

Design Resource

Traditional Utensils - Varanasi

Traditional Utensils of Brass, Copper and Silver

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/traditional-utensils-varanasi>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
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Introduction

Kamandalu which is also known as Kamandala or Kamandalam is a traditional water pot used for carrying water by Hindu Naga sect sadhus, yogis and Buddhist monks. In Hindu mythology it is represented that gods and sanyasis carry Kamandalu in their hands that holds a greater spiritual significance. Some of the gods and goddesses represented with Kamandalu in their hands are:

Lord Shiva: Lord Shiva is symbolized with numerous iconic features that has abundant philosophy behind it. One among such icon is Kamandalu. It is constantly always seen along the image Lord Shiva. It is believed that Kamandalu of Shiva holds nectar and it symbolizes the purification of mind.

Goddess Durga: During the time of Navarathri (Dasara festival) goddess Durga is worshiped in nine forms. One among such nine forms is goddess Brahmacharini. She is represented by holding Kamandalu in one hand and rosary (japa mala) in the other hand which denotes prosperity, peace, grace, happiness and austerity.

Guru Dattatreya: Guru Dattatreya son of Rishi Athri and his wife Anusuya, has six hands and in one hand he holds Kamandalu. The water in his Kamandalu is believed to be of highest purity and has the magical power to cure all the physical and mental ailments.

Lord Brahma: Lord Brahma having four arms holds rosary and Vedas in top right and left hands. In lower right hand he gives Abhayamudra and the lower left hand holds a Kamandalu that represents the cosmic energy through which the universe is created.

Gods like Varuna (God of rain), Agni (God of fire), Guru Brihaspathi (Guru of gods), Goddess Ganga whose birth is attributed to the Kamandalu of Lord Brahma are associated with water and are represented with Kamandalu.

It is mentioned that the water from this traditional pot is used by Gods and munis to curse the sinners and also bless their devotees by sprinkling the Kamandalu's water on them. As mentioned in Hindu religious text 'Devi Mahatmya' Goddess Karamgamaladharini is described to wear a garland of several Kamandalas around her neck and goddess Brahmini killed the demons by sprinkling the holy water from her Kamandalu on them. This upholds the power of the water in the Kamandalu. According to the most renowned Hindu text 'Garuda purana', it states that gifting a Kamandalu to a Brahmin during the ritual of a funeral ceremony done for a dead person ensures that the dead person receives plenty of drinking water in his afterlife journey.

Even today in some villages the Hindu religious sanyasis visit few houses and collect rice till their brass Kamandalu gets filled and then cook their mid-day meal sitting under the peepal tree. And recently during the time of an excavation, a coin that belongs to the period 183 to 165 BC is found which has a stamp showing Lord Krishna carrying a Kamandalu. Till the date in many of the Hindu temples of Lord Shiva and other deities Kamandalu is still used for doing abhisheka (purifying the idol of deity by pouring water over it) to the lord.

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The actual Kamandalu is traditionally made of ripe bottle gourd or the pumpkin or coconut shell or from the wood of Kamanadalataru tree (bottle gourd tree). Often ripe pumpkin is chosen for making Kamandalu. It is initially plucked from the pumpkin creeper plant. Then the ripe pumpkin is sun dried and once it is dried the pulp and the seeds inside are scooped out retaining the outer skin intact. Then the skin is thoroughly cleaned and dried again just to remove the moisture content. Once the moisture is removed, the shell (skin) of the pumpkin is cut into the shape of Kamandalu (a pot that holds water) and a handle is also made out of it and attached to it. This process of making Kamandalu out of pumpkin is interconnected with a deep symbolism which holds the spiritual significance. The pumpkin Kamandalu is believed to be containing nectar and is presented in front of Lord Shiva on the ground in the centre. Here the process of making Kamandalu is connected with the spiritual messages linked to the individuals regarding the worldly plane representing self-contained and simple life. Here the pumpkin creeper plant is compared to the material world, the pumpkin is compared to an individual, seeds and the pulp of the pumpkin is symbolized as ego. The cleaning and removal of the pulp and seeds denotes the practice of controlling the desires. As a conclusion it states that one should remove the ego and the desires by getting detached from the physical world and stay pure within by cleaning his inner self in order to experience the bliss of the self to attain Moksha. As the way the water is held in Kamandalu, in the same way the mind should fit into the enjoyment of the celestial bliss. It is also considered that the water in the traditional pumpkin Kamandalam is equivalent to Amrita – the elixir of life representing one's life, fertility, prosperity and continuity.

Now a days Kamandalu is made of brass, copper, silver and also with clay sometimes. Sometimes we also come across a unique Kamandalu made of brass and copper. Aesthetically speaking it is a beautiful combination of brass and copper. As the copper represents river Jamuna and brass represents river Ganga, this type of Kamandalu is called as Ganga Jamuna Kamandalu. This Kamandalu has three stepped base. It is a round shaped pitcher with a wide-open neck that has a semicircular handle attached to the mouth of the Kamandalu to facilitate the grip when carried and a snout - through which the water can be poured in a controlled way.

Since ancient times Hindus consider some of the metals are very sacred and auspicious to prepare gods idols and other Pooja materials. Three among such metals are Copper, Brass and silver. According to Hindu astrology the metal copper is ruled by the planet Venus which is mainly used for money and fertility purpose. As the planet Venus has the lowest rotating frequency and being passive, receptive, kind and ready to adopt are the characters of it and copper shares the same characteristics with a great affinity to Venus. Copper easily blends with other metals and easily transfers heat and electricity and it is used for preparing yantras among Hindus. The other metal that is considered as sacred and used among Hindus is Brass. It gives utmost reliability and has more strength due to which it is used for making idols, yantras and considered it as pure. The idols that are made of brass without any problems pass on by generations to generations. Thus the Kamandalu is either completely made of brass or with the combination of brass and copper. Silver is also one among the metals that are highly used for the rituals. As per astrology Silver is ruled by the planet Moon. It is used as a protection against the supernatural and helps in improving the psychic ability and intuition. The planet moon is associated with the characteristics of motherliness, femininity, cycles and the emotional changes. Thus it is also used as the religious jewellerys and accessories in mass.

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Intricately carved silver stool.



Beautifully designed silver plate.



Attractively ornamented silver substantial.

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A piece of silver decorative stuff.



Senior artisan giving the final finishing to the silver utensil.



Silver decorative material.

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Pleasingly decorated kalash.



Traditional lota made of brass and copper.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools used for making traditional utensils are as follows:

- **Brass Metal:** Brass is the main metal used for making Kamandalu.
- **Copper:** Copper metal is also one of the main materials used when the Kamandalu is made in the combination of brass and copper.
- **Silver:** Silver is used for making some religious accessories.
- **Brazing Flux Powder:** It is used while joining the different parts of the Kamandalu.
- **Charcoal:** Charcoal is used in the kiln to lit the fire to heat the Kamandalu.
- **Furnace:** Furnace is used for heated purpose of the Kamandalu.
- **Hammer:** Hammer is used for tapping on the joints of different parts of the traditional pitcher to get the proper shape.
- **Water:** Water is used for mixing the brazing powder and brass powder that is used for filling the gaps. And it is also poured on the pitcher to cool down after it is heated.
- **Polishing Machine:** Polishing machine is used for polishing the brass products.
- **Buffing Machine:** Buffing machine is used to get the smooth finishing of the Kamandalu.
- **Files:** Files are used while polishing the brass and copper products to get the fine finishing.
- **Chisels:** These are some of the designery chisels used for embossing to decorate the silver sheets.
- **Scissor:** It is used for cutting the silver sheets.
- **Lack:** The sticky substance that is used for holding the silver sheet in grip while creating the impressions on them.
- **Fire Gun:** It is used for heating / firing the substances while joining the two parts of the silver.

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Silver bullion bar is the main material used for making silver utensils.



Brass and copper are two basic metals that is used to prepare any sort of utensil.

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Tools used for making silver utensils.



File used for polishing the utensils.

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Hammer is used while engraving the silver plates.

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Another form of hammer.



Chisels are used to etch designs on the silver metal.



Compass used for measuring the distance while sketching on the silver sheet.

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A tool that is used as a support.



The other tool that is used for supportive base.

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Some of the tools that used for making brass, copper and silver utensils.



Brass powder that is used for filling the gaps between the two parts.

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Brazing flux powder used while joining the different parts of the Kamandalu.



Benzoin stones.

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Making Process



Silver Utensils Making



Kamandalu Making

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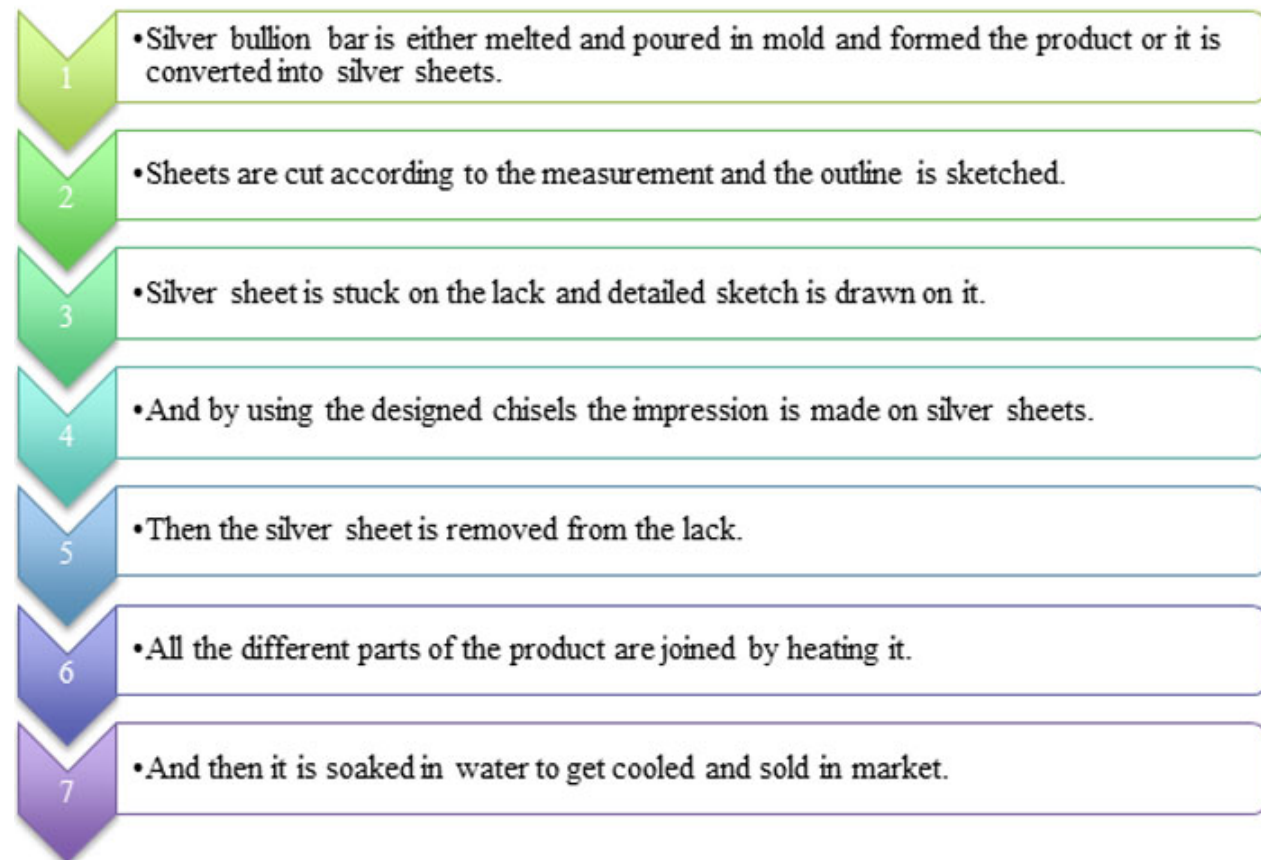
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Silver Utensils Making

Silver bullion bar is initially converted into silver sheets. These sheets are cut according to required size and the basic outline sketch is made on it. Then the lack is spread evenly on the stone and it is lightly heated through fire gun and on that the silver sheet is stuck. The temperature of the lack is maintained till the process of silver sheet designing gets completed by heated it often. Then the detailed design is drawn on the silver sheet and by using designery chisels it is pressed on the silver sheet according to the design. By using this embossing method the design of the silver sheet is made and removed from the lack. Later when necessary as per the design the extra silver is cut off and all the parts of the same single product is joined by heating it. Once all the parts of the product is joined it is allowed to get cooled in temperature by immersing the product in the water for some time. And then once it is completely cooled it is taken out from water and sold in market.

Flow Chart:



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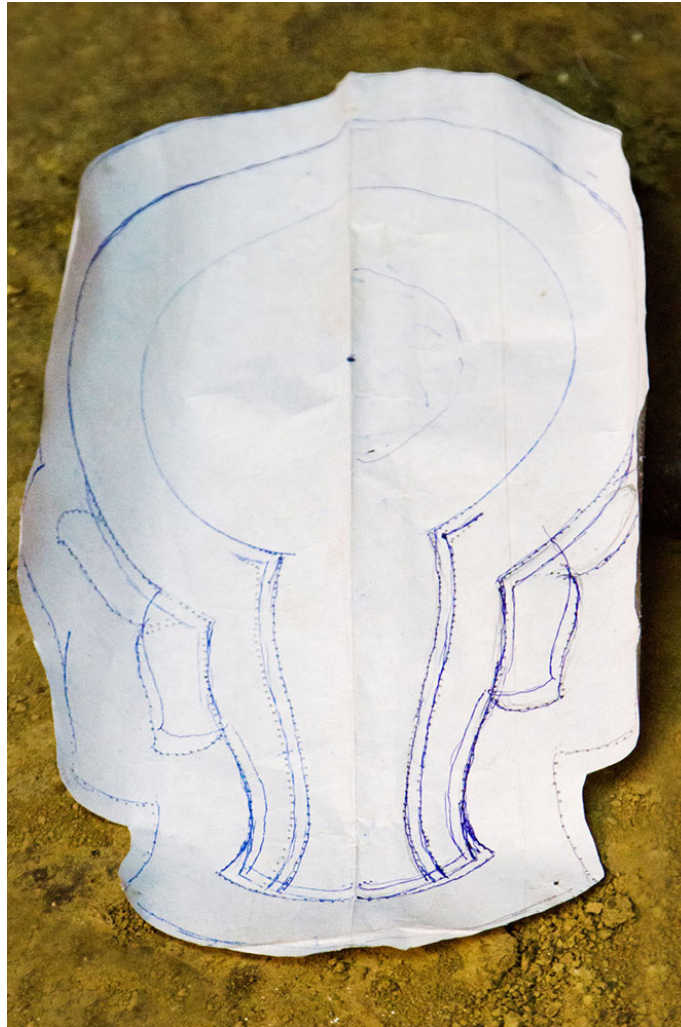
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Initially a sketch is made before starting to do any utensil.



Silver bullion bar is needed to for making silver utensils.

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Silver bullion bar is converted into the silver thin sheets.



Silver sheet is measured before the design is drawn on it.



Later the outline is made on the sheet.

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Accordingly the extra sheet is cut off.



Lack is spread even on a stone evenly by melting the lack through fire gun.



On lack the silver sheet is stuck for the grip purpose.



Silver sheet is pressed in the corners of the silver sheet to make it stuck to lack.

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It is etched neatly as per the design.



The detailed design is drawn on the silver sheet.



The other dimension of the silver sheet that is been etched.

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Over view of the silver sheet on which the designery impression is made.



Then the lack is melted again to separate the designed silver sheet from lack.



Then it is dipped in water to cool down.



Then it is again neatly polished using file tool.

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Then all the different parts of the designed silver pieces are fired to join them.



After firing it is held in a metal holder to transfer the material.



And then the silver utensil is immersed in water for it to calm down in temperature.



As a final process it is buffed.

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Attractively carved/etched silver plate is then prepared and sold in market.

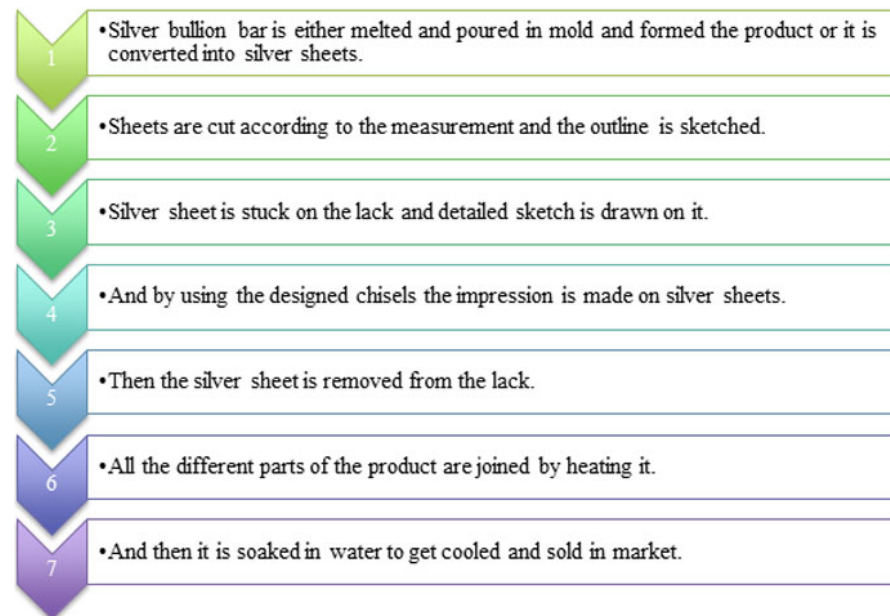
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Kamandalu Making

To prepare a brass Kamandalu, initially the scrap brass pieces are allocated and heated in a furnace. The heated brass, which is of liquid form is poured into the pitcher mold and allowed it to form a solid shape. And then the mold is detached from the brass pitcher. Sometimes when the Kamandalu is made in the combination of brass and copper, the top mouth portion and the below portion in the shape of a cup is made of brass using the two different molds. Then the thick copper sheet is cut and welded according to the required measurement and joined in-between the upper and lower parts of the brass Kamandalu. Initially the upper mouth portion of Kamandalu made of brass is fixed to the copper ring by hammering it and shaping it. The gap between the brass and copper is filled by painting the liquid mixer of brass powder and brazing flux powder as a binding agent and heated in the furnace. Once the Kamandalu's middle portion of copper and the top brass portion of Kamandalu is attached firmly by fixing and heating, it is allowed to cool for some time. Then the down brass part of Kamandalu is attached in the same way to the other side of the copper and heated in furnace and cooled. When it is only the brass Kamandalu then once the pitcher mold is taken, it is allowed for cooling and then it is neatly polished by the polishing machine. After the pitcher is ready a hole is made according to the requirement, in the area where the snout has to be attached. A brass snout is also made by using a mold and is polished. And then it is attached to the pitcher and the mixer of brass powder and brazing flux powder is applied and heated and then buffed completely. A thick sheet of brass is cut accordingly and attached in a semicircular manner at the mouth of the Kamandalu's either sides as a handle. Thus the traditional brass Kamandalu is prepared and sold at Varanasi.

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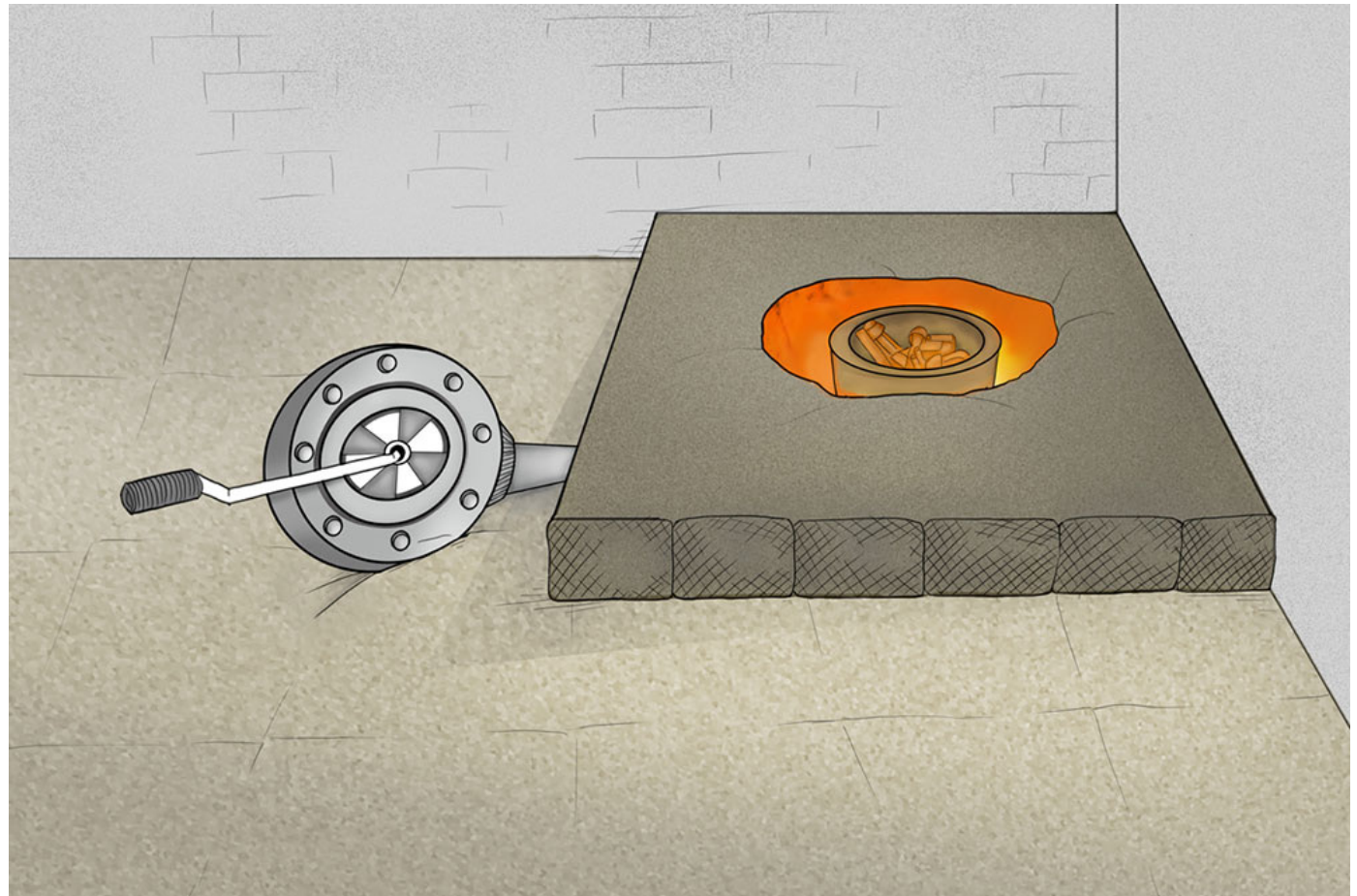
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Scrap brass metal is filled in graphite crucible and placed in the furnace for heating.

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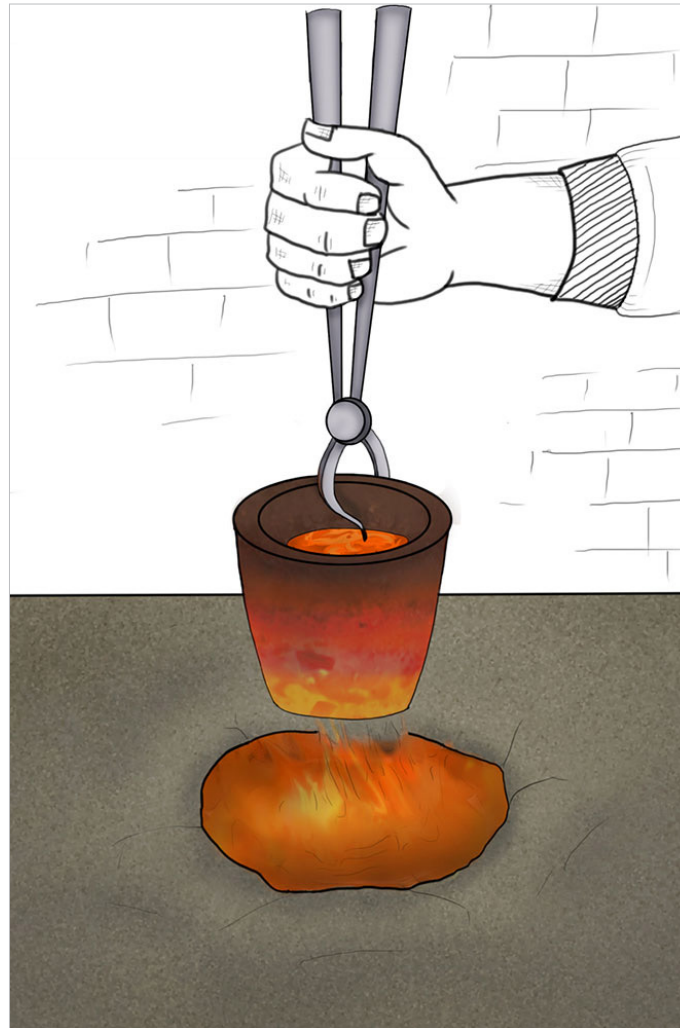
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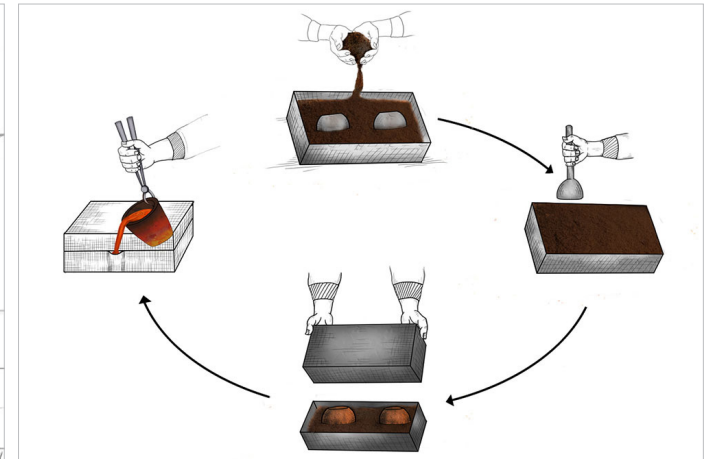
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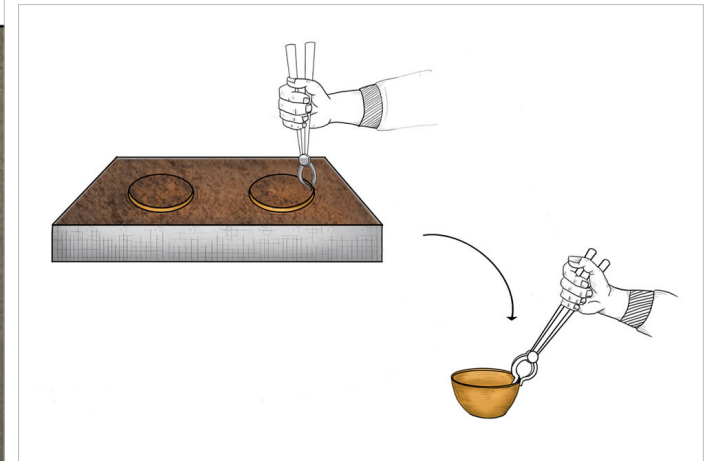
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Molten brass is taken out with the help of the crucible ladle.



Then the molten brass is poured inside the mould.



After the molten brass takes the shape of the mould, it is separated from the mould.

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When the kamandalu is made in the combination of copper and brass, then the copper portion and the brass top portion of kamandalu are adjusted to each other and fixed tightly by hammering.

Overview of the copper and brass portions joined to make kamandalu.

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The bonding liquid is then applied on the joints of the kamandalu's outside portion.



The bonding agents for copper and brass are mixed brass powder thoroughly.

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By using a brush this mixer is applied inside portion of the joints.



Overview of the parts of the kamandalu.

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Then the parts of the kamandalu that joined with the bonding agents are fired in the furnace.



Once it is completely fired it is taken out and allowed it for cooling.

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Again the same process of joining the bottom and other portions of the kamandalu is done.



After joining it is again fired in furnace.



After firing it is allowed for cooling.

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Water is poured on the fired kamandalu to calm down the temperature.



Outlook of the kamandalu that is fired and cooled.

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Traditional Utensils - Varanasi

Traditional Utensils of Brass, Copper and Silver

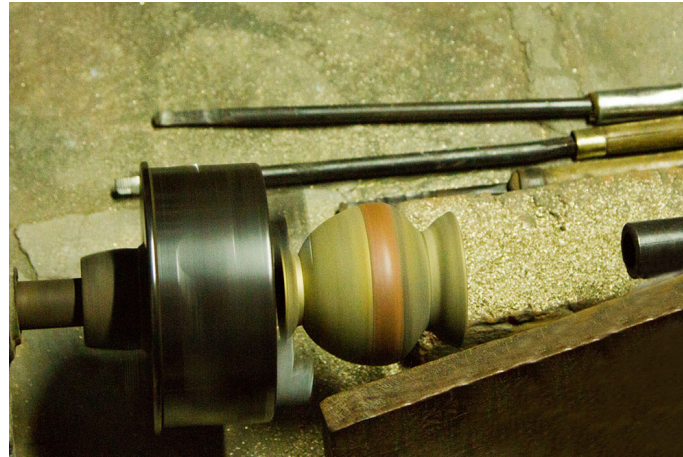
by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/traditional-utensils-varanasi/making-process/kamandalu-making>



Then the kamandalu is attached to the polishing machine.



Using the file tool it is polished thoroughly and buffed neatly.



Handle is attached and sold in market.

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 - 3.1. Silver Utensils Making
 - 3.2. **Kamandalu Making**
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Design Resource

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/traditional-utensils-varanasi/products>

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Products

Varanasi is very famous for its traditional products that are mainly used while performing some rituals by Hindus. It has the heritage of maintaining the same tradition by producing such rare products and selling it. Some of the products that are available are:

- A traditional brass lot / pitcher (Kamandalu).
- Copper tumbler.
- A brass plate.
- Brass lamp.
- Copper cup.
- A trishul and a snake of lord Shiva made of brass.
- Brass Agarbatti stand.
- Brass Abhishekam tray.
- Silver decorative plate.
- Silver idols.
- Silver mantap.
- Silver bowl.
- Silver pot.



Pot made in the combination of brass and copper.

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Attractively designed silver kalash.



Silver kettle.



Traditionally used silver bowl for kumkum.

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Intricately carved silver walking stick.



Beautifully etched silver articles.



Silver Mantap used in pooja room.

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A plate and a tumbler made of copper.



Silver Mantap used in pooja room.



Arti Thali made of brass.

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Copper tumbler of different design.



Silver artifact.



Copper plates.

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Copper plates.



Brass container.

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Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/traditional-utensils-varanasi/video>

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Video



Making of Brass Utensils

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Contact Details

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You can get in touch with

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