Pardesi
Age: 26 years
Gender: Male
Income: Rs 2500 approx a month
Marital Status: Married
Number of Children: None

Has been working for the past 14 years and is the master craftsman at MSSIDC. As a regular source of income, Mr Pardesi works at the MSSIDC workshop during the daytime and also has looms back at his own house so that he can earn extra by weaving in his free time. He also holds exhibitions and live demonstrations in various cities like Delhi, Ludhiana, Mumbai etc.



Name: Kanchan Garde
Age: 29
Gender: Female
Income: Rs2000 approx
Marital Satus: Married
Number of Children: 2

Has been working for the past 12 years at the MSSIDC workshop making paithani sarees in her free time. She explained that working here has never been about earning money but rather spending time doing things other than the household chores. We caught her weaving a 'Matka design' on a 'wall piece' which was 36 inch long ordered by customer from Mumbai.



Name: Anwar Beikh
Age: 25 years
Gender: Male
Income: Rs5000 approx
Marital Status: Unmarried
Number of Children: None

We met him while he was weaving a 'koiri mor' design on the border of a Paithani saree. He is a master craftsman at the workshop and is also involved in the training of personnel. He undertakes the knotting of the warp threads. We were informed that it takes almost a day to finish the whole knotting process.



Name: Durga Baare
Age: 31 years
Gender: Female
Income: Rs2000 approx
Marital Status: Married
Number of Children: 4

Has been working for the past 14 years and was very excited to meet us posing especially for the camera giving us candid shots. She was working on a 'Kocheri design' which takes 5-6 months for completion, the weaver constructing only 2-3 inches a day. She showed us how the bobbin is filled using a 'Charkha' and even though she's been weaving pure silk Paithani sarees for more than a decade she doesn't own a single pure silk saree and has to resort to synthetic sarees for free movement on the 'Pata' or the seat where she sat and wove.



Name: Sumitra Devi
 Age: 29 years
 Gender: Female
 Income: Rs1200 approx
 Marital Status: Married
 Number of Children: 2

She has been working at the MSSIDC workshop since the past 4 years. We found her weaving with both her young daughters along with her. Her 7 year old daughter observing her mother all the while she was weaving and her younger daughter who was only 6 months lay on a swing like structure made by tying the opposite ends of a 'dupatta' on opposite surfaces. She explained us about 'Soda', the sacred piece of cloth with is used to cover the deities.



Name: Umesh Shelke
 Age: 32 years
 Gender: Male
 Income: Rs5700 approx
 Marital Status: Married
 Number of Children: 3

We found him knotting the fresh warp yarns on a loom. He is a master trainer and gives training here at MSSIDC as well as the Namded centres. The training easily gets him Rs5000 a month and every time he knots fresh yarn to start a new saree it gets him Rs400.'Dhaaga jodna' as they call it is done only by him in the workshop.



Name: Usha Bubham Shinde
 Age: 37 years
 Gender: Female
 Income: Rs 3000 approx
 Marital Status: Married
 Number of Children: 2

This very chatty weaver has been working with MSSIDC since the past 11 years and has a daughter following in her footsteps and is also a 'Paithani weaver' at MSSIDC itself. She has a son who is working at 'Ajanta Medical Company' and is currently taking care of the family. She just like many other female weavers has set up a loom at her house and works from home when her shift gets over. The loom took Rs10000 to setup sans raw materials and is a great way for these women to earn some extra cash seeing their meagre salaries. Some take the help of financial institutions in the form of loans and others just borrow from relatives for the initial costs of the setting of the loom.



Name: Kashibai Pote
 Age: 35 years
 Gender: Female
 Income: Rs3000 approx
 Marital Status: Married
 Number of Children: 1

Caught her in the middle of making a 'lotus kali' border and a 'Muniya' or a flying parrot design along the 'pallav'. She explained us how it would take her about one and a half months in total to complete this saree and that the saree would be sold for Rs20000 and she would be getting Rs 4000 on the completion.



Name: Sunita Bombke
Age: 34 years
Gender: Female
Income: Rs1500 approx
Marital Status: Married
Number of Children: 2

She has been working with MSSIDC since the past 11 years and we found her making a silk on silk Paithani saree with no 'zari'. The sari she was constructing had an 'Asavalli' or 'flowering vines' border. She informed us that the total production cost of the saree would turn out to be Rs10000 and that it would take at least a month for completion.



Name: Shobha S. Jadhav
Age: 28 years
Gender: Female
Income: Rs 2100 approx
Marital Status: Married
Number of Children: 4

We were introduced to a very interesting contemporary design that was being woven on a Paithani saree. This new introduction is called the 'Swapnavel' design or the floral vine design on the back of a 500 rupees note. It was being constructed on the border of the saree.



Name: Santosh Gavare
Age: 29 years
Gender: Male
Income: Rs3000 approx
Marital Status: Married
Number of Children: 2

We met one of the very fine master craftsmen who was currently working on a Rs400000 saree with pure zari polished with gold. The saree had 'buta' motifs on the field with a very intricate 'pallav' that was being worked on. This saree takes around one and a half years to construct. The weaver explained that he earns Rs7000 on the completion of a saree with 'asavalli' design, Rs12000 with lotus design, Rs3500 with 'muniya' design and Rs 52000 for a 'baangri mor' or four peacocks in a bangle respectively. But since 'baangri mor' take a year to a year and a half, the earning is not very much.