

# KONDAPALLI

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Andhra Pradesh

# OVERVIEW

Kondapalli is an industrial town near Vijayawada city, Andhra Pradesh, India with nearly 38000 population covering an area of 1.5 sq kilometers. It is about 20 km by road from Vijayawada on National Highway 221 and on Hyderabad - Vijayawada railway line.

The word Kondapalli gets its name from the shepherd named 'Kondadu' who showed the site to the King Kondaveedu Reddy and hence it was called Kondapalli. The town is known for two major things i.e. ancient 'Kondapalli Fort' and its locally made toy craft Kondapalli bommalu (Kondapalli toys). 'Kondapalli Fort' of three storeys was built in this place during the region of King Anavema Reddy in 1360 A.D. It was however during the rule of the Qutab Shahis that Kondapalli gained paramount importance and fame as a hill fortress. The 37 Sultans re-christened it as Mustafanagar. Later, the British East India Company considered it as a strategic location and a military school existed here till 1859 (as revealed by the historic records of Andhra Pradesh in general and Vijayawada in particular).





# HISTORY OF CRAFT

- ❖ 400 years from now, old tradition
- ❖ The artisans who make them are called 'Nakarshalu'.
- ❖ It started with idols of lord shiva.
- ❖ Wooden toys depicting people from two different communities.
- ❖ These toys imaginatively visualize occupations and customs of local communities.
- ❖ Toys depicting people of different generations.
- ❖ Then they started making idols of gods and goddesses and folk art forms.





# PRODUCTS

- ❖ Ambari elephants
- ❖ Krishna dolls
- ❖ Ganesha dolls
- ❖ Birds
- ❖ Animals
- ❖ Palm trees
- ❖ Village sets
- ❖ Dasavtara sets-ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu
- ❖ Corporate gift boxes.





# TOOLS

- ❖ Files
- ❖ Chisels
- ❖ Saw
- ❖ Bow saw
- ❖ Carving tools
- ❖ Cutting tools





# RAW MATERIALS

## WOODEN TOYS

- ❖ Made of softwood named Tella Poniki, which are found in nearby kondapalli hills. Also they import from Telangana Khammam district.
- ❖ Enamel paints from nearby shops/ oil, watercolor, vegetable dyes.
- ❖ Toys are first heated and then applied kerosene on them.
- ❖ The carving tool is made by themselves only and the other machine and hand tools are bought.
- ❖ Packaging is done in plastic and newspaper and packed in a cardboard box.
- ❖ Kerosene





# WORKING CONDITIONS

- ❖ They work in courtyard of the houses.
- ❖ They prefer sitting down and leaning instead of sitting in chair resulting in back pain, neck pain etc.
- ❖ They feel hot in summer because they can't use fan as the paint dries up by fan.
- ❖ The painting of the idols and figurines is done in a dark room devoid of sunlight and heat.





# WORKING HIERARCHY

- ❖ Each segment of the cluster has more than 4 men(carving) and 4 women(painting).
- ❖ The oldest male of the house works on carving and the oldest lady applies kerosene or otherwise cooks.
- ❖ The most important people work on carving and least important on painting.





# PROTECTION OF THE WORKERS

- ❖ As there is no involvement of any injurious task, there is no real requirement of any protection.
- ❖ But during cutting and sawing, gloves are not worn.
- ❖ Doesn't wear anything.
- ❖ No precaution is taken in the paint area for inhaling the paint.





# QUALITY CHECK

- ❖ Normally, the quality check for the products is not done.
- ❖ When trainees come from Chennai and Hyderabad' they check the quality of the products.
- ❖ They give certificate on the basis of quality.





# DISTRIBUTOR

LEPAKSHI , the biggest distributor chain play a major role in spreading kondapalli toys across India. Each year trainer are send for months to help them come up with new design in the hand crafted products for which workers are suppose to get 250 rs per head/day instead middle men and the established companies give them 150 rs ( compensate 100 rs for providing trainee).

LANCO supports the craftsmen by funding them.

INDIAMART is an online platform to reach the craftsmen and place order.

CRAFTCOUP is a website which sells Kondapalli toys.

LOCAL RETAILERS are present in Vijayawada and other local markets which place their order to the craftsmen.





# DECLINING CULTURE

15 years back there were 110 workers but their children chose to study and move forward with other jobs. So presently, there are 20 age old workers (60 yrs +), 40 adults (30-40 yrs) and 4 youngster (20-25 yrs) . Thus the craft is declining on a fast pace.





# PAINTING

- ❖ For painting the wooden and paper mache idols, enamel paint is used after primer paint.
- ❖ They get the paints from nearby shops of good paint companies like asian paints and burger.
- ❖ As Vijayawada has a hot climate, the brushes that they use to paint the raw idols tend to dry up.
- ❖ Therefore, they dip the brush in kerosene so that the brush doesn't get dried up.
- ❖ Still sometimes, they brush hardens and they get a tough time removing the paint or either buying a new brush.
- ❖ Previously, they used to make vegetable or natural dyes of their own and use them with oil.
- ❖ The usage of water- colour was also very common.





# DESIGN CHANGE

**Le-pakshi**, a handicraft platform conducts workshop and trains the craftsmen new methods and techniques. They introduce new designs in the craft which is easily marketable. They themselves are not affected by the change in trends and are reluctant to bring any change in design themselves.





# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

To promote and protect the traditional art form of 400 years, LANCO through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme has launched an initiative called LIGHT (Lanco Institute of General Humanitarian Trust), in place since 2002. LIGHT has enabled about 140 Kondapalli artisan families to upgrade the quality of production and marketing of Kondapalli toys, thus keeping alive the age-old cottage industry. 80% of the beneficiaries are from SC/ST community.

NGOs have also been roped in to help. 'Dastakar' (Andhra Pradesh) was one of the first to encourage the artisans to work with an improved colour palette. Much later, Crafts Council (Andhra Pradesh) conducted workshops and there was a gradual return to traditional vegetable dyes. NIFT, Hyderabad introduced a product line more suited to the contemporary milieu and corporate gift items like boxes, pen knives, key holders, table clocks, pin and pen holders.

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# LANCO





# WOODEN MODELS

Wood is cut from the trees of the kondapalli forest called Tella Poniki. And cut with a wood cutting machine.



The big circular blocks are then cut into multiple small pieces of wood to make human figures of miniature sizes. The cutting tool and chisel is used in this step.



External part of the raw wood is peeled off by a small planer. A stopper is used for the wood piece from moving while the worker is shaping the wood.





The raw wood starts taking shape with the help of carving tool. And the features are added.



Finishes are done with the sandpaper



It is dipped in Kerosene to make it pest and termite resistant.





It is dried over a small furnace when it is humid.



Sweet potato gum, sawdust and tamarind are mixed and used as coating for surface finishing. Filler and sandpaper are used for smoothening the surface



Final painting is done by hand.









# DANCING DOLLS

- ❖ Chalk powder
- ❖ Paper powder
- ❖ Dye powder
- ❖ Boiled sweet potato
- ❖ Shining powder
- ❖ Concrete moulds (white cement)





# PAPERMACHE



Core ingredients:  
Chalk Powder, Paper  
powder, Dye powder are  
sorted.



These ingredients are mixed  
with little amount of water.



The mixture is laid flat by a  
roller. Shining powder is  
sprinkled over it.



Flat layer is pasted on the  
cement mold and pressed  
into the details.



The embossed layer is taken  
out.





Sweet powder mixture along with paper powder is mixed to make glue.



The mixture is rubbed over the top surface of newspaper.



The coated paper is applied thrice on the embossed cast.



The mold is taken out and shining powder is applied.



The same process is followed with the head, torso and skirt.



# STORAGE AND PACKAGING

- ❖ The show figures are usually stored in a bamboo basket in bulk after the drying process.
- ❖ Later they are shifted into boxes for long run storage.
- ❖ Packaging is only done on demand, the toys are packed in a plastic sachet then supported into a newspaper then put it into a box.
- ❖ Sometimes the packaging is done with a glass frame for the expensive toys.





# PROCESS BASED INTERPRETATION

- ❖ Breathing large quantities of kerosene vapour or drinking kerosene-based liquids may cause non-specific signs such as dizziness, headache and vomiting. Repeated skin exposure may result in dermatitis (eczema). A short, one-off exposure to kerosene is unlikely to result in any long-term effects.
- ❖ Breathing enamel paint fumes for too long can cause headaches, dizziness, and nausea. These paints can even be deadly if they are inhaled on purpose, or "huffed", to get high. Longer- term effects include asthma and lung-cancer.
- ❖ The postural problems happening by bending and kneeling may lead to long term pain and less productivity.
- ❖ Newbies face more postural problems which may hinder the productivity.
- ❖ The craftsmen inhales the carbonated fumes from the furnace which can lead to respiratory diseases.





- ❖ Cutting and planing the logs of woods takes a lot of time.
- ❖ The enamel paint dries very quickly which results in wastage of paints.
- ❖ No designated area to dry the wooden figures.
- ❖ The soft wood is heated for 2-3 hours which delays the process.
- ❖ Most of the work is done in sitting posture.
- ❖ The craftsmen are continuing with the same old techniques and materials.
- ❖ The work is done in steps and not simultaneously, like painting is started only after carving process is finished.
- ❖ The paint floor and the clothes of the painters gets stained with the paint.
- ❖ The packaging is done by wrapping newspapers which may break the figurines.
- ❖ Due to middle men interference, the craftsmen don't get the deserved amount of money and funds. For that they are not able to buy new machines.
- ❖ They also don't encourage their young generation to follow on the tradition. The craft is dying for this reason.





# PROCESS BASED PROPOSITIONS

- ❖ Natural termite resistant chemicals may be introduced which is far less dangerous than kerosene.
- ❖ A proper mask should be introduced for clean air inhalation.
- ❖ A proper ergonomic desk and chair may be introduced to fix the postural problems.
- ❖ New and innovative machines and technologies may be incorporated which can make a short log of wood from a whole tree.
- ❖ New organic paints with more viscosity can be developed and introduced which will take much more time to get dried up.
- ❖ The craftsmen may have a vertical storage furniture to dry up the figurines which can save space and provide a sense of belonging.
- ❖ The furnace's design may be changed into a closed one which will store the heat for long duration.
- ❖ The exhaust system of the furnace may be directed outside so that the craftsmen don't inhale the smoke.





- ❖ The work should be done simultaneously. There should be a system where painting will be done in line with carving.
- ❖ Packaging can be improved by adding a material to provide cushioning.
- ❖ There should be a transparent system of the division of funds and money.







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