

KONDAPALLI TOYS: AN INSIGHT INTO THE CRAFTS AND THE ARTISANS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract

India has a history of rich and diverse cultural tradition. And among its diversity, the legacy of India's craft culture always occupies a special place owing to its beauty, dignity, form, style and aesthetics.

India is traditionally known for its rural village and wooden cottage Industries. About 10 million people are directly depending on the industry to eke out their livelihood, while millions of people depending upon subsidiary occupations connected with the rural craft handmade wooden products. The share of employment provided by the rural industry in the total decentralized sector is about 10 percent. Thus, the Rural Artisans of Andhra Pradesh and the Handicrafts industry constitute one of the major sectors employing the larger number of persons, next only to agriculture. My paper focus on the present scenario of the art and craft along with the artisans.

Keywords: Traditional Art Form, Creative Art, Fine Arts, Sculptures, Woodand Craft

Introduction

India has glorious rural artisan handmade tradition in toys. The tradition of toys started from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro which have thrown up a magnificent profusion of clay toys of considerable ingenuity, animals with moveable heads, monkeys that slide round a stick and the most skilful toy carts. Toys are torches, which guide children into adult life, for it is through them that they are imitated into the inner mysteries, traditions and faiths of the world they are to enter. Kondapalli, Nirmal and Etikoppaka toys are the most significant wooden toys made in the Andhra Pradesh.

History of kondapalliAnnavema Reddy: brought craftsmen from Rajasthan for sculpting the temples built by his dynasty. King Sri Krishna Devaraya gave boost to this craft and encouraged more number of people to take up this occupation.¹Aryakshatriyas origin: My family grand forefathers parents said 'Aryakshatriyas' origin of craftsmen migrated from Rajasthan to Kondapalli around the 16th century bringing with them the art of crafting toys. This 400-year-old tradition has passed on from generation to generation with every member taking part in the toy-making activity in 'Toy Colony' of Kondapalli. There is also reference to this group of people in the "Brahmanda Purana". This community claims its origin to Muktharishi, who is said to have been endowed with skills in arts and crafts by Lord Shiva himself. These craftsmen claim that it was their ancestors who sculpted the numerous sculptures like the Garuda, Nandi, Simha and the Vahanas in the many temples in Andhra Pradesh.² Figure-1 (Interview with second generation Artisan Sri. BalaBrammachary Senior Artisan)⁶.



Figure-1: Sri. BalaBrammachary 1st generation and 2nd generations and 3rd generation young Artisans.

This paper focus on present scenario of Kondapalliarisans methods of preparation, techniques, artisan views,art and design changes on both primary and secondary data. The primary descriptive data was collected through master craftsmen interviews, field observations and perceptions by the authors. The secondary data was collected by exploring various resources such as, existing research papers, books, and internet. The study is mainly descriptive in nature and delimited to some of the most distinguished crafts of the State of Andhra Pradesh.

They are some parts in Telugu states which seem to be forefront of certain unique talents, attracting the whole world and in some places, there are different arts that have flourished and spread to the world; Kondapalli is such a unique village. When the name Kondapalli is mentioned immediately the toys that are made there are remembered, and there is no wonder to say that Kondapalli had become so famous because of these toys. Kondapalli is about 15 kilometres away from Vijayawada; in the distance it is close to Ibrahimpatam. Toy making in Kondapalli had been an industry since 400 years. Here, there is colony with toy makers. All these artists in the colony make their livelihood by making the toys. All these artists came as migrants long ago from Rajasthan; they are called as Arya Kshatriyas. The Kondapalli toys are made very traditionally and attractively. This art has been preserved by the artists, which they have inherited from their ancestors. Kondapalli toys were once seen everywhere in the world and there is no Telugu who is unknown about the Kondapalli Toys; such a popular these toys were. These toys are made from the wood called as white poniki. Everyone in the family would be involved in making these toys. The white wood is found in the vicinity of Ibrahimpatam. The wood is very soft, hammered and suitable for making these toys. The artists consider this art very traditional; thus, they fully take care and fully involve in making their toys. In these toys they make, Telugu cultures and traditions are reflected. They are made in a way that impresses everyone including the children, like traditional Telugu wedding toys.challenges The problem of raw-material supply The materials used in traditional wooden-toy making fall into two categories: Tellaponiki, Ankudu wood, the basic raw material from which toys are made; and subsidiary materials such as aluminium, zinc, waste coir and cotton, mogali (kewada) leaves from Panda us fascicular is, sawdust, ochre (derived from clay containing mineral oxides), orpiment (an arsenic sulphide mineral compound), chalk powder, gums and pastes, gurjan oils (from Dip taro corpus turbinat'e's), and other natural colours and paints³.

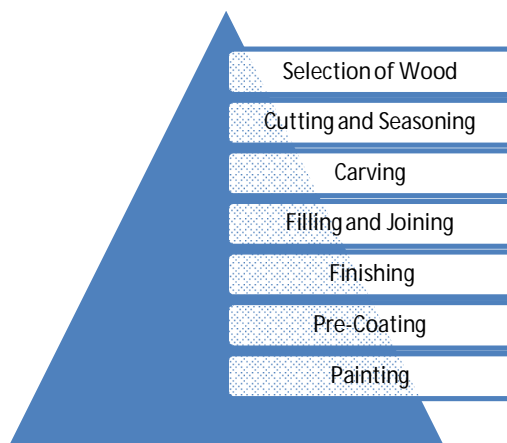
Low prices Artisans complain that while raw-material prices increase, the prices paid for their products remain static. This is partly because of the presence of intermediaries between suppliers and purchasers in export, wholesale and retail markets and partly a function of product substitution and the need for product diversification. As synthetic substitutes flood the market, prices for handmade products cannot be expected to rise unless they acquire a new level of desirability. It is necessary to improve designs and diversify products, which requires new skills and training².



Figure-2: Smt. P. Lalitha Kumari 2nd generation senior women Artisans.

The toys are mainly inspired from mythology or village life and the product range include Hindu Mythology Dasavatharam, Lord Seta Ram Lax man, Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma The carvedout toys are smoothed and painted with vegetable dyes and lively enamel paints. elephant ambary, wedding ambary, farmer, ploughing, jiggery seller, bullock cart etc. Figure-2 shows a typical elephant ambary from this craft. With vibrant colours, elegant features and a rustic appeal, the rural atmosphere of the Telugu areas is so evident in these toys. The sceneries like agricultural pie, man climbing the palm tree; women who grinds the flour, the rural women who plant paddy as well as birds, parrots, tiger, lion; the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna can be seen; and also toys from folk, mythologies and social figures are found. Therefore, they become a part of life of Telugu people. These artists are known for their mythological, folklore and rural life; thus, they make such a variety of toys. Palanquin-bearers carrying the bride and bridegroom, Dancing dolls, Kondapalli soldiers, pen stand, rural folks along with various animals and birds³.

Methods



Flowchart

Figure 3: Making Process

Tools:The carving tools used is drill, Hammer, Axe, *Bahudara* (for carving), *Aakurai* (file) and chisels for finer work. All parts are turned and finished on lathe they looks very glossy any symmetry to their axis.All the parts of the product are coloured on the lathe machine by pressing a colouredlacquer stick on rotating part. Beautiful and delicate art work has been done by using lac-mix; a mixture of lacquer, Bee Wax, Castor oil, Mustard oil and Brick Dust, and simple Chasing, Embossing and Chisel like tools iron chisel, Badisa, Hoaxes Blades and other tools.

A craft man working on the raw materials tools is shown in the Table-1: Computation of Energy Required to Make a Kondapalli rural artisan Toy by Industry Processes The stages of making Kondapalli toys also start from cutting wood from the trunk, dry it in a well-ventilated place and further cut it into small pieces then further dry it up and make it moisture free. Later the artisans chisel the wood into required shape part wise.

Table-1 below

Sl. No	Operation	Industrial machine tool	Power required in watts	Operation time in seconds	Energy in kilo joules
1	Cutting	Jig saw/ Circular saw, ½ H.P Jig saw/ Circular saw, ½ H.P Jig saw/ Circular saw, ½ H.P Jig saw/ circular saw 1/2 H.P	380	600	228.0
2	Shaping	Sanding, 1/2 H.P	380	240	91.2
3	Painting primary 1 st coat, 2 nd coat and varnish	Spray paint, 1 hp	760	240	182.4
Total energy required by industry process					501.6

Calculation of Raw material

It shows that a 10” lengthKondapalli toy product was approximately saving energy of 501.6 kilojoules in production; further thisprocess does not involve any machinery or Environmental pollution.



Kondapalli village artisan Interview with: The wood is brought by the craftsmen from the nearby forests of Gangineni, Adlapadu, Konduru, Chevuturu and Madhavaram. Most of the times, instead of cutting down the entire tree, they just cut the branches so that the tree develops the branches again and the wood is available for more time. Several natural materials like Gluing paste of Tamarind seed powder & saw dust, Lime powder (Thopa), *Tummajiguru* (acacia gum) and natural dyes are used to finish the toys. Fevicol is also used nowadays instead of Thopa. The brushes used to colour the toys are very fine and sharp are made of goat's hair. These toys have carved a niche of their own in the world of handicrafts. Nimble fingered artisans carve with aplomb, as characters emerge and evolve from light soft wood. The wooden piece is heated to make it moisture-free. Different parts of the image are carved separately. They are then glued together with an adhesive made of crushed tamarind seeds. Cover it with fine saw dust to give fine surface Materials used and the process are almost same in Etikoppaka, Nirmal and Kondapalli toys. (Interview with third generation Artisan K. PurnaChandarao Senior Artisan).⁷

My forefathers Once upon a time, the toys made by them were decorated in many Temples. Harmless dyes are used to make these toys. Wooden Painted Toys locally known as Kondapalli toys are world-famous for their special wood that adds a touch of aesthetics to drawing rooms with their finely created figurines. (Interview with Artisan M. Krishna, Third generation senior artisan)⁸.

The Government should implement different initiatives to resolve and protect the artisans from migration. Late chief minister N.T. Ramarao providing this colony only Many artisans are migrated to other professions for their livelihood. This happened lack of low profits, time taking to produce, cannot afford for promotional activities and less identity. now onwards having same house there are lot of things, no education, lake off wood, lake of artisans lake of field growth, no workers attend in this work, No business, No market facility's, No fundraising, No training centres, No wood. (Interview with Artisan M. Hanumatharao, Third generation senior artisan).⁹

Kondapalli artisan he and his family told that there was a major boom in exports in the 1980s during which artisans prospered and multiplied in numbers. However, dip in exports in recent years is slowly killing the handicraft toy community (Interview with third generation senior Artisan Ch. Kesavachary).¹⁰

Over the years, Kondapalli toy has become a collectible from a plaything. The shift ate into the repurchase market because, unlike children's toys, which tend to break, collectibles require little replacement. An integral part of the Dusshera and Sankranti celebrations is the 'Bommala Kolu' or 'Kollu' when toys are collected and ceremoniously displayed and most children and women would vie to have the most grand and elaborate collection. The artisans of Kondapalli would make the most business during these festivals, but these traditions are slowly vanishing and with them artisans are forced to look at measures to cut costs and switch to enamel colours instead of natural dyes. Though there was neglect of the interests and development of the Kondapalli artisans due to the advent of mechanized toys, the scenario has completely changed in recent years. The Government, Governments departments, certain institutions and organisations are giving a helping hand in developing this industry. Figure-2 shows (Interview with women Artisan Panuganti Lalitha Kumari, fourth generation senior artisan).¹¹

The future of India's wooden-toy industry The Indian middle class has emerged as a major consumer force; its purchasing power is now equivalent to that of the entire European market. India's wooden-toy artisans create beautiful things. Considering the retail boom and the changing consumption habits of the middle class, which favours the use of toys as a medium for entertainment and education, the wooden-toy industry in India could if adequately supported experience major upward growth. In our view it is the duty of society, which benefits from the artistic creations of the wooden-toy makers, to assist them. The most important factor is the availability and affordability of the raw material with which to practise their craft. A dwindling supply of wood from natural forests has caused an escalation in the cost of the raw material. The problem of raw-material supply can be overcome by using the wood of alternative species, grown in plantations. There is an urgent need to conserve existing forests and bring them under sustainable management and reforestation programmes, and to encourage the use of alternative plantation grown species. At the same time, wooden-toy makers need assistance to up skill in the face of international competition in the toy market.²

The present study helped to know the extent to which kondapalli and Etikoppaka toys are useful in promoting education particularly in the childhood stage. Also, as the world is buzzing towards a safe environment and eco-friendly devices, the study helps in knowing how eco friendly the kondapalli toys and Etikoppaka toys are as compared to plastic toys available in the market. The study also helps in finding out the toys that are useful at humanity level for promoting over all development at different stages.⁵

Kondapalli and Etikoppaka toys provide a wide variety of learning opportunities to children particularly at the early childhood education level. These toys should be properly utilized to develop conceptual learning in the country. These are very reliable and helpful for shifting the educational approach in the country from traditional approach of teaching to constructivist approach. These toys can be used as best evaluating devices particularly at the primary level to recognize the level of the children and thereby restrict the formal means of evaluation particularly through examinations at the primary level. These toys will also overcome the difficulties faced by the children of primary level though programmed like early childhood education. Necessary efforts should be

taken to develop a kit for early childhood education system using Kondapalli and Etikoppaka toys similar to that of the learning materials of Montessori Method. Introduction of these toys in education will definitely help in providing a child centered education in India and the government should consider seriously using these toys in education and helping the children to be relieved of pressures of education.⁵

Covid -19 Impact Kondapalli artisans: Indian products will now face problem in global markets. Chinese handicraft exporters would now get edge over our Indian products. Our competitiveness will be impacted. In 2014-15, the country's handicraft exports declined 7.66 per cent to USD 1.38 billion over the same period previous year Covid 19 very bad effected we have not traditional toys made no one customer not coming for sale. Especial we have a demand for Please remove GST in Rural Kondapalli handmade toy makers. So it is a labour intensive sector. Government has to give support to the sector to boost export of Kondapalli handicraft toys. (Interview with third generation senior Artisan BalaBrammachary).⁶

Kondapalli Artisans It's true that getting skilled artisans is a bit of a challenge these days. However, he says that the largest employment of crafts people is for domestic trade. "Another handicrafts toy maker ShakeNagul mere, Durga Malleswararo also accepts that there is 20-25 per cent de-growth in exports and hence they cannot hire more artisans as providing them continuous work is becoming a challenge. We are presently concentrating on the domestic market," ShakeNagul Meera, Durga Malleswararo (Interview with third generation senior Artisan BalaBrammachary) ⁶.

Crafts in education: Handicrafts are mostly defined as "items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools, and are generally artistic and/or traditional in nature. They are also objects of utility and decoration. Now days, hand-made products are considered to be a fashion statement and an item of luxury. Craft can be used as a means of interpreting many social issues and ways of living. Craft in India is so universally prevalent that it has been unseen over the centuries as a metaphor for numerous philosophical, metaphysical and social concepts. Many words, forms of measurement, colors, and materials have a craft origin.³

Now-a-days, cultural aspects fashion trends in the product industry are changing very dramatically with short product life cycles. Once upon a time, the toys made by them were decorated in many Temples. Harmless dyes without chemicals are used to make these toys. It appears that from leaves and vegetables the artists make the desired colours. The colours of the toys are even decided by the artists before he makes a toys, then he dyes the colour to the toy. The use of dyes made from tamarind seeds, powder mixture, turmeric powder and flowers; thus they look very natural and attractive. However, the popularity of these toys seems to be declining. Hundreds of families solely depend on this art. Therefore, the art of Kondapalli toys is to be protected. It is the responsibility of the government in fact every one's to protect such a beautiful art. Western trends are taking place in Telugu culture which has tremendous impact on the livelihood of these artists. Many arts forms have been the part of the life of Telugu people from long ago, but over the time many of these arts have flickered to the extreme. The extinction of the arts must be seen as the extinction of culture. So it is incumbent upon everyone to move forward with the support of artists and the promotion of the arts. The artisans are requesting for provision of direct Market to sell their products. They want the raw material to be sold under subsidised prices for procuring it from the government. The wood bank which was started needs to be materialised. Training sessions and workshops on this art form should be practised. Monetary benefits like health card. Pension schemes, free education to their children will help them improvise their livelihood and the sustenance of the Kondapalli Toys.

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