

Design Resource

## Terracotta

Terracotta Production in Chitoor

by

Mr. C. Susanth and Mr. J. Antony William  
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/terracotta>

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



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## Introduction

Sadum is a small village located 65km away from Tirupati in Chitoor district in Andhra Pradesh. The ancient earthenware is traditionally practiced by craftsman in Sadum maintaining their own distinctive identity in the products. The practice of terracotta craft has been happening for many generations. The rich clay found in local ponds is very suitable for making clay idols. The finely processed clay is thrown on potter's wheel and then the different parts of the idol are made independently and joined. Finally it is decorated with clay balls and thin clay coils. The craftsmen belong to Kummari community. In Sadum, the men are normally engaged in making the clay objects on potter's wheel, wherein the women folk perform the decoration part. The artisans trained by the government training institutes try to introduce the contemporary designs in the products.



The natural colored garden decorator.



Clay is beautifully being moulded into pot.



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The master craftsman involved in making creative product.



Texturing the simple Diya-mud lamp.

### 1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details



The master craftsman with his decorative artifacts.



The craftsman with his family.

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The attractive Diyas are on display.



The commonly used household earthen pots.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

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tools-and-raw-](http://www.dsource.in/resource/terracotta/tools-and-raw-)

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

## Tools and Raw Materials

Clay is the basic raw material used for making terracotta idols. Sand and matti-clay is mixed with water to prepare the dough. Potter's wheel is main tool used to make the basic shapes of the idol. The earlier generation potter's wooden wheel is now replaced with the cement wheel as it is more stable. This wheel is rotated with the help of bamboo stick which is locally called Veduru karra. Some other tools such as pen, metal blade and small iron sticks are used to do the decoration work on the clay bodies. A semicircular piece of plastic is used for texturing the surface of the object. A mushroom shaped stone-known as Raayi locally which is used to beat the inner surface of objects like pot, vessels etc. where in the Salapa-wooden bat is used to beat the outer surface of the pot. Wet cotton cloth- known as Paata locally is used to keep the lump of the clay, as it keeps the clay wet for a longer period. This cloth is also used to clean and smoothen the surface of the object before motif work. A wooden board is used to prepare the thin rolls of clay which are later used to decorate the animal objects such as horse and elephant. The closed furnace which is built with bricks is used to burn the finished products. Locally procured coconut stems are dried and used to produce the heat.



Clay procured from local ponds.



Potter's wheel made of cement.

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Veduru karra-bamboo stick used to rotate the wheel.



A pen rolled with cotton cloth which is used to decorate the clay objects.

1. Introduction

**2. Tools and Raw Materials**

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details



A metal blade used to create the motifs.



U-shaped iron sticks are inserted into the clay balls and attached to products as accessories



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tools-and-raw-](http://www.dsource.in/resource/terracotta/tools-and-raw-)



Semicircular piece of plastic used for texturing the surface of the object.



Raayi-A mushroom shaped stone which is used to beat the inner surface of objects.



Salapa-wooden bat is used to beat the outer surface of the pot.



Wet cotton cloth is used to smoothen the surface of the object.

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details



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tools-and-raw-](http://www.dsource.in/resource/terracotta/tools-and-raw-)



The kiln used to burn the finished products.



Dried coconut stems are used as fuel.

1. Introduction

**2. Tools and Raw Materials**

3. Making Process

4. Products

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3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

## Making Process

The making process involves different stages such as clay refining, clay mixing, throwing on the wheel, drying and firing.

### Clay Refining and Mixing

In the Initial stage the clay is refined by removing the dust particles like stones, lumps and other impurities in the clay. This is done manually using fine nets to filter the dry clay. Now the raw materials such as isuka-sand, mat-ti-clay are added with water to prepare the dough. The craftsmen mix the clay by stamping and crushing for the better mixing of clay.

### Throwing Process

The throwing process is done on the potter's wheel. The mixed clay is placed on the center of the wheel. Then the wheel is rotated with the help of bamboo stick. As the wheel starts rotating, the craftsmen start to shape the clay into the required form. Different parts of the object are turned separately and then joined together later. Smoothing of the outer surface is done with wet cloth and the motif patterns are done using sharp edged metal piece. Some objects such as pots, bowls, and vessels are beaten with a flat wooden bat and a mushroom shaped stone which is held inside the object. This process is repeated until the required thinness is achieved. The object is allowed to dry under the sun for 2 to 3 days. The object is also not dried for a longer period as it becomes very tough. Some products are also covered with clothes to avoid excess drying and cracks on the surface of the object.

### Firing the Clay objects

The firing is done in the bhatti-traditional open furnace within a circular area. The articles are piled carefully and covered by locally available fuel such as dry coconut leaves, small wooden pieces. The kiln is covered with mud and fired to produce a very high temperature. The objects after firing turn into two different colors such as red and black. The red color is obtained when the smoke comes out through the vents of the kiln. Where in the black color is obtained by covering the vents completely without allowing the smoke to come out. The objects/ products after firing are tested and segregated by separating the good quality pieces and the damaged ones.

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



The dough is prepared with clay and sand.



The mud is applied on the center of wheel which acts as an adhesive.



Placing the clay on the center of the wheel.



As the wheel rotates, the excess clay is removed.



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



Water is applied before starting the shaping process.



Once the wheel starts rotating, the craftsmen start to shape the clay.



Rotating the potter's wheel.



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The required form is being shaped.



Craftsman stretching the clay vertically.



The neck of the pot is being shaped.



The outer surface is textured while the wheel is in motion.

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



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Shaped object is now smoothed.



Final cleaning of object using wet cloth.



Motifs are created as per the requirement.



The finished product is then removed from the potter's wheel.

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



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The product then is allowed to dry under the sun.



Eyes of the object/ figures are fixed using thin clay rolls.

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

**3. Making Process**

4. Products

5. Contact Details



Ears are made separately and fixed.



The hands are attached and smoothed.



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



Both the hands are joined to place the diya on the hand.

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## Product



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



Design Resource

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Mr. C. Susanth and Mr. J. Antony William at [NID, Bengaluru](#).

You can get in touch with Professor Bibhudutta Baral at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu).

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