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Kondapalli Toys: Andhra Pradesh’s Softwood Toy Tradition

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Kondapalli Toys: Andhra Pradesh’s Softwood Toy Tradition

Kondapalli toys are painted wooden toys from Kondapalli village in Andhra Pradesh. Artisans carve them by hand from a light softwood called Tella Poniki. The village lies near Vijayawada, in what is now NTR district. The craft is about 400 years old. It has a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

1 Where are Kondapalli toys made, and who makes them?

The toys come from Kondapalli, a village in Ibrahimpatnam mandal. A mandal is a local administrative block. The village lies near Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. Older records place it in Krishna district. Government pages now place it in NTR district.



Kondapalli wooden toy figures, Vijayawada. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Who are the artisans?

- The toymakers are called Aryakshatriyas.

- The Kondapalli toy cluster has about 250 artisans.
- Many artisans are poor, and their whole families depend on the craft.
- These families own no farmland, so toy-making is their only income.

What is the Common Facility Centre?

- A Common Facility Centre is a shared workshop with machines.
- The Kondapalli centre stands near Khilla Road.
- It has both training and production space.
- It takes the heavy, tiring work out of carving and sawing.

Think it through. Why does a shared workshop help poor artisans?

Machines are costly. One family cannot buy them. A shared centre lets every artisan use them.

What is the memory hook?

Think “village near Vijayawada, now NTR district”. Place and district go together.

> **Quick check 1.** Kondapalli toymakers earn extra money from their own farmland. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ntr.ap.gov.in; search.ipindia.gov.in

2 How old is the craft, and where did the artisans come from?

Official pages say the craft is about 400 years old. They also trace its roots to the 16th century. These two figures do not match exactly. Treat them as a rough age, not a fixed date.

What do the origin stories say?

- The artisans are believed to have come from Rajasthan several centuries ago.
- A local legend links them to the sage Muktharishi.
- The legend says Lord Shiva blessed him with artistic skill.
- A legend is a story handed down by people. It is not a document.

What about royal patronage?

- The district page says King Krishnadevaraya supported the craft.
- This is a local claim, so exams rarely build a question on it.
- The town also has a historic fort on a hill, called Kondapalli Fort.

Think it through. Why should we be careful with “400 years” and “16th century”?

They are two rough figures from local tradition. Four centuries back is the 17th century. The 16th century is a century earlier. Neither is a proven date.

What is the memory hook?

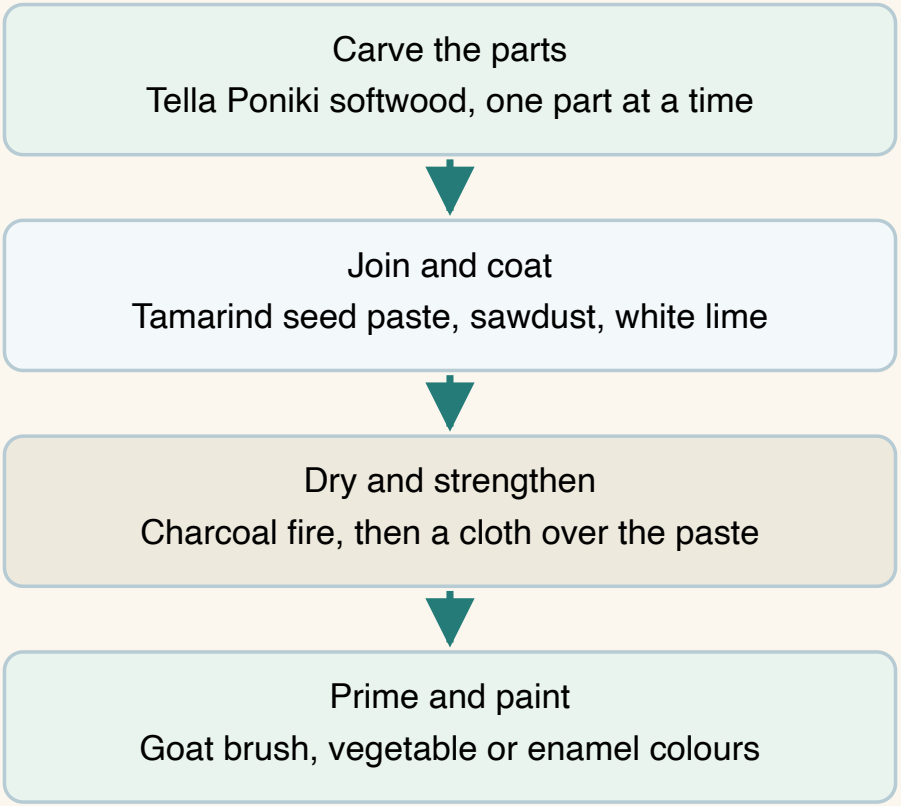
Think “Aryakshatriyas, from Rajasthan, about 400 years”. Keep the community, the origin and the age together.

> **Quick check 2.** Kondapalli artisans are believed to have come from Rajasthan. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ntr.ap.gov.in; outlooktraveller.com

3 What is a Kondapalli toy made of, and how is it made?

The toys are carved from Tella Poniki. It is a light, soft wood, also called white sander. It grows on land set aside around the village. Because the wood is soft, artisans can carve fine detail by hand.



The steps run from carving to colour. Original explanatory diagram.

How is a toy made, step by step?

- The wood is seasoned and cut to size.
- Each part of the body is carved on its own.

- The parts are joined with a paste made from tamarind seeds.
- The surface gets a coat of sawdust and tamarind seed paste.
- A coat of white lime, called sudda, goes on top.
- The toy is then set near a charcoal fire. This dries out the moisture.
- A cloth is fixed over the paste to add strength.
- A primer coat goes on. Then the colours are painted with a goat brush.

Which tools and paints are used?

- Carving tools include a drill, hammer, axe, bahudara, aakrai and chisels.
- A bahudara is a carving tool. An aakrai is a file.
- Colours come from vegetable dyes, oil paints or enamel paints.
- The paint choice depends on where the toy will be sold or used.

What is makku?

- Makku is the tamarind-seed paste used as a natural glue.
- Some pages describe the paste as a glue. Others describe it as a surface coat. It does both jobs.

Think it through. Why is a soft wood good for toys?

Soft wood is light and easy to cut. A hand tool can shape faces and small details. A hard wood would be heavier and slower to carve.

What is the memory hook?

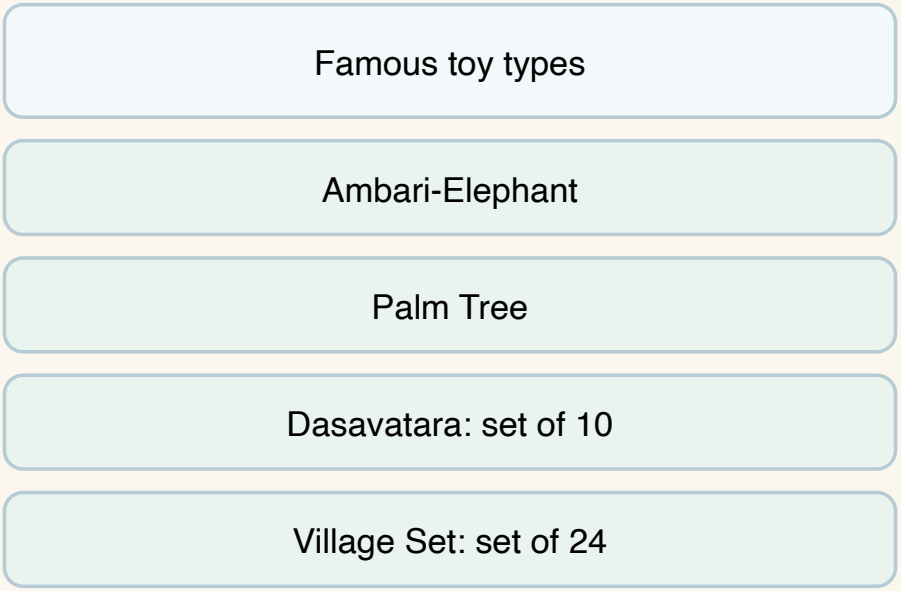
Think “Tella Poniki, tamarind paste, then paint”. Wood first, paste second, colour last.

Quick check 3. Kondapalli toys are carved from hard teak wood. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: spicyip.com; ntr.ap.gov.in; policycircle.org

4 What do the toys show, and when are they used?

The toys show gods, village life and animals. Each toy has fine detail in its face and form. The best-known pieces are sets. Families also use them in festival displays and in storytelling.



Two of the types are sold as numbered sets. Original explanatory diagram.

Which toys are famous?

- The Ambari-Elephant is an elephant design with a seat on its back.
- The Palm Tree, also called the toddy tree, is a popular piece.

- The Dasavatara is a set of 10 toys. Its theme is Lord Vishnu.
- The Village Set has 24 toys.
- Village scenes include women grinding flour and men climbing palm trees.

How are they used in festivals?

- Bommala Koluvu is a display of toys, also called Kollu.
- Families set it up at Dussehra and Sankranti.
- Households show off their collection as a mark of prosperity and cultural pride.
- Storytellers also use the toys to show folk tales and epics.

Think it through. How does a toy set help tell a story?

Each figure stands for a character. A teller can place them in order and point to them. Listeners then see the tale as well as hear it.

What is the memory hook?

Think “ten for Dasavatara, 24 for the village”. Two sets, two numbers.

> **Quick check 4.** The Dasavatara set of Kondapalli toys has 24 toys. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: ntr.ap.gov.in; spicyip.com

5 What does the GI tag protect, and how is the craft supported today?

A GI tag is a legal label that ties a product’s name to the place it comes from. Only makers from that place may use the name. The tag helps artisans fight fakes. For Kondapalli, the registry name is Kondapalli

Bommallu.

What does the GI Registry record say?

- The application number is 44.
- It was filed on 10 November 2005.
- The goods are listed as handicraft, in classes 16, 20, 27 and 28.
- The applicants are LIGHT and Kondapalli Wooden Toys Manufacturers.
- LIGHT is the LANCO Institute of General Humanitarian Trust.
- The certificate number is 30, and it carries a 2006 date.

Why do pages give different years?

- Some pages say 2005. That is the year the application was filed.
- The district page says 2006, which matches the certificate.
- An opinion piece says 2007.
- So never trust one year without checking the registry.

What support does the craft get today?

- Kondapalli toys are the One District One Product pick for NTR district.
- The central SFURTI scheme funded the Common Facility Centre.
- SFURTI stands for Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries.
- The Ministry of MSME sanctioned Rs 172.50 lakh for the cluster.
- Training reached 252 artisans, and 72 got toolkits.
- Tella Poniki and Ankudu wood are growing scarce.

Think it through. Why might a GI be "2005" on one page and "2006" on another?

The application was filed in 2005. The certificate is dated 2006. Each page picked a different step.

What is the memory hook?

Think "filed 2005, certificate 2006". Two steps, two years.

> **Quick check 5.** All sources give the same year for the Kondapalli GI tag. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: search.ipindia.gov.in; ntr.ap.gov.in; policycircle.org

6 How has this topic been asked in exams?

Which traps repeat?

- Kondapalli toys use Tella Poniki softwood and tamarind paste. They are not lacquered.
- Etikoppaka is another Andhra craft. Its toys are lacquered and use Ankudu wood.
- Kondapalli toys are tied to NTR district today. Older records say Krishna district.
- Do not rest an answer on one GI year. Sources give 2005, 2006 and 2007.
- The Dasavatara set has 10 toys. The Village Set has 24.
- Bommala Koluvu is the toy display at Dussehra and Sankranti.

What is the memory hook?

Think “Kondapalli carves, Etikoppaka lacquers”. One craft cuts soft wood. The other seals it with lac.

Practice MCQs

1. Kondapalli toys are carved by hand from which wood?

A. Tella Poniki

B. Rosewood

C. Sandalwood

D. Teak

See answer ↓

2. Artisans coat Kondapalli toys with sawdust mixed with which paste for a smooth surface?

A. Lac resin

B. Tamarind seed paste

C. Cow dung

D. Rice starch

See answer ↓

3. The Kondapalli toymakers belong to which community?

A. Mudaliar

B. Devanga

C. Aryakshatriya

D. Vishwakarma

See answer ↓

4. Kondapalli toys are the One District One Product pick of which district?

A. NTR district

B. Kurnool district

C. Chittoor district

D. Visakhapatnam district

See answer ↓

5. The toy display called Bommala Koluvu is held at which festivals?

A. Holi and Diwali

B. Raksha Bandhan and Eid

C. Dussehra and Sankranti

D. Ugadi and Ganesh Chaturthi

See answer ↓

6. The GI application for Kondapalli Bommallu was filed by Kondapalli Wooden Toys Manufacturers and which trust?

A. LANCO Institute of General Humanitarian Trust

B. Khadi and Village Industries Commission

C. TRIFED

D. NABARD

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The answer is Tella Poniki. It is a light softwood, also called white sander. Soft wood is easy to carve by hand. Memory hook: soft wood, fine detail. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** The answer is tamarind seed paste. The same paste also joins the carved parts. Lac resin is used in Etikoppaka toys, not here. Memory hook: tamarind holds, then paint. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** The answer is Aryakshatriya. Tradition says they came from Rajasthan several centuries ago. Memory hook: Aryakshatriyas, from Rajasthan. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** The answer is NTR district. Older records place Kondapalli in Krishna district. Government pages now place it in NTR district. Memory hook: village near Vijayawada, NTR district. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** The answer is Dussehra and Sankranti. Households show their toy collections at these festivals. Memory hook: Koluvu means toys on display. ↑ Q5
6. **A.** The answer is the LANCO Institute of General Humanitarian Trust, or LIGHT. The GI Registry lists it as a co-applicant. TRIFED is the authorized user, not an applicant. Memory hook: LIGHT lit the GI filing. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** it is false. They own no farmland. Toy-making is their only income. ↑ 1
2. **True.** it is true. Tradition says the Aryakshatriya community migrated from Rajasthan. ↑ 2
3. **False.** it is false. They are carved from soft Tella Poniki wood. ↑ 3
4. **False.** it is false. The Dasavatara set has 10 toys. The Village Set has 24. ↑ 4
5. **False.** it is false. Sources give 2005, 2006 and 2007. The application was filed in 2005. ↑ 5

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