

HANDICRAFT(DHOKRA)



Dhokra metalwork in Dhenkanal is deeply rooted in the traditions of tribal communities, particularly the Ghasis and the Kondhs, who have passed down this craft through generations.

Historical and Cultural Context: Dhokra art is one of the earliest known methods of non-ferrous metal casting known to human civilization. The oldest form of metal casting `Dhokra` is popular because of its primitive simplicity, exclusive folk characters, strength, and shapeliness of design. The statues find forms like the traditional attires of the tribals. As they go about their daily lives, making the moulds, softening the wax, and wrapping the moulds with slender threads, the beauty of the art and pain of their hardships reflect in the final product, which can take up to months.

The Lost-Wax Technique: The essence of the process is to model the object in wax, each one individually around a hardened clay core which has approximately the shape of object to be cast. Layers of soft refractory material are laid over wax model and hardened into a mould. The wax between core and mould is lost or burnt out as mould is heated. Then molten metal takes its place and hardens between the core and inner surface of mould which holds a negative impression of the wax model in all its detail. The outer surface of hardened metal, therefore, reproduce the shape and details of original wax model, with the core producing hollow interior. The hard core and mould become spongy and soft on firing and are easily removed.

Materials Used: The primary material used in Dhokra craft is alloy made of brass, nickel and zinc, although sometimes copper and other metals are also used. The choice of brass gives the crafted pieces a distinct golden hue, making them highly prized.

Product Range and Designs: Dhokra artisans in Dhenkanal produce a wide variety of products, including:

Figurines of deities such as Lord Buddha, Lord Ganesh, and tribal gods.

Animal figurines, especially elephants, horses, and birds, which symbolize strength, grace, and nature's harmony.

Home decor items such as lamps, candle stands, and wall hangings.

Functional objects like bells, boxes, and utensils, which combine utility with artistic beauty.

Jewelry such as earrings, necklaces, and bracelets, inspired by traditional tribal designs.

The figures are often stylized and feature geometric and flowing patterns, reflecting the simplicity and spiritual essence of the tribal communities in Odisha.

Cultural and Economic Significance: Dhokra craft plays a vital role in the local economy. It provides livelihood to hundreds of artisans and has gained recognition not only within India but also in international markets. The craft is widely appreciated for its eco-friendly production method and its connection to ancient traditions. It has been promoted by various governmental and non-governmental organizations to sustain and preserve the art, with efforts being made to modernize designs while still maintaining its traditional aesthetic.

CASHEW



Dhenkanal, located in the central part of Odisha, has a favorable climate for the cultivation of cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*). The district's warm climate, well-drained soil, and adequate rainfall make it suitable for growing cashew trees. The district has been steadily expanding its cashew cultivation, and it is now one of the leading cashew-growing areas in Odisha. The farmers in Dhenkanal practice a combination of traditional and modern

farming techniques, which have contributed to the increased production of cashew nuts and the development of a thriving cashew-based industry in the region.

Economic Significance of Cashew

The cultivation and processing of cashew nuts provide employment to thousands of farmers, labourers, and workers in the processing units. **Cashew processing units**, which are spread across the district, employ a significant portion of the local workforce, especially women, in various activities such as harvesting, shelling, and packaging of cashew nuts.

The cashew industry in Dhenkanal not only caters to domestic markets but also has a growing **export potential**. As part of the ODOP initiative, the government has been promoting the establishment of more cashew processing units, providing training to farmers, and facilitating the creation of value-added products like cashew-based snacks, cashew butter, and cashew milk.

Geographical Conditions and Cultivation Practices

Dhenkanal's geographical conditions, such as its soil type and climate, are well-suited for cashew cultivation. Cashew trees grow best in areas with an average annual rainfall of 900-1500 mm and temperatures between 25°C to 35°C. The cultivation of cashew in Dhenkanal is typically done on small to medium-sized agricultural holdings. The trees start bearing fruits within 3-4 years of planting, and the harvest season typically begins in the months of January to March.

Government Support and Initiatives The ODOP scheme has brought increased attention to the potential of cashew as an economic driver in Dhenkanal. The government, in collaboration with various agricultural and industrial organizations, has undertaken several initiatives to support cashew farmers in the district, like, training programs on modern agricultural practices, pest control, and post-harvest management, providing subsidies and loans to farmers for the purchase of high-quality planting material, irrigation systems, and equipment, setting up more cashew processing units in the district, creating more employment opportunities and increasing the value-added products that can be exported, facilitating better marketing channels for cashew products, including participation in national and international trade fairs to promote Dhenkanal's cashew industry globally.