Design Resource

Tuma Craft of Bastar

Unique Craft of Chattisgarh
by
Palash Vaswani
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
http://dsource.in/resource/tuma-craft-bastar

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Source:
http://dsource.in/resource/tuma-craft-bastar/intro-duction

Introduction

Tuma craft, which uses dry gourds, is considered as one of the unique crafts of Chattisgarh. A recently developed craft is an example of craft innovation and exists in the region of Bastar in Chattisgarh. Dried gourd is etched with hot knifes with beautiful patterns and made into various products ranging from wall hangings to pendants. Jagat Ram Devangan of Kondagaon is the craftsman behind the innovation of the Tuma craft.

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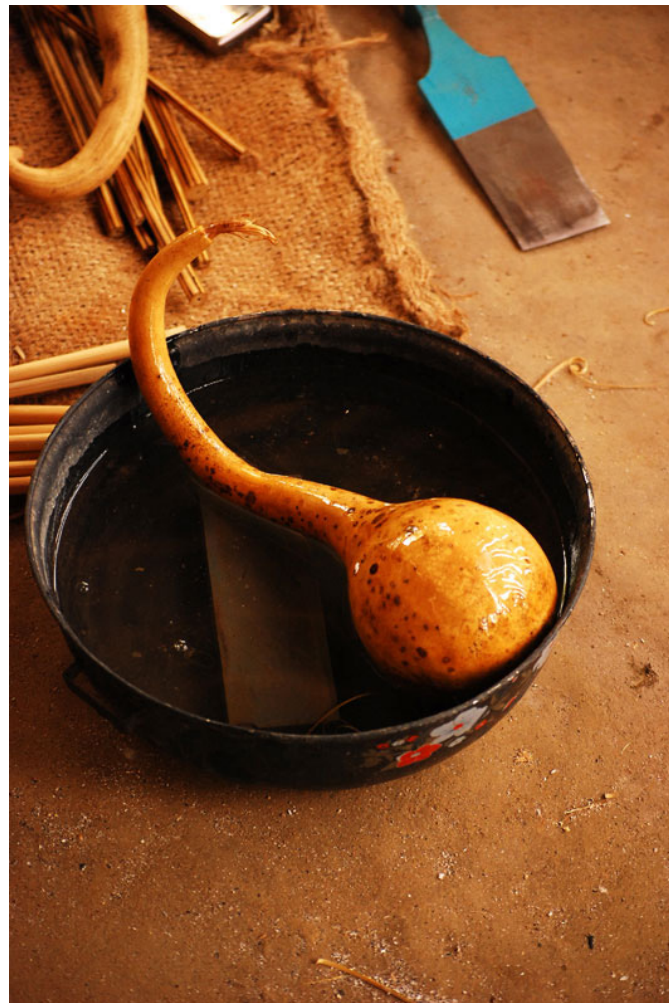IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
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History

In the earlier times, dry gourds were used as storage devices by the tribals to carry water, local alcoholic drinks (salfi and mahua) and energy drinks (madia painch). They also used to decorate their tuma vessels with interesting patterns on it. Inspired by the structure of the vessel, Jagat Ram Dewangan of Kedaichepda started experimenting with the form and style of it. Choosing interesting shapes and etching patterns on it with the hot knife, cutting it for different purposes, he gave birth to all together a new craft form named Tuma. Started with vessel for local villagers, now the form also exists in the shape of lamps, planters and even jewelry.

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Place

Bastar, a land of tribals, is the largest district in the state of Chhattisgarh. Endowed with rich minerals deposits and precious stones, it forms the southern part of Chattisgarh. The total forest area of the district is roughly 7112 sq km, which is more than 75 per cent of the total area. Tribes consist of 31.8% of the total Chattisgarh population, with 66.3% of concentration in Bastar. The main tribes of Bastar are Gonds, Kamars, Biagas, halbas and Bhatras. This region is also famous for some distinctive and equally beautiful craft forms. Kondagaon is one of the bigger towns in the area and is considered to be the centre of handicrafts manufacturing. Jagat Ram Dewangan lives in gram palari, which is about 4 kms from Kondagaon. Famous for ironsmith community, the village has about hundred people dedicated to wrought iron craft. Jagat Ram Dewangan is the only Tuma craftsman in the whole vicinity.

Jagat Ram's tuma workshop.

Jagat Ram's tuma workshop

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Village Kedaichepda, post Palari

Jagat Ram's house
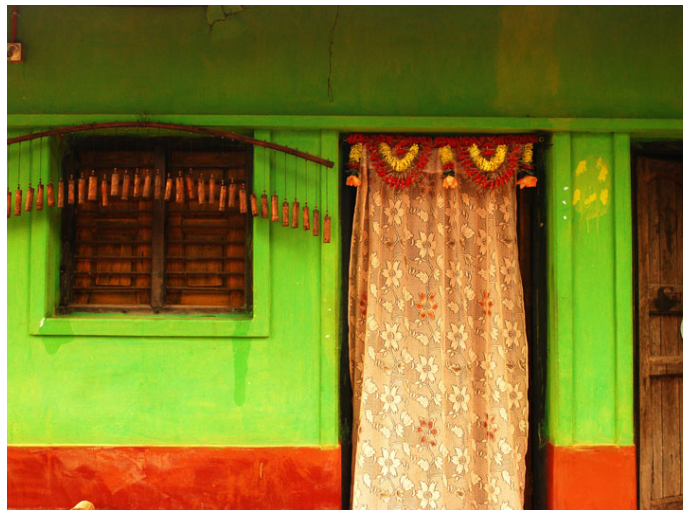
Jagat Ram's house

Gourd farm in the backyard

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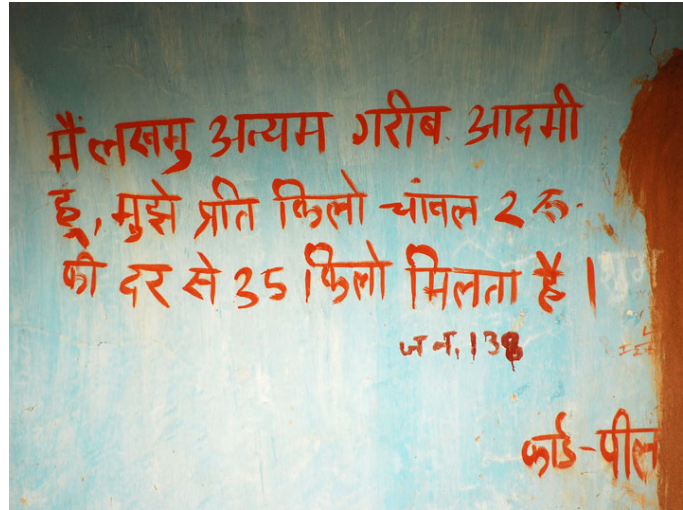IDC, IIT Bombay

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Ration card painted on a villager's wall

Crop fields

Crop fields

Crop fields

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Conversations

Crop fields

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People

Jagat Ram Dewangan was a wood craftsman and has learnt the craft from his father. He started experimenting with the form and styling of dry gourds when he saw it being used by the tribals to carry water, salfi, mahua and madia painch. Tribals used to decorate their tuma vessels with interesting carvings on it. Jagat Ram gave birth to a new craft form by making innovative and unique shapes of lamps, planters and even jewelry from it. Now the whole family is involved in the craft. He has traveled to many cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Bangalore to showcase his work. He has been honored with state award by Chattisgarh Government in 2005, National Merit certificate in 2007 and Kalamani Award, Suraj kund crafts mela in 2009.

Jagat Ram at his workshop

Jagat Ram's wife was trained by him, and is now a skilled crafts person.

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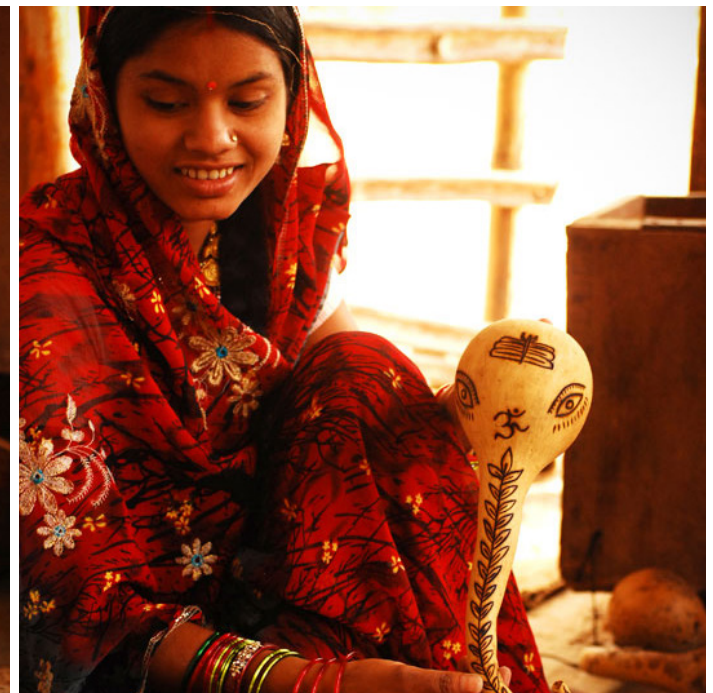He has also employed some of the people from village

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Jagat Ram's wife was trained under by him, and is now a skilled crafts person

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Jagat Ram Dewangan

Jagat Ram at his workshop

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Products

Tuma products include lampshades, planters, wall hangings, utensils and masks. The recent jewelry range is a good example of innovation. Bitter gourds, which are normally not consumable, are used for the craft. Earlier the waste gourds were taken from the villagers, but now they grow it. Generally jewelry is made from the waste part of it. Designs are made keeping transportation in mind, like small lampshades are put inside big lampshades and filled with the jewelry products. Final product is made in such a way, that it doesn't rot for years.

Ganpati wall hanging

Decorated show piece made from a salfi vessel

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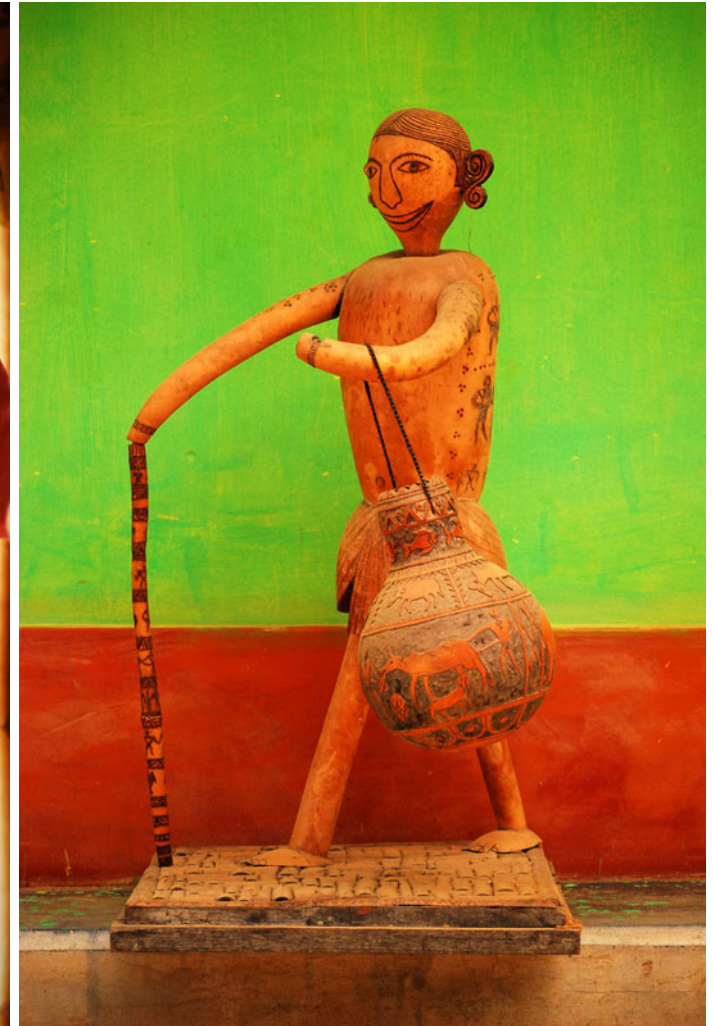by
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Lampshade

Show piece made from tuma

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Show piece made from tuma

Pendants

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Lampshade

Lampshade

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Earrings

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Process

Gourd, also called 'lauki' in hindi is a common vegetable in Bastar. The ones with desired natural shapes are selected and dried in sunlight, as a result of which they turn brown in color. Darkness of the color also depends on how old is the gourd, the older the darker. Once dry enough, they are thoroughly washed using mud, which acts as a scrubber. Then again its dried under the sunlight and kept in water for 5-6 hours. By keeping it in water, its upper layer comes loose and is scrapped out using a knife. The back part is cut using a hot knife and the hollow part of it is cleared from inside. Designs are made on it with the pencil and etched with a hot knife. This process burns the surface and makes the pattern permanent. If bowls and food utensils are made, they are boiled first to remove the bitterness from it.

Tools and materials

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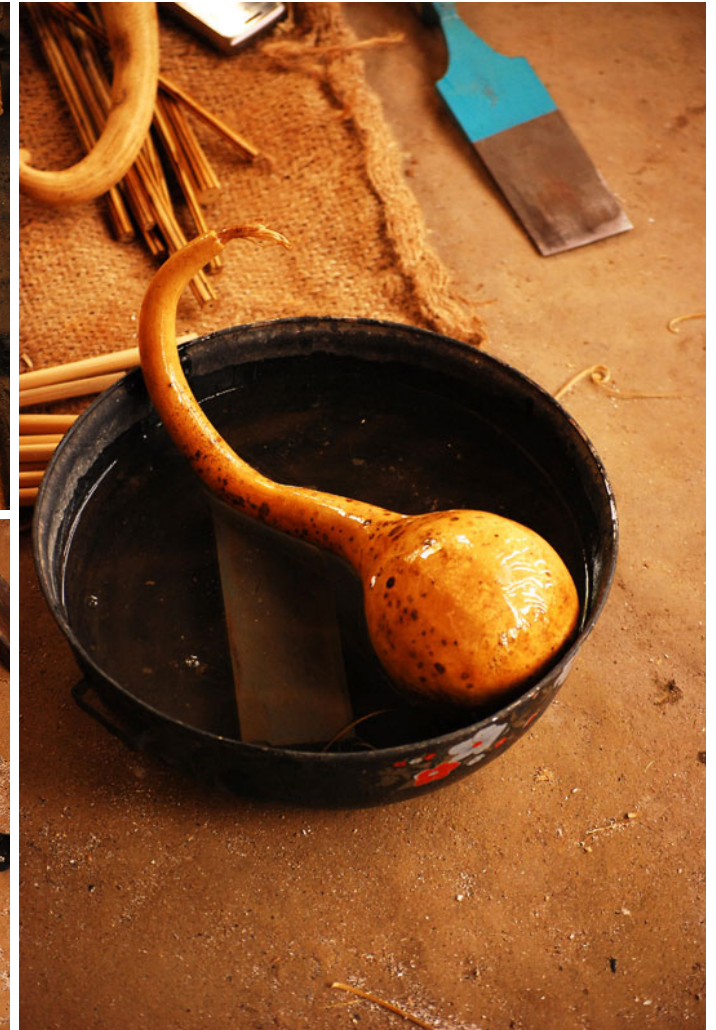
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Making of Ganpati Wall Hanging

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Final Product

Planter in Making

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Video

Tuma Craft in Making

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Contact Details

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You can get in touch with Palash Vaswani at palsonline[at]gmail.com

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