

Design Resource

Terracotta Idol Making - Tirupati

Making of Terracotta Idol

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

Lija M. G.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/terracotta-idol-making-tirupati>

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



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Introduction

The craftsman of Terracotta idol making settled in Tirupati originally hails from Tamil Nadu region, who has settled down here from about two generations before. Tirupati is one of the pilgrimage center of India which is located at the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh and largely famous for the Venkateswara Swamy temple.

Terracotta is the material with its natural, brownish colour that differs considerably depending on the clay that it is generally used. In some cases it is waterproof and sturdy material, where ancient sculptures made are still in its excellent shape. Terracotta/ potter artists generally satisfies to the wishes and necessities of the society. There are large number of scope for the range of products that are made from terracotta.

Only for three months in a year these craftsmen work with terracotta idol making, rest of the year they are busy in making of the paper mache. Today only 10 families have been left in making of the terracotta idols. This art of making terracotta idols is handed over to them from two generations before them who have been continuously in this field. They regularly make the idols of Lord Ganesha, Radha Krishna generally during the festive seasons like Dussehra, Ganesh Chaturthi etc.



Artisans applying water onto the terracotta idols.

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Decorative flower pot wind chime made out of terracotta.



Few sculptures of ganesha idols.

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Artisan ensuring the features of the idol.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Below listed are some of the tools and raw materials used for Terracotta idols of Tirupati:

- **Knife:** It is a hand held device used for cutting into parts as per the sizes required.
- **Water:** It is used to make the surface sticky for joining and also makes it easier in kneading.
- **Clay Molds:** It is used as a reference to pattern the material to the final product.
- **Bamboo Tool:** It is used to shape the surface to the required portions.
- **Clay:** Its Collected from the nearby water sources.



Ganesha idol moulds made of Plaster of Paris (POP).

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Chalk powder is dabbed with the cotton cloth onto the moulds.



A chunk of terracotta clay which is used in making of idols.



Tool made up of bamboo, which is used in detailing and shaping of terracotta idols.

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Making Process

As per the amount of clay required the quantities of clay is taken and knead with hand to obtain the clay into a roll form. Moulds are dusted with the chalk powder in a loosely tied cloth to get the impression to which the clay material has to take up.

The rolled clay is placed into the mould of even thickness from one end and water is been sprinkled to its surface to keep the moisture in the clay. After the clay is completely applied to both the parts of the mould, water is slightly sprinkled to the corner surfaces and joined from one end aligning correctly to the other end of the clay mould.

Some amount of clay is taken and is then fixed to the bottom of the moulds. Extra clay is cut out and removed, closing all the gaps in the clay idol. The mould is then removed from one part and then the other part is kept to dry in one side of the room. After the clay dries to one extent the craftsman places the clay idol on a stand, where he/ she can observe every features of the terracotta and shapes the detailing of the idol with the help of the bamboo tool. Finally a little amount of water is used for finishing of the idol.

In few of the cases the terracotta idols are cleansed with smooth running water. In other cases the water colours are painted to beautify the look of the idol. Colours are chosen as per the motif of the idol to be achieved mostly of the figures of Gods/ Goddess.

As per the craftsmen the master idol piece is made with the facial details or features are taken to consideration for its making. References are always taken from books, newspapers, photos etc. As the idol is arranged the mould of 2 inch thickness of two parts are combined to the idol with a flat strip of clay. Generally a mixture of Grease and Kerosene are applied on the idol to hold the mould paste.



Chalk powder is been dabbed on the mould which helps the clay to release from the mould once it is dried.



The earth clay is been mixed with the bare hands to get the refined clay.

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The clay is been rolled to the required length with hands.



The clay roll is placed in middle of the mould, which contains intricate details.

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The clay roll is pressed onto the mould with the help of the hands.



The clay is spread towards all the corners of the mould with the thumbs.



The clay is spread evenly and pressed so that it takes the form of the mould.



The two moulds are equally placed and the position is ensured.

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The two moulds are pressed and joined together firmly.



After joining the two moulds the base of the mould is examined.



The hollow base of the mould is filled with clay.



The clay is flattened to give the idol a flat base.

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Front side of the terracotta idol is taken out of the mould and kept for dry.

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Details and facial features are sharpened with the help of a bamboo tool.



The completed terracotta idol of Lord Ganesha.

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Products

Some of the Terracotta products usually made by the craftsman of the Mangalam Bomban quarters are the Idols of Ganesha, Radha Krishna and the figures of the Gods/ Goddess as per the order obtained for the seasons of Ganesh Chaturthi, Dussehra and Deepavali etc. The smallest Idol measures about 2 ½ to 3 feet of height and as per whatever comes as the order. Costs less for the Idol without colour and more for the idols with colour applied to it.



Bala Krishna idol made out of terracotta and painted.



A show piece of cow with the shiv linga made out of terracotta.

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A terracotta flower pot wind chime.



Terracotta decorative pottery sculpture.

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A beautiful goddess sculpture made out of terracotta.



A decorated earthen pot.

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This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and Lija M. G. 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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