

Design Resource

## Clay Idols - Pondicherry

Naturally Made Clay Products

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and B. Srikanth

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/clay-idols-pondicherry>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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## Introduction

Pondicherry is a union territory of India, known as Puducherry and is sharing border with Tamil Nadu. Terracotta making is one of the ancient craft practiced in Pondicherry. In the beginning only traditional pots were made which has been changed over to making decorative objects and household items. The terracotta products are decorated with minute intricate design. Pottery making is famous and significant craft of Pondicherry.

The artists in Pondicherry create excellent range of products using clay. The craftsmen create new designs on the basis of customers/market demand.



Roadside stalls arranged for sale of terracotta products.

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3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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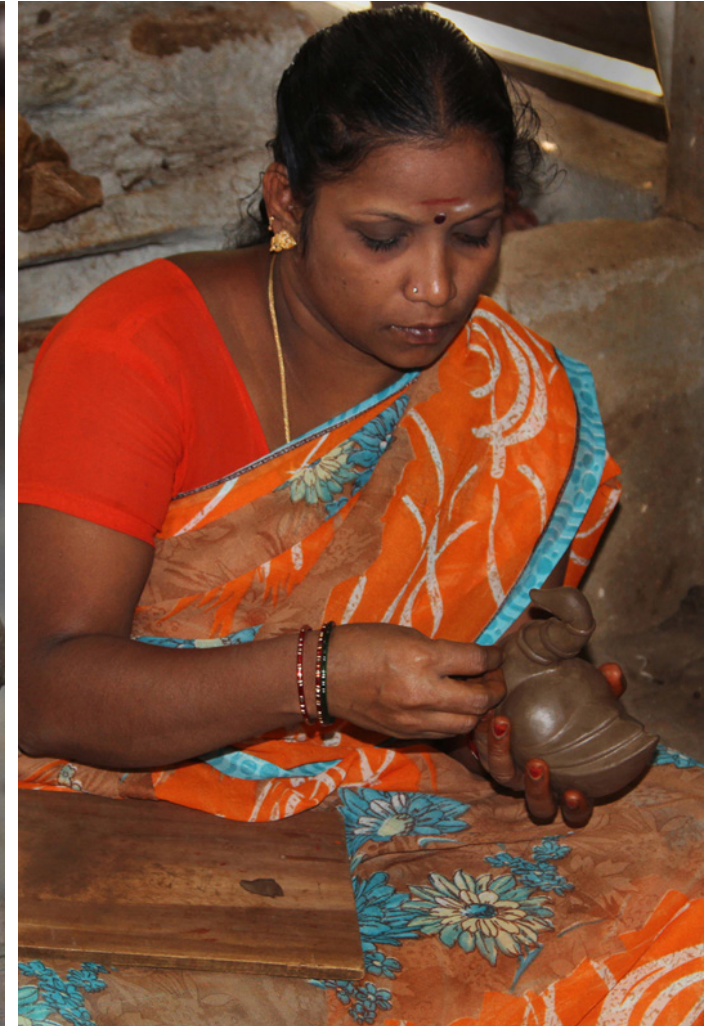
3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details



An old piece of clay idol carved with intricate design.



Artisan making an clay idol of a duck.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details



Most of artisans involved in terracotta works are women.



Small figures of Buddha.



Design is made on the article using a sculpting tool made of bamboo.

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### 1. Introduction

### 2. Tools and Raw Materials

### 3. Making Process

### 4. Products

### 5. Contact Details

## Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials used for making clay idols are very basic and simple and are available locally. By using these handmade tools the artisan create different varieties of earthen products.

Below are the tools and raw materials:

- **Clay:** It is one of the major material used for the process.
- **Sharp Tools:** Sharp edged tools like knives, and blades, which help to carve/create the minute designs and to decorate the idols.
- **Molds:** Different types of molds are used to create the small idols according to the required designs and patterns
- **Furnace:** Finished products are placed/ kept inside the oven/furnace for baking.
- **Bamboo Sticks:** These are used to design the products.



Tools used in sculpting the idols.



Verities of mould with different idol designs.

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1. Introduction
2. **Tools and Raw Materials**
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details



Enamel colors used to paint the finished articles.

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. **Making Process**
4. Products
5. Contact Details

## Making Process

Three types of clay which are mixed together to form the dough are:

- Soft Clay,
- Mud and
- Sand.

The dried clay is thoroughly mixed with water and soaked for the whole night to absorb/soak the water. The next day clay is finely stamped/pressed for more than hour and finally gathered/prepared into a mould. Idols are shaped in to required products with/using hands.

Base is the initial stage of the statue/idols. To form the base, the artisan makes small balls of clay and then they start shaping form. After that they keep on adding coil to form the structure. If the wall of the idol begins to show the indication of weakness, the artisan leave it to dry for a few hours before continue to shape it.

Different varieties of tools are used to shape and design the features of the idols. The surface is smoothened with the fingers with a touch of little water. Idols are left to dry in room temperature for a day then dried in sunlight. A coat of diluted clay slip is applied on the dried idols before baked in the furnace. The statues are baked in a kiln for 2 to 3 hours. The baked articles are colored with vibrant/bright colors to make them elegant and dazzling. Many articles are decorated with glitters to make the products look shimmering.



Clay balls are prepared.



The clay balls are joined to form a basic/base shape of the idol.

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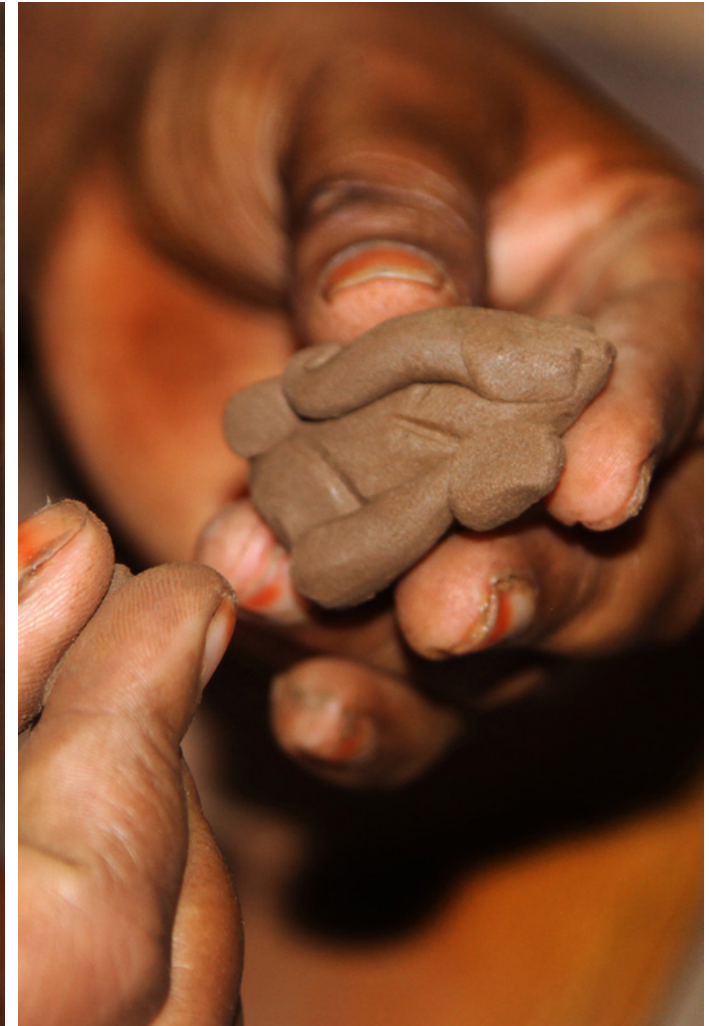
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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/clay-idols-pondicherry/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. **Making Process**
4. Products
5. Contact Details



Artisan shapes the clay into required form with her fingers.



Artisan shapes the clay into required form with her fingers.



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Details are added to the shaped idol.



Facial detailing is done in the end for creating the facial impression.



Finished idols are kept to dry.



Enamel color is applied for shine and luster.

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3. **Making Process**
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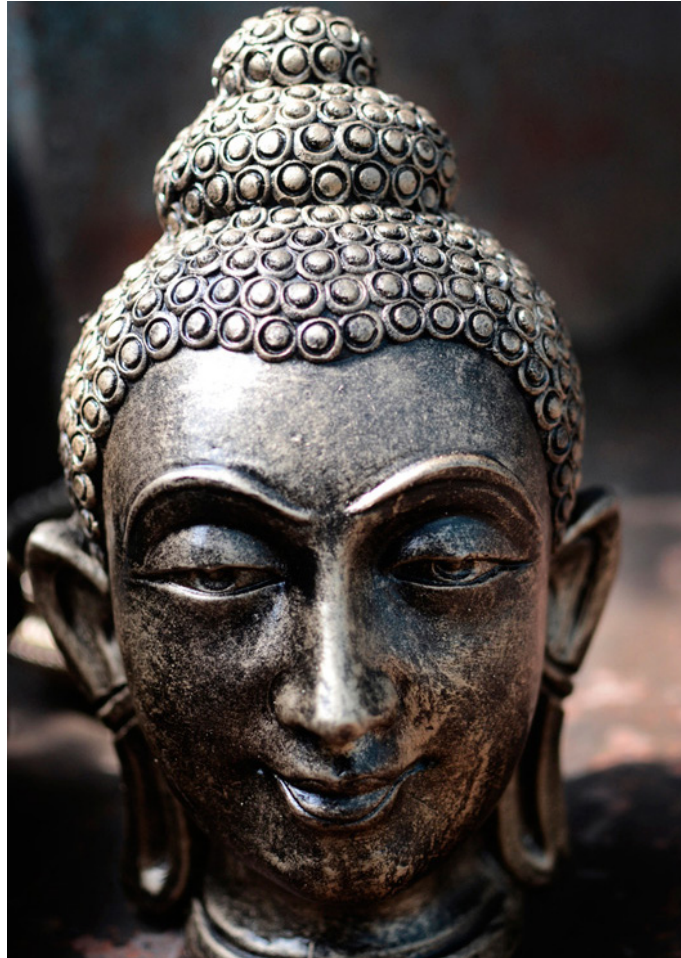
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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. **Products**
5. Contact Details

## Products

Pottery making has been practiced in India from olden days. The clay crafts made in Pondicherry have wide variety of clay items. The products have huge varieties like home decorative pots, diyas (lamp), idols of gods and goddesses, and deities. The productions of the clay items happen throughout the year but have huge demand during Ganesh chaturthi, Duserrra and Diwali. The naturally made clay products are used for the daily life, special occasions and also decorative purposes. The products are made according to the customers demand.



Clay idol of Lord Buddha colored with antique shade and decorated with glitter.



Finished idol of a God.

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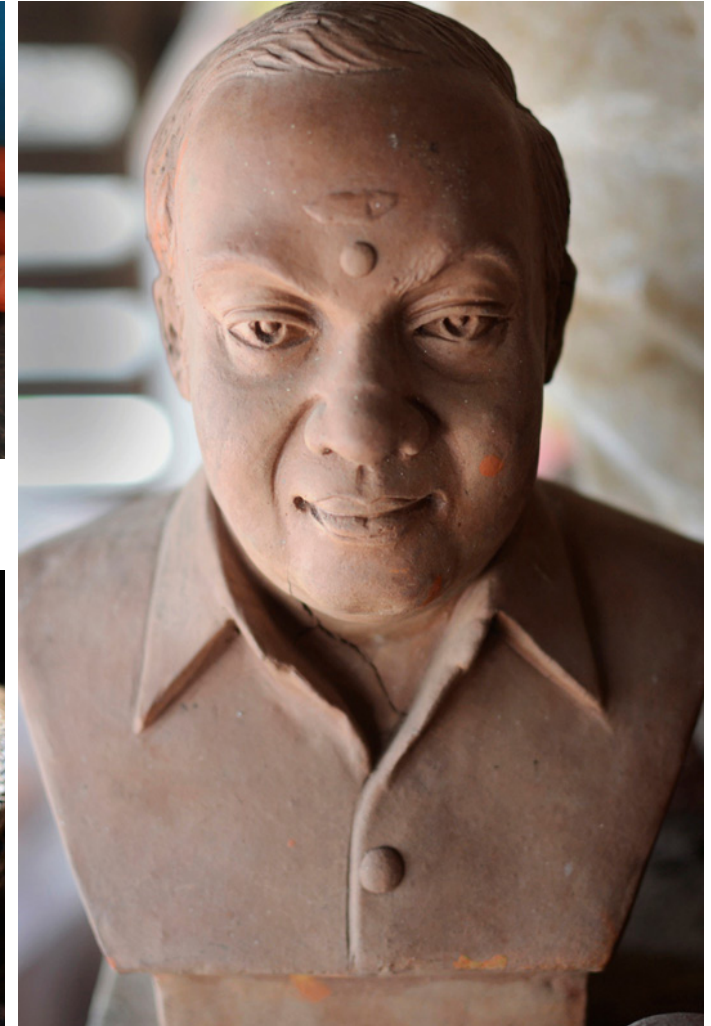
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A decorative art piece.



A decorative clay flat bowl with antique color shade.



Sculpture of a person made on customer's demand.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials

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A show piece of clay horse with detail design.



Varieties of pots made of clay.

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and B. Srikanth at **NID Campus, Bengaluru**.

You can get in touch with

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You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

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