

Design Resource

## Terracotta Craft of Allahabad

The Craft of Clay Moulding

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Mr. Sushanth CS, Mr. J. Antony William and Ms. Anushree Kumar  
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/terracotta-craft-allahabad>



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## Introduction

Allahabad clay products are unique and matchless. Each product is unique. This craft of clay moulding in Allahabad is documented in the next sections.

### Place:

Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh is very rich in alluvial soil deposits due to abundant availability of Yamuna river water. The rich plasticity in clay is very much suitable for turning the clay pots as well as moulding the clay idols. The clay is processed, preserved for few days and then used for making the pottery. Khurja, Chinhat are the other famous places in Uttar Pradesh well known for Pottery work.

### People:

The artisans in Allahabad belong to Prajapathi community engaged in practicing terracotta craft from past 50 years and continuing the tradition. Men are engaged in procuring raw material and clay-turning process. Clay modeling and ornamentation work is done by women in the household.

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The master craftsman involved in clay turning.



The product is decorated by fixing additional moulded clay pieces.



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Beautiful earthen lamps ready for painting.



Women involved in idol making.

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The master craftsman with his family.

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## Tools and Materials

### • Tools:

Simple and basic tools are used by artisans to create beautiful and intricate designs. Also, different types of moulds are used to produce the clay products.

The different tools used are listed below:

**Clay Modeling Tools:**

These are bought from local market to create the idol detailing.

**Thaapi:**

A round shaped stone with handle used to flatten the clay like a shape of chapatti.

**Knives and Blades:**

These are used to create the motif patterns and decorations on the idol.

**Potter's Wheel:**

It is used to turn the clay into objects.

**Brushes:**

Different sizes of brushes used to paint the products.

**Wire Tools:**

These are used to smoothen the surface of the product.

**Kiln:**

It is the traditional furnace. The finished products are burned in furnace.

**Kandaa (Gobar):**

Cow dung cakes are used to produce the heat in the kiln.

**Wood and Dry Leaves:**

Locally procured wood and dry leaves are also used as fuel.

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### • Raw Materials:

Different Raw materials used are as below:

#### **Kaali Mitti (Black Clay):**

It is the main raw material used to produce the clay products. This clay is procured from banks of Yamuna River as well as from the local village area.

#### **kagaj (Paper Pulp):**

The clay is mixed with kagaj - Paper pulp, synthetic gum and medical cotton so that it takes proper shape of mould.

#### **Carrom Powder:**

It is used to sprinkle on the mould to avoid the contact with mould.

#### **Water:**

Water is frequently sprinkled while turning the product on the potter's wheel.

#### **Slurry Mud:**

The clay is mixed with water to make it slurry. This slurry mud is used as adhesive while fixing the parts of object.

#### **Paint:**

Colored chalk powder and Gond is mixed and used as paint to color the products.

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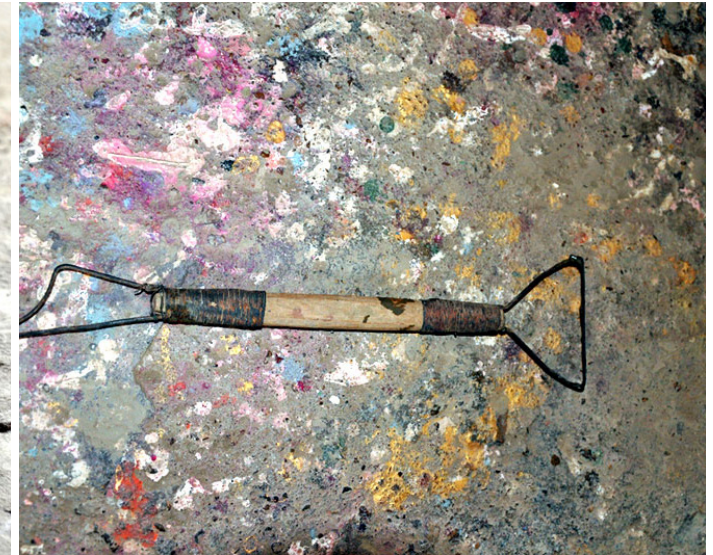
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Thaapi used to flatten the clay.



Clay trimming tool used to make the surface even.



Potter's wheel used to make the turning products.



Kaali mitti -black soil used to make the clay products.

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Wood sticks used to create designs on the product surface.



Fiber modeling tools.



Different types of trimming tools.



Mould made of POP (Plaster of Paris).

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## Process

In the basic process of clay moulding; the clay is processed, preserved for few days and then used for making the pottery. The smaller amount of clay is flattened and the prepared slab of clay is filled in two moulds and both are joined. The mould is removed to reveal clay idol. Finally the products are burned/ heated in a closed kiln. Embellishments are added through painting to enhance the external beauty.

The detailed process of clay idol making includes:

- Firing Process
- Clay Modeling
- Washing
- Coloring

### Clay Purifying:

Initially, the clay is preserved up to 15 days as the preserved clay is very much suitable to make fine products. The mitti is bought from Khusru bag area in Allahabad. It is allowed to dry under the sun for 2 days. Then it is filtered to remove the stones and impurities using iron sieve. The processed mitti is mixed with water to prepare dough. The dough is finely mashed with hands to make it soft. The process of mashing is done by the womenfolk in the household during their free time.

### Clay Modeling:

Smaller amount of prepared clay dough is taken and flattened in a circular shape like chapatti. Two moulds which are made of POP (Plaster of Paris) are taken in modeling process. Boric powder is sprinkled on the mould as it helps to avoid contacting with the clay while removing the clay model. Now the prepared wet slab of clay is placed on the mould and pressed into it until it takes the proper shape of the mould. The mould consists of two parts to form one idol. The two mud filled moulds are joined and pressed to fix the corners of idol. Now the mould is carefully removed to reveal the idol. The idols are allowed to dry under the sun for two days. Proper care is taken to avoid the cracks due to excess heat.

### Firing Process:

Firing process is done in a traditional kiln. The dried clay idols are placed inside the kiln and it is covered completely. The kiln is fired using wood and charcoal. Firing is done at a high temperature for 4 hours continuously. After firing, the burned products are allowed to cool for 12 hours inside the furnace.

### Coloring:

Burned clay idols are beautifully embellished with colors. Colored chalk powder and gond are mixed to prepare the color solution. Different colors are used to decorate the clay idols.



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Flattening the clay to make the surface even.



Clay slab is placed into the mould.



Then clay is pressed to take proper shape of mould.



Two moulds are ready to be joined together.



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Joining the clay filled moulds.



Closing the base of idol.



Idol is revealed.



Corners are trimmed with an iron blade.

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Gaps are being filled by Kaali mitti- black soil.



Creating the coin slot for gullak- piggy bank.

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The idols are allowed to dry under shade.



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## Products

Clay products that are made in Allahabad are unique and matchless. Each idol is unique. The main motifs of products are influenced by flowers, images of deities, scenes from daily life and nature are replicated on the clay tiles. The range of products includes gullak- piggy bank, decorative items, garden decorators, lamp shades, wind chimes and kullads- clay cups to serve tea. These clay cups are very good substitutes of plastic cups. Devatas cricket - scene that depicts Hindu deities playing cricket is one of the unique product among all.



Decorative tile can be used to embellish any product.



Uncolored Piggy banks.



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Replica of miniature dog.



Flower vase in floral design.

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Another flower pot in natural color.



Decorative pillars.

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Idols of animals.



Lord Ganesha image on clay tile.

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## Video



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## Contact Details

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