

Design Resource

Terracotta Craft of Arcot

Painting Technique

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Mr. B. Srikanth and Mr.

Raghavendra Chari K. M.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/terracotta-craft-arcot>



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2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
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Introduction

Terracotta products have a lot of prominence in many states of India and this craft is practiced historically for many generations. Tamil Nadu is a state famous for temples in India. The culture of Tamil Nadu is rich in its heritage from ancient times. Pottery is one of the traditional crafts practiced in India from ancient times. The old and traditional craft even today has been practiced with great interest. A variety of beautiful products are made which are used for both household and decorative purposes. The work is mostly done by male artisans.

In South Arcot in Panruti, clay is used to produce small and large figures of deities, toys etc. Karigiri (workmanship) in south Arcot is known for its exclusive style of pottery. Some noteworthy items of this type of pottery are water jugs, tea and dinner sets, ashtrays, beautifully decorated flower vases and decorative animal figures made as paperweights. Every item has a distinct structure and is artistically designed.

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Senior artisan explaining about the mold.



Mouth of the pot is being shaped.

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Huge variety of products displayed.



Variety of most commonly used earthen products.



The surface of pot is smoothed using wooden filer.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Clay is the basic raw material used for pottery. Potter's wheel is the main tool used to make the basic shapes of the pot. Most south Indian potters use spoked wheels with attached pivots. This type of wheel has a small hole in the upper edge of the outer rim into which the potter inserts a long stick. The potter then rotates the stick faster until the wheel is spinning rapidly.

Some other tools such as bamboo sticks, metal blades and small iron sticks are used to do the decoration work on the clay bodies. A flat wooden bat and a mushroom-shaped stone are used to beat the surface of objects like pots and flat based vessels to acquire the required thickness for the product. For the baking process, Hay and Coconut husk is used, which are spread on the articles and covered with a mixture of mud and water.



Clay is thoroughly mixed with water.



Metal string is used to give shape for the clay.

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Potter's wheel.



Wooden mallet is used to beat the product until proper shape is acquired after baking.



Clay dough is the basic raw material used for making pots.



Mixture of clay, sand and water used in baking process.

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Making Process

The finest clay comes from the riverbed and alluvial plains. The clay is cleaned/ filtered by removing pebbles and impurities from it. It is mixed with sand and finely mashed into a soft mixture of clay dough used for pottery. To enhance the elasticity of the clay and remove the air, it is kneaded/ pressed continuously for a long time. The prepared dough is covered and stored to retain moisture. The clay is now ready for pottery making. The artisan then places the clay dough in the center of the potter's wheel and starts creating the pot. Every potter in Arcot first prepares a small Diya (small lamp) and keeps it aside as an offering to God. As the wheel rotates the artisan squeeze and pulls the clay gently upward and outwards into a hollow shape. Then he shapes the clay into the required form of the article/item. After acquiring the desired form the potter separates the pot from the wheel using a thread and keeps it dry. Objects such as pots, bowls, and vessels are beaten with a flat wooden bat and a mushroom-shaped stone that is held inside the object. This process is repeated until the required thinness is achieved. The prepared articles are kept to dry in the sun for 2 to 3 days.

When all the clay articles are dried they are taken to the furnace for baking. The baking process is done to strengthen the clay. In Arcot, the baking process is done in an open and wide space. Coconut husk is first spread on the ground, on which the articles are placed. These articles are then covered with hay. A mixture of mud and water is applied to the hay and covered to avoid the heat coming out. Few baked pots are arranged around to absorb the excess heat and avoid the articles to break. Small articles are baked for one and half an hour and for big articles for at least two hours. Male members in the family mostly do this terracotta/pottery work.



Clay is thoroughly kneaded to enhance its inner flexibility.

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Clay dough is placed in the center of the potter's wheel. The clay dough is being shaped.

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The mouth of the pot is being shaped.



Artisans give required form of shape.

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The inner layer of the surface is textured.



Wooden stick is used to make the surface even.

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Neck of the pot is being shaped.



The finished product is allowed to dry in sun shade.



The finished product is removed from the potter's wheel using thin thread.

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Products

The products are made according to the experience of skilled artisans. The craft is practiced majorly by men artisans. The products made are – Pots, teacups, small bowls, cooking vessels, decorative items, idols of gods and goddesses and many more varieties of decorative products. The price range depends upon the size and details of the work.

Most of the market is set on festivals times, as the sales are more at that time. During the Sankranti festival (locally known as the Pongal festival) the potters have a huge demand for the products as they cook the Pongal (pulses and rice) in the clay pot, which is practiced since ancient times in Tamil Nadu. Diyas (clay lamps) have huge demand during the Diwali festival. The clay products are most used in villages.



A simple and commonly used Diya (lamp).



Most commonly used household vessels after baking process.

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The unfired product before drying in sun shade.



The idols have huge demand during festivals.

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Idol kept on the house to avoid evil eyes.



Lamps with very simple and minute designs.



The Diyas (lamp) have huge demand during Diwali festivals.

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The products made in clay are most commonly used in villages.



Traditional designed lamps with golden paints.

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Contemporary and traditional lamps used decorate home during festivals.



Laughing Buddha which is one of the most demanded products in the market.

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Video



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