



Sangeet Natak Akademi  
New Delhi

**Traditional craft of making brass and copper utensils among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list**

**27 November 2014, New Delhi:** "Traditional craft of making brass and copper utensils among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab" nominated from India is the latest element inscribed on the Representative List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This decision was made in the ongoing ninth session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee taking place at Paris from 24 November to 28 November 2014. The Representative List seeks to create awareness about the intangible heritage of a community, provide recognition to its tradition and how it is reflected in the community's cultural diversity. The Intergovernmental Committee consists of 24 representatives from the State Parties elected by the General Assembly.

The Thatheras of Jandiala Guru in Punjab, India are a clearly defined community sharing a common ethnic, historical and geographical identity which is connected with the Jandiala Guru de Thathere, or the traditional craft of making brass and copper utensils among the Thatheras. Belonging to a single caste/social group, viz., Khatris, and following a common hereditary occupation, that of processing metal and crafting utensils using brass, copper and kansa (an unusual alloy of copper, tin and zinc), the craftspeople occupy a specific settlement-'Bazar Thatherian' (market of the Thatheras), Gali Kashmirian, in the small town of Jandiala Guru about 15 km from the holy town of Amritsar, on the Grand Trunk Road in the state of Punjab, India.

The settlement of the craftspeople in Jandiala Guru is laid out along a series of narrow lanes, lined on both sides by small home-cum-worksheds with families living and working on their hereditary profession. Both male and female members participate in the processing and creation of the artefacts. The process begins with procuring cooled cakes of metal which are flattened into thin plates, and are then hammered into curved shapes, creating the required pots, urns, plates and bowls and other artefacts. Heating the plates while hammering and curving them into different shapes requires careful temperature control, which is done by using tiny wood-fired stoves (aided by hand-held bellows) buried in the earth. The utensils are manually finished by polishing with acid, sand and tamarind juice. Designs are carved by skilfully hammering a series of tiny dents on the surface of the heated metal. Using basic tools that are handmade, the craftspeople create ritualistic, ceremonial and utilitarian vessels for both individual and community use.

Jandiala Guru de Thathere is today a threatened craft due to lack of adequate patronage and marketing. As a community, the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru while not formally part of a very active group are conscious of the uniqueness of their craft and the fragility of its existence and recognise the need to formulate techniques to preserve the element by reaching out to the broader community both within and outside the state of Punjab.

In India Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi is the appointed nodal agency for the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). This is the eleventh element from India to be inscribed on the Representative List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the first element in the country under the domain of 'traditional craftsmanship'.

**Helen Acharya**

Secretary – Sangeet Natak Akademi