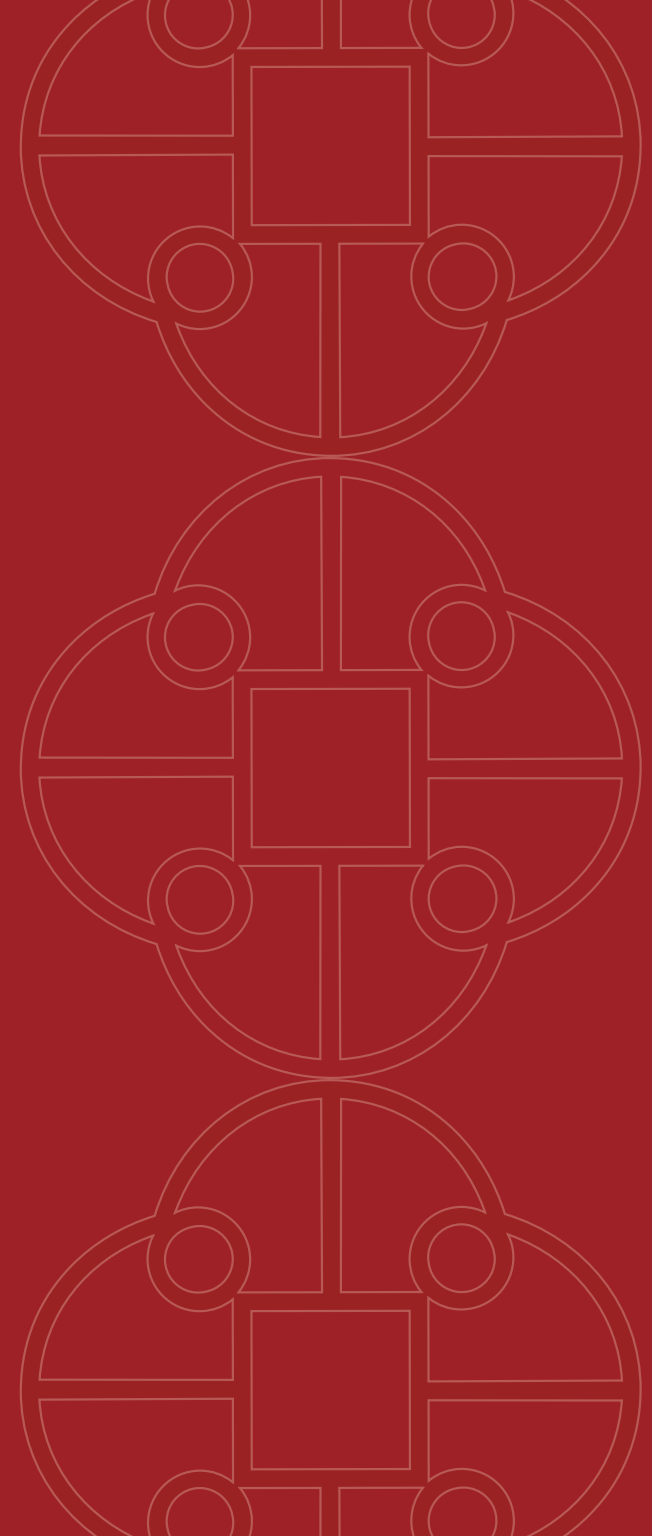
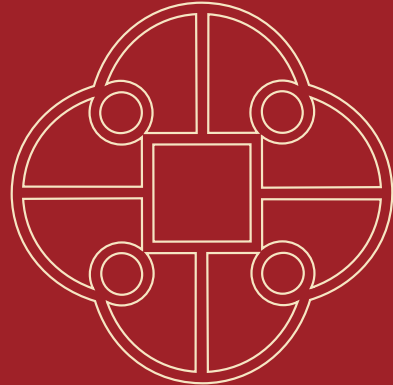


నిదాకలా

NidaKala : A glimpse into the craft of Andhra's shadow puppetry; Tholu Bommalatta
A Craft Document







A craft research and documentation by Fashion Communication Department (batch 2022-2026)
National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bengaluru

Under the guidance of Mr. Bhimappa Pattar, professor, Fashion Communication Department

Copyrights

© 2024 National Institute of Fashion Technology,
Bengaluru.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted
in any form or by any means, including
photocopying, recording, or other electronic or
mechanical methods, without the prior written
permission of the National Institute of Fashion
Technology, Bengaluru.



Certificate

This is to certify that the undersigned students of Semester V, Department of Fashion Communication, National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Bengaluru, have successfully completed the Craft Research Documentation (CRD) project as part of the NIFT curriculum.

The CRD project involved in-depth research, documentation, and analysis of the craft cluster Nimmalakunta Leather Puppetry. We have completed this study under the supervision of Mr. Bhimappa Pattar, Department of Fashion Communication.

We also declare that this project has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or other title. We hereby confirm the originality of the work and that there is no plagiarism in any part of the dissertation.

Place: Bengaluru

Date:

Signatures of the candidates:

Ananya Mandal
Reg No: BD/21/1366

Meghana Kumthekar
Reg No: BD/22/119

Mohana Krishnaa
Reg No: BD/22/471

Pushkara Pawar
Reg No: BD/22/1071

Satyam Kumar
Reg No: BD/22/1000

Srijani Banerjee
Reg No: BD/22/125

Tasmoisri Bera
Reg No: BD/22/1292

Certificate

This is to certify that the craft research documentation project titled “Nidakala” is a record of work done by the students, Ananya Mandal, Meghana Kumthekar, Mohana Krishnaa, Pushkara Pawar, Satyam Kumar, Srijani Banerjee, Tasmoisri Bera from Semester V, as regular students for the degree of B.Des Fashion Communication during the period of July 2024. This work represents independent research and does not form the basis for any previous work.

Place: Bengaluru

Date:

Under the Guidance of
Mr. Bhimappa Pattar,
Professor, Fashion Communication Department
National Institute of Fashion Technology
Bengaluru, 560 102

(External Jury Member)

(External Jury Member)

(External Jury Member)

(External Jury Member)

Acknowledgment

We extend our sincere gratitude to the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bengaluru, for the opportunity to visit and engage with the artisans of Nimmalakunta.

We would like to thank the following mentioned for their guidance and support throughout this project.

Development Commissioner for Handloom and
Development Commissioner for Handicrafts,
Ministry of Textiles

Ms Sunitha I.A.S
Principal Secretary - Department of
Handlooms & Textiles, Government of Andhra
Pradesh

Mr Lakshmi Nath, OSD to APHDC

Mr Ramesh,
Assistant Director, Sri Satyasai District
Handlooms & Textiles

Mr T. Sathiyamoorthy,
Assistant Director (H), Handicrafts Service Centre,
O/o Development Commissioner (Handicrafts)

Mr B A Srinivas, Jr Sales Assistant,
AP Handicrafts Development Corporation LTD,
Government of Andhra Pradesh

Mr Katamaiah, Sales Assistant, Lepakshi
Handicraft Emporium, Anantapuram

Ms Tanu Kashyap IAS, Director General, NIFT,
Dr Yathindra L, Campus Director, NIFT,
Bengaluru

Dr Nilanjana Bairagi, Associate Professor & CAC,
NIFT, Bengaluru

Dr Shipra Roy, Associate Professor & CIC, NIFT,
Bengaluru

Mr Sanjeev CM, Associate Professor & Campus
Coordinator, Department of Fashion Communication

Dr Raja B, Assistant Professor & COE

Mr Bhimappa Pattar, Assistant Professor & SDAC
Dr Gulnaz Banu, Professor & CC FC

Dr Vibhavari Kumar, Professor & CP FI

Mr Himanshu Dhanda, Assistant Professor

Prof. M,J Kamalakshi, Mr. Bobsurrao, Mr. Shyam
Aravindakshan.

Mr and Mrs Padma Shri Dalavai Chalapathy Rao &
Family

Mr and Mrs Sindhe Anjanayelu & Family

Mr and Mrs Khande Bhaskar Rao & Family

Mr and Mrs Sindhe Sri Ramulu & Family

All the Faculty & Staff from the Department of
Fashion Communication





Preface

Tholu Bommalata, the traditional art of shadow puppetry from Andhra Pradesh, India, is a blend of storytelling, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage. This art form, with its carved leather puppets and narratives from epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, has engaged audiences for centuries. In this document, we explore the history, techniques, and significance of Tholu Bommalata, aiming to shed light on the

artistry and dedication that sustain this craft. This document provides a detailed study of Tholu Bommalata, a traditional shadow puppetry craft practiced by artisans in Nimmalakunta, a village near Dharmavaram, Andhra Pradesh. Conducted by students of the Fashion Communication department (2022-2026), this research includes both secondary and primary data.

Research Methodology

This research delves into the workspace and lifestyle of the Leather Puppetry artisans of Nimmalakunta. In line with the established objectives, both primary and secondary data have been collected to provide an in-depth analysis of the craft. Secondary data was sourced from books, videos, articles, and research papers. Visual documentation included detailed photography and videography, showcasing the craftsmanship, artisans deeply engaged in their tasks, and thorough audio-visual interviews with the artisans. Observation periods and casual conversations were conducted with the artisans to establish rapport and obtain valuable insights.





Scope

This study will provide detailed information about the Nimmalakunta shadow puppetry cluster, including its location, history, the village of Nimmalakunta, the products made, processes involved, techniques, raw materials, challenges, existing tools, technology used, workstations, sales, demography, artisan lifestyle, government subsidies, and education level of the artisans.



01

Introduction 02

02

About Nimmalakunta

Map	05
Climate	08
Place	09
Food	10
Demographics	11
Ethnography	15

03

About Tholu Bommalata

History & origin	23
Folklore & beliefs	26
Materials & tools	27
Leather Cleaning Process	29
Making of a puppet	30
Form	33
Colour Palette	34
Design Elements	25
Making of commercial products	37
Storing & preservation	38
Artisan profile	39

04

The Performance

Behind the scenes	47
Rituals	49
Elements of a performance	52
About the performance	60



05

Our Objective

The portrayal of Good & Evil	64
Study of design elements	65
Depiction of Rakshasa	68
Ravana, the antagonist	71
Depiction of the Protagonist	77
Depiction in Vanvas	83
Inference	87

06

Analytical Study

Swot Analysis	91
5 P's of marketing	94
Government policies	97
Comparative study	105

07

Conclusion 113

08

Glossary 115 References 118





Introduction

A verse from the Bhagavad Gita metaphorically signifies how all living mortals function imminently and unanimously to the divine higher power resembling a puppet show, carefully maneuvered and orchestrated.

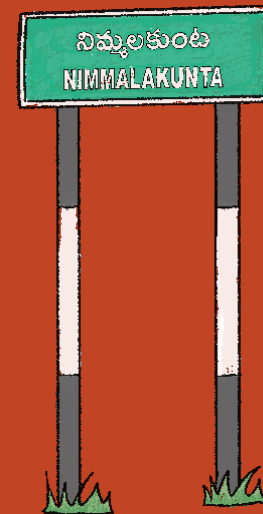
Tholu Bommalatta is an art form of this precise ritualized puppet performance, skillfully conducted by artisans perpetuating a legacy spanning generations. India, known for its diverse puppet traditions with varied forms of shadow puppetry,

includes this visual art practiced in the village of Nimmalakunta in Andhra Pradesh. Starting with the process of cleaning and preparing the leather, followed by drawing precise outlines and coloring them vibrantly, this cultural art form brings life to lifeless figures. The finished puppets become the stars of puppet shows, which blend music, dance, and performance into a display. These performances, which narrate the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, preserve the tradition and legacy of storytelling across generations.

About Nimmalakunta

Nimmalakunta is a small picturesque village positioned in the culturally renowned district of Anantapur which falls under the Rayalseema region. It is approximately 406 kilometres from the state capital of Amaravati, 167 kilometres and 411 kilometres from the neighbouring state capitals of Karnataka and Telanagana i.e Bengaluru and Hyderabad respectively. It comes under the Dharmavaram Mandal and the Pothulanagepalle Panchayat while the former also being the nearest accesible town, situated 10 kilometres from Nimmalakunta.

It is surrounded by Chennekothapalle Mandal to the west, Kothacheruvu Mandal to the south, Bathalapalle Mandal to the north, and Bukkapatnam Mandal to the east. This quaint village is known for its age-old tradition of the leather puppetry craft, Tholu Bommalatta practiced by expert craftsmen and passed down through generations. Carrying the timeless elegance of the craft, Nimmalakunta stands tall as a tribute to India's rich creative legacy and as a living repository of cultural traditions that continues to captivate and fascinate.









Legend

- (•)- Society hall
- Blue - Artisan Houses
- Red - Workers Houses
- NA- National Award

- 1.) Dalavai Chalapati Rao (9701740193)
(Padmashri, NA, Shilpu guru)
- 2.) Sindhe Sri Ramulu (9052873163) (NA)
- 3.) Dalavai Tirupalu (9908840399)
- 4.) Venkata Ramudu (9849886636)
- 5.) Dalavai Kulayappa (9959309029)(NA)
- 6.) Dalavai Raju (7013535845)
- 7.) Dalavai Durgesh (9177578929)
- 8.) Khande Srinivasulu (8897291616)
- 9.) Vanaruchu Kulayappa (9701040367)
- 10.) Chinna Kulayappa (900902077)
- 11.) Vanaruchu Shankara (9398493069)
- 12.) Vanaruchu Vishwanath (9963578126)
- 13.) Sindhe Sri Ramulu (9177071767)
- 14.) Dalavai Chinnaramana (8179032717)
- 15.) Dalavai Baburao (7702733439)
- 16.) Sindhe Anjaneyelu (9618737418) (NA)
- 17.) Sindhe Chitambara Rao (9000894562) (NA)
- 18.) Khande Bhaskar Rao (9989916769)
- 19.) Sindhe Maruti Rao (6305813447) (NA)
- 20.) Sindhe Maruti (6305027325)
- 21.) Khande Mohan Rao (9959303184)
- 22.) Khande Anjaneyelu (9704703359)
- 23.) Khande Raghavendra (9849879310)
- 24.) Sindhe Mohan Rao (9866789937)
- 25.) Khande Bhaskar (9100146468)





Climate

The village has a warm and humid climate for most of the year, with occasional light showers bringing annual precipitation to 47.54 millimeters over 93.17 rainy days. Temperatures range from 25°C to 40°C, and windy conditions are common, with average wind speeds of 15-25 mph. Summers from April to June are intensely hot, often exceeding 40°C, creating a sweltering environment. Winters from December to February are milder, with temperatures between 15°C and 25°C, offering a pleasant respite. The monsoon season, from June to September, starts with scattered mild showers in early June and progresses to heavier rains. Though less intense than in coastal areas, this rainfall is crucial for agriculture, relying on monsoon showers for crop growth.



Place

Nimmalakunta, a village in Anantapur district of the Rayalseema region, is about 406 kilometers from Amaravati and 167 and 411 kilometers from Bengaluru and Hyderabad, respectively. Part of the Dharmavaram Mandal and Pothulanagepalle Panchayat, it is 10 kilometers from Dharmavaram town. Surrounded by Chennekothapalle, Kothacheruvu, Bathalapalle, and Bukkapatnam Mandals, Nimmalakunta is renowned for its tradition of Tholu Bommalatta leather puppetry, a craft passed down through generations, embodying India's rich cultural legacy.





Food

Pappu is a spiced lentil stew with vegetables, typically served with rice. Annam (rice) is a staple, paired with various dishes. Podi is a spicy powder used as a condiment.

Ragi Mudde is a nutritious finger millet ball. Natu Kodi is a traditional Andhra chicken curry with spices, slow-cooked for a smoky flavor, often served with medu vada, rice, or chapati.

Bajji is a deep-fried vegetable snack in spiced gram flour batter, enjoyed with chutneys and chai as an evening snack. These dishes highlight the village's traditional cuisine.

Demographics

People

The population under consideration consists of 318 females and 304 males, making for a fairly balanced gender distribution. The community is composed of 50 families from the OC category, 10 families from the ST category, and 111 families from the BC category.

In terms of age distribution, there are approximately 75 individuals below the age of 18, a significant majority of 454 individuals falling within the middle age range of 19 to 60 years, and about 71 individuals aged 60 and above.



Locals enjoying a evening game of Ashta Chamma



Make-up Artist



A farmer



A local shopkeeper

Occupation



Agriculture and livestock rearing are the main sources of income in Nimmalakunta. A few families continue the traditional Tholu Bommalata craft. Due to declining income from puppetry, artisans now create contemporary products, supported by the Ministry of Textiles and Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation (Lepakshi Handicrafts). These products are sold in exhibitions and fairs in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, and internationally. Despite these efforts, many artisans have turned to other livelihoods, including farming, painting temples, and working as makeup artists for theatre actors.

Transport



By Rail: The nearest railway station to Nimmalakunta is Dharmavaram Junction, a major hub in Andhra Pradesh with frequent train services. From Dharmavaram, Nimmalakunta is easily accessible via well-connected roads.

By Bus: The Dharmavaram APSRTC Bus Station, 9.4 kilometers away, is a key transit point. The APSRTC operates numerous bus services from major cities, ensuring convenient road access to Nimmalakunta.

Travelling within Nimmalakunta is convenient due to its small size, making it easy to explore on foot. Walking through the village offers glimpses of daily life, showcasing the close-knit community.





Ethnography



Culture & Language



Many families involved in Tholu Bommalata in Nimmalakunta mostly speak Telugu, although they have Marathi origins. In the 17th century, their ancestors migrated from Maharashtra to southern India. While these puppeteers perform in Telugu and have integrated into the local tradition, they speak a Marathi dialect called 'Aare' within their community.



Architecture



Houses in Nimmalakunta are simple, single-story mud and clay structures with courtyards and verandas. Modern materials and improved utilities are becoming common. Narrow streets create a close-knit community, and a local health centre provides essential services.

Homes are brightly painted in reds, yellows, and blues, with traditional motifs like lotus patterns on doors. This vibrant, artistic approach reflects the village's cultural heritage and adds to its charm.



Festivals

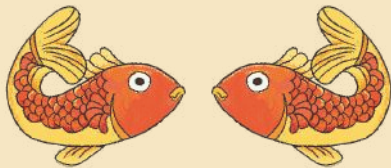


In Nimmalakunta, festivals are celebrated with vibrant traditions. Sankranti features kite flying, rangoli, and special dishes. During Ugadi, homes are cleaned and decorated, and festive meals are enjoyed. Vinayaka Chavithi involves clay Ganesha idols adorned with flowers and prayers. Diwali lights up homes with oil lamps and fireworks. These celebrations reflect the village's cultural heritage and foster community spirit.





About Tholu Bommalata



About Tholu Bommalata

Tholu Bommalata, a traditional leather puppet theatre from Andhra Pradesh, is a remarkable fusion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This art form, dating back to the 16th century, flourished under the patronage of the Vijayanagara rulers. Crafted from translucent goatskin, these grand and vibrantly colored puppets are intricately detailed and delicately perforated, reflecting exceptional craftsmanship. The origins of Tholu

Bommalata trace back to an ancient theatrical tradition known as “Chhaya Nataka” or shadow drama, which is believed to have existed during the composition of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. This art form likely originated in Gujarat around a thousand years ago and gradually migrated to Maharashtra. Over time, wandering performers spread this tradition across different regions of India, leading to its evolution and expansion.





History & Origin

By the 18th century, performing troupes of Tholu Bommalata had migrated to Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. The puppeteers, known as bommalata vattu, originally hailed from present-day Maharashtra and spoke a Marathi dialect called Aare, while performing in regional languages like Kannada and Telugu. Tholu Bommalata shares similarities with neighboring art forms such as Togalu Gombeyaata and Tholpavakoothu.

The Pallava, Chalukya, and Vijayanagara dynasties played crucial roles in shaping and preserving this unique shadow puppetry tradition.

As Sanskrit drama declined, various forms of folk drama and performance art developed in regional languages, adapting elements from earlier theatre traditions and creating new customs.

Tholu Bommalata is closely associated with Shiva and is traditionally performed during festivals and special occasions such as Shivratri. These performances, often held at night, could last for about four hours or more. The “Ranganatha Ramayana,” written in the 16th century by Gona Budda Reddy, was specifically adapted for shadow puppetry shows, highlighting the art form’s deep cultural and religious significance.





Folklore & Beliefs

The Ranganatha Valmiki Ramayana, with its nine parts, including Sundara Kanda and Ayodhya Kanda, serves as the basis for puppet shows, each part having 2-3 subplots suitable for performances. Puppeteers are respected for spreading these epic stories, and their puppets are revered, especially during festivals like Ramanavami. Rama and Sita puppets are treated with special care, while clown puppets are believed to ward off evil. Nimmalakunta does not follow the tradition of placing the Lakshmana puppet below the Sita puppet.

Puppeteers link generations by placing their hair in clown puppets and believe temple deities protect their craft. Performances, held during weddings, rituals, and festivals, are considered auspicious, with Tholu Bommalata believed to bring rain during droughts. Despite their skill, leather workers face social challenges due to caste perceptions. The puppet-making process is ritualistic, with puppets adorned with sacred tilak symbols representing Vishnu and the tulsi leaf, ensuring the divine presence and providing protective power to attendees.

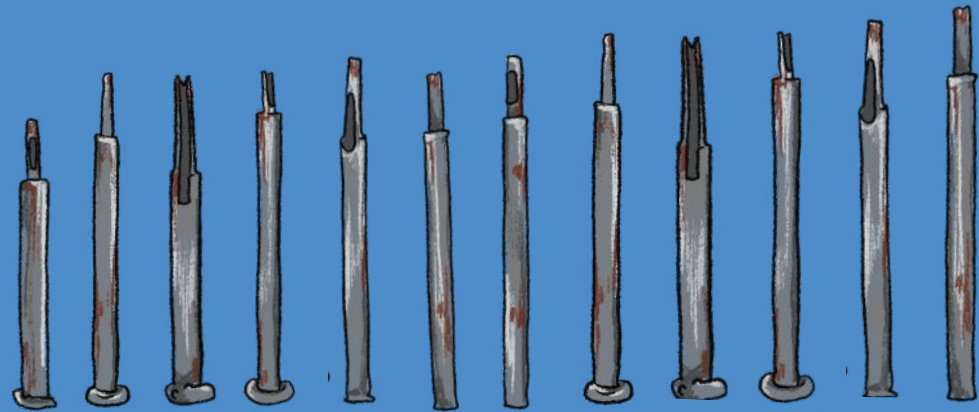


Material & Tools

Tholu Bommalata puppets have traditionally been made from meticulously prepared leather, originally from deer, goats, and occasionally buffaloes. Initially, palm leaves were used, but leather soon replaced them for its durability. Deer leather was used for divine and heroic characters, while buffalo leather was used for demonic figures. Due to the decline of the craft, dwindling patronage, and poaching laws, artisans now primarily use goat skin for all characters. Leather is sourced from nearby meat markets in Dharmavaram, Anantapur, Hindupur, Narasaraopet, and Hyderabad. Recently, artisans have also started using artificial leather for products like lamps and wall hangings, due to its availability and lower labor requirement.

The basic tools used during the process of making the puppets include :

- Pencil(formerly charcoal) for freehand sketching of the silhouettes
 - A bamboo stick (with a slot in the middle for a nib) which is used to draw the precise black outlines of the figures
 - Paintbrushes
 - Ink and dyes
 - Cheernam (Chisel like structure) and hammer for punching holes through the leather
 - Sūdi (Needle) leather strips and Flexigum to tie pieces of leather together
- Formerly, colour dyes were extracted from various natural sources.



The black dye was produced by combining soot with ragi flour, while other hues such as red, green, and yellow were extracted from boiled flowers. A viscous, adhesive substance derived from tree sap was mixed with these dyes to enhance their adherence to the leather. Currently, natural dyes have been replaced by industrial inks such as Camlin drawing inks that also have close enough properties of the previously used natural dyes.





Leather Cleaning Process

Treating the leather is a crucial step in the puppet production process of Tholu Bommalata, taking 3-4 days to achieve thin, light, and refined leather. The leather must be used within a day for optimal results.

First, artisans remove a layer of skin to clean and deodorize it. The hide is then soaked in boiling water to soften it, making it easier to remove fur and hair. Next, they use sharpened knives (Tadakadutaham) to clear the skin, followed by brushing (Chukanti) to remove any remaining fine hair, leaving a smooth surface. The clean skin is then stretched tightly in a frame for about 2 days to dry, becoming stiff, sturdy, and more transparent.



Making of a Puppet

Traditional Process:

Making shadow puppets traditionally took 30-40 days, but modern methods take 2-3 days due to water shortages, the use of chemical colors, and the creation of smaller items.



Designing:

Outlines of puppet figures are drawn on the hide. Little windows are cut out to create details and a sparkling effect. The outlines are marked with black ink using bamboo nibs. Holes are punched for embellishment, and bamboo pens are used to add smaller details.



Initial Steps:

Fresh goat hide is obtained from the weekly meat market. The hide is soaked in cold water for 2-3 hours, then cut and flattened. It is washed in warm water, dried in the sun for a few hours, and then cut to size.



Coloring:

The leather is colored with vibrant hues such as red, green, and ochre using ink and a brush. Common colors include black, red, and green, with yellow used for female figures and sages. After coloring, the outlines are re-marked in black.



Transformation:

The hide is transformed into translucent parchment through a process of curing, washing, and cleaning.



Assembly:

Individual parts of the puppet are cut and stitched together for mobility. A stick is prepared to operate the puppets. The puppet is mounted on sticks and bound with ropes for movement. Different parts, such as the head and limbs, are tied together to allow free movement.





Form of the puppet

Nimmalakunta leather puppets are renowned for their intricate details and vibrant colors. Tholu Bommalatta features large puppets (3-6 feet) and smaller ones (0.5-1 foot) for varied poses and characters. For instance, Hanuman has puppets ranging from 0.5 to 6 feet to depict different actions. Key characters like Rama and Ravana have multiple puppets showcasing different life stages and roles. Rama, for example, is depicted as a royal prince and an exiled ascetic. Ravana's large size emphasizes his power. Sita's attire varies based on her role. Smaller puppets are used for

supporting characters and souvenirs. Traditionally, puppets were side-profiled with large eyes, except for Ravana. While early puppets had varied proportions, modern ones are more accurate. The art includes animals, trees, and landscapes, with some puppets combining characters and scenery.



Colour Palette

Nimmalakunta leather puppetry has undergone a significant color evolution. Traditionally, artisans relied on natural dyes, crafting a vibrant palette with colors like enduring reds and blacks that stood out under performance lights. Other hues, including blues, yellows, browns, and greens, complemented the warm glow of traditional lamps. These natural dyes have proven remarkably resilient, showing minimal fading over centuries.

In contrast, modern synthetic dyes offer a broader spectrum of brighter colors, though they may not possess the same longevity. Contemporary puppets

showcase a wider range of hues, including bold blues, pinks, violets, oranges, and greens. The color choices for characters are deeply rooted in traditional iconography. For instance, Rama is often depicted in shades of blue, Lakshmana in reddish and yellowish tones, and Sita in browns and yellows. Hanuman's color palette varies, including greens and even olive in older pieces. Ravana is typically portrayed with darker tones and accents of gold. These color codes are derived from ancient epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, passed down through generations of artisans.

While the underlying principles of color selection remain tied to tradition, contemporary adaptations have emerged. Modern products, such as lamps and accessories, often feature a vibrant color scheme aligned with current aesthetic trends. In some cases, a minimalist approach has led to monochromatic designs, using only black ink or indigo blue. This reflects the evolving nature of the art form while honoring its historical roots.

Design & Decorative Elements

Designs and motifs play a crucial role in Nimmalakunta leather puppetry. The main inspirations for the art style, designs, and decorative elements used in this craft are drawn from the renowned 16th-century Veerabhadra Temple (also known as Lepakshi Temple) in Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh, located 76 kilometers from Nimmalakunta. The artistic grandeur of this temple is reflected in the detailed and elaborate designs of the leather puppets. The design elements, drawing inspiration from the elaborate carvings and frescoes of the

Lepakshi Temple, include floral patterns, divine figures with the carefully designed ornaments etc., are all intricately rendered to mirror the temple's artistic traditions. Also, in the mid-14th century, the establishment of the Bahmani Sultanate in the regions of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh brought an influx of an Islamic population, which in turn influenced the art form with elements of Turkish puppetry. This influence is evident in the colorful garments, sumptuous jewelry, and long beards on male puppets.



Intricate perforations made on clothes and jewelry add to the beauty of these puppets, especially when illuminated during performances. While contemporary designs may adapt to the artisan's aesthetics, most design elements have been faithfully followed through generations. Adapting to trends has been a long-standing practice among artisans. For example, during the British period, Ravana was depicted with a pocket watch and police badges, showcasing contemporary influences. Today, commercial products like lamps, necklaces, and

wall clocks feature both traditional narratives and contemporary motifs, often inspired by Kalamkari art. These motifs, such as fishes, flowers, peacocks, and elephants, are simpler and less intricate than the original designs. The traditional tapering lamps have evolved to include candle holders and other products to cater to modern tastes. Thus, artisans now are experimenting with vibrant colors and new motifs to create products that appeal to a broader audience while still preserving the essence of Nimmalakunta leather puppetry.

Making of commercial products

With the craft on a decline due to reduced interest, especially among the current generations, commercial products such as fashion souvenirs and decorative products are on the rise, and artisans are slowly adapting to changing their traditional processes. Many commercial products nowadays include lamps, wall hangings, clocks, candle holders, bookmarks, and accessories like earrings, bun pins and necklaces. These mass-produced products are made using machine-made artificial leather rather than natural leather, which, unlike industrial leather, takes days to prepare and treat. For the lampshades, a GI metal

frame/mould is used, depending on the shape and height of the lamp to be made. Shorter metal frames cost about Rs. 100, while bigger metal frames cost about Rs. 200. The artificial leather is cut accordingly so that it can be wrapped around the metal frame that serves as the base. The edges of the wrapped leather are then stitched and adhered with glue/flexigum. Similar to the puppet-making process, designs and motifs are drawn initially with a pencil, then inked with black ink using the Lekhini. The unique perforations are made with Cheeram (Chisel) and Sūdi (Hammer) to give the iconic leather puppetry look. Vibrant hues



are added using industrial inks to finish the look. The product is then left to dry. Once it is dry, a holder and the wiring for the lamp are set up resulting in the final finished product.

Other products like candle holders, bookmarks and accessories follow a similar procedure of inking, perforating and painting, with variations according to the design and finishing. For instance, earrings are attached with hooks, while for candle holders, the leather is wrapped around a glass cylindrical container.



Storing and preservation

The prolonged life of these leather puppets, some of which are still in existence after hundreds of years and have been passed down across generations, is due to the careful preservation techniques employed by artisans. The puppets are stored very carefully and with the utmost care and devotion. Artisans apply coconut oil periodically with a cloth to maintain the puppets. Natural leather puppets are susceptible to damage from water and rats, making it essential to safeguard them from these elements. Traditionally they were stored in large bamboo boxes. Nowadays, they are carefully enclosed, with

their arms and legs bent towards the torso, stacked vertically, wrapped in a cloth, and packaged in plastic polythene bags for safekeeping whereas smaller puppets are kept in suitcases and boxes. Damaged or broken parts of the puppets, such as arms or legs, are either mended and stitched or replaced with extra fragments or pieces.

Modern commercial products like lampshades are stored and shipped in cardboard boxes, often stacked on top of each other if height permits. Smaller items like earrings and wall hangings are packed in transparent plastic wrapping before being sold.

Artisan Profile



Dalavai Chalpathi Rao

Shri. Dalavai Chalapathi Rao, born in 1936 in Nimmalakunta, Andhra Pradesh, is a master of leather puppetry, initiated into the craft at 13 by his father. Over 40 years, he expanded traditional puppetry to include leather paintings, lampshades, and room partitions, attracting youth with lucrative earnings. His artworks range from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 2 Lakhs.

In 2020, he received Padma Shri Award for his efforts in leather puppet art. He also received many other awards and citations in various forums and public functions.

Rao has performed internationally, including 45 consecutive days of shows in Germany, and has received numerous awards, including the National Award for Excellence in Leather Puppet Making in 1988. He has trained many young artisans, helping them earn national recognition. Despite his age, Rao remains dedicated to the craft and helped form a Mutually Aided Co-operative Society for fair pricing of products

Anjaneyalu, a dedicated artisan, carries forward the traditional art of leather puppetry as taught by his father and grandfather. With funding from the government, Anjaneyalu aspires to teach the ancient craft to children and people from different communities, ensuring its preservation and expansion. His international performances in cities like London, Paris, Amsterdam, Germany, and Spain were facilitated by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. Anjaneyalu and his brother Marju Rao received the National Award from President Pranab Mukherjee for their depiction of the Mahabharata war on a single skin. As the son-in-law of Shri Dalavai Chalapathi Rao, Anjaneyalu is deeply committed to passing on this art form to future generations, believing it can provide a livelihood for backward classes with governmental support.



Shinde Anjaneyalu



Sindhe Sri Ramulu

Sindhe Sri Ramulu is a distinguished Tholu Bommalata artisan from Andhra Pradesh, honored with National Award in 2006 for his 40ft artwork of Rasleela. With this award to his credit the Government of India has recognized him as a Master Craftsman.

Sri Ramulu performs in 10 to 15 shows in a month, while his mother, Sindhe Bhagyamma, trains women in drawing and painting through Kalakriti, a cooperative movement promoting the art form.

His family, deeply rooted in this craft, includes his son Chandu who holds a Master's degree in Computer Application, also assists him in the craft, while his wife Lalita creates customised jewellery. The Sindhes create intricate, freehand-drawn puppets and artworks, using unique, handmade tools. Their heritage is exemplified by their uncle, Padma Shri Award winner Shri Dalavai Chalpathi Rao. Facing a decline in traditional puppetry, they have shifted to decorative items, ensuring their craft's survival and striving for broader recognition.

Sivamma, a 40-year-old master artisan from Nimmalakunta, Andhra Pradesh, has dedicated her life to the intricate craft of leather puppetry. Despite being an expert in creating traditional puppets, she has adapted her focus towards more sellable products due to shifting market trends. Sivamma's work includes exquisite leather paintings and innovative decorative items, which she showcases at exhibitions in North India, particularly Delhi, where there is a greater appreciation for her art. Her exceptional skill has earned her national recognition, including the prestigious Shilpguru Award for a magnificent painting depicting Lord Krishna. Sivamma continues to uphold and innovate within this traditional art form, ensuring its preservation and relevance in the contemporary market.



Sivamma



Khande Bhaskar Rao

K. Bhaskar Rao, born in 1980 in Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, comes from a long line of traditional leather puppeteers. He honed his skills from a young age, learning the intricacies of Tholu Bommalata by working alongside his father. Bhaskar Rao is renowned for his vibrant, flexible puppets that vividly depict folk tales and mythological stories, captivating audiences with their bold colours and dynamic movements. His work uniquely blends traditional motifs with contemporary styles, resonating deeply with regional folk theatre. In addition to his artistic creations, Bhaskar Rao is a dedicated mentor, training numerous aspiring artists and conducting workshops at institutions like the National Institute of Fashion Technology in Hyderabad and the International School in Bangalore. His contributions to the art form have earned him state awards and a place in several prominent collections, highlighting his role in preserving and advancing this cultural heritage.

Baburao, a 53-year-old artisan from Andhra Pradesh, proudly represents the third generation of his family in the region. He resides with his 50-year-old wife, Kulayamma, and they have a son and a married daughter. Baburao is renowned for his mastery of leather puppetry, a traditional craft that he passionately preserves. He goes to exhibitions only in India. He used to play the harmonium and sing songs during the shadow puppetry shows. Due to downfall of income from the craft, he also engages in painting temple walls, working in agriculture, and applying makeup for local drama performances. Baburao's diverse skill set and unwavering dedication to his work highlight his commitment to both sustaining his family's livelihood and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Andhra Pradesh.



Dalavi Baburao



The Performance



The Performance



The Performance

The tremendous efforts invested in creating the Tholu Bommalatta puppets come to fruition during the actual shadow puppetry performances, where these devotedly crafted figures are gracefully handled and manipulated by skilled puppeteers. The process of setting up the show continues until the very end of the show, with all performers and artists remaining utmost vigilant and

sharp, to ensure a smooth and captivating performance. Despite the decline in the traditional performance culture nowadays, the passion and devotion of the performers and puppeteers who are the frontrunners of these performances, have not diminished. For them, more than the crafting and selling of the puppets, the performance itself is the heart and soul of the Tholu Bommalatta tradition.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two lit incandescent light bulbs hanging from above. In the lower right foreground, there is a detailed black and white line drawing of a hand holding a puppeteer's control rod. The hand is adorned with a large, ornate, circular bracelet. The rod has a decorative, mesh-like headpiece. The overall tone is artistic and behind-the-scenes.

Behind the Scene

Before the actual performance begins, there is a flurry of activity to set up the stage and arrange everything. Performers and support staff gather in the early evening to erect a temporary structure of a stage. This initial setup ensures a smooth and seamless performance when the show takes place later in the evening, extending well into the night. The pre-performance setup includes erecting the stage, setting up the electrical lighting, assembling all the performers and puppeteers, and arranging mats for the audience, among other preparations.



Ganesha, dancing to Maha Ganapatim

Rituals

The performance begins with rituals and offerings to the gods Ganesha and Saraswati. The respective puppets of these deities are placed or pinned on the screen for some time before the actual show starts. Lord Ganesha, known for removing obstacles and offering a clear path, is prayed to before any major event, ensuring his blessings for a smooth performance. Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, art, wisdom, and learning, is also honored. Nowadays, songs praising these gods are played digitally alongside the rituals.

Just before the show starts, a plate with a coconut, flowers, and incense is placed before the gods. The bhagavatar then performs a puja by breaking the coconut and reciting holy incantations. After this, camphor is lit and shown to Lord Ganesha, signaling the start of the performance. These rituals are performed to seek the gods' blessings for the performance, the audience, and the village, protecting it from any misfortune. The performance commences with a short act dedicated to Lord Ganesha, followed by the main show.



Coconut, Camphur and Kumkum for the rituals



Elements of a performance

Light

Lighting is crucial in shadow puppetry to ensure that the puppets are well-illuminated and their silhouettes and shadows are clearly visible on the screen. Traditionally, rows of earthenware castor oil lamps were used for this purpose. Positioned just behind the screen, these lamps provided a warm, uniform light that made the puppets glow and sparkle. Today, electric lighting has largely replaced these oil lamps. While oil lamps offered a natural and even illumination,

the 60 W yellow electric lights produce a more concentrated light distribution that can sometimes be less ideal for the performance. This change in lighting has led artisans to adjust their puppet-making techniques. To compensate for the more intense and less natural lighting of modern electric lamps, puppeteers now use lighter and slightly less vibrant colors in their puppets. This adjustment helps maintain the quality and visual appeal of the puppetry under the new lighting conditions.

The Stage

The shadow puppetry performance is conducted behind a large white screen, typically measuring between 3 to 6 meters wide and 2 to 3.5 meters tall. This screen is tightly stretched within a bamboo, timber, or metal frame, often set at a slight angle to the vertical for better visibility. The size of the screen corresponds to the size of the puppets, with some screens reaching an impressive eight by two and a half meters. However, smaller screens of three to four meters by two meters are now more common due to a reduction in puppet sizes.

Traditionally, the setup of the stage was supported by the hosting village, with contributions from various members of the community. The village dhobi (washerman) would provide white saris or dhotis to be used as the screen. The first step in setting up involves assembling the metal frame by arranging and screwing together various metal rods. The screen is positioned 1.5 meters off the ground, with a dark cloth covering the lower part to conceal the puppeteers. Once the frame is assembled, the white fabric is stretched tightly across it to

maximize transparency and securely tied to the frame. The setup, initially done horizontally, is then raised to a vertical position. Before the performance begins, the performers check everything thoroughly. This includes testing the microphones, tuning musical instruments, and practicing puppet manipulation with their sticks to ensure a smooth and effective show. This pre-show preparation is crucial to guarantee that all elements are in place for a successful performance.



The stage





The instruments backstage - mridangam & harmonium

Music

Music is an integral component of Tholu Bommalata performances, weaving together the narrative, enhancing dramatic moments, and deepening the overall impact of each scene. It not only sets the mood but also helps convey the story, enabling the audience to connect with and appreciate the performance, even if they do not understand the language. The live music in Tholu Bommalata includes a variety of elements, such as songs that introduce characters, vocal dialogues, and rich, evocative background scores. The performance features both solo and choral pieces, performed by singers and instrumentalists who are typically junior members of the puppetry troupe.

These musicians sit behind the puppeteers and play a range of instruments, including the muddalam and mridangam (percussion drums), cymbals, harmonium, mukhaveena (a reed pipe), and shankha (conch shell). Additionally, the sound of gulusu (anklets) is created by striking feet on wooden planks, adding a rhythmic element to the performance. The music, which blends classical and folk traditions, enriches the entrances, dialogues, and fight scenes, making them more dynamic and engaging. Through its carefully crafted musical score, the performance becomes a more immersive experience for the audience.

The performers must also be skilled in modulating their voices to suit the different characters they portray. For instance, Rama is depicted with a calm, soothing, and gentle voice, while Ravana's voice is thunderous and intimidating. Sita is portrayed with a soft-spoken and sweet tone. Additionally, the actors voicing the jester characters need to adapt their voices to reflect the mischievous and cackling demeanor of these comedic roles. This vocal versatility is crucial for bringing the diverse personalities of the characters to life and enhancing the overall storytelling experience.

The Performers

Tholu Bommalata puppets come to life through the skillful movements of puppeteers, who use a complex system of sticks and strings to create dance-like performances. Mastering this art requires extensive training in singing ragas and talas, voice modulation, storytelling, playing instruments, manipulating puppets, dancing, and reciting epic texts. A dedicated troupe, usually consisting of 6-10 family members, works behind

the scenes. The senior-most member, the bhagavatar or sutradhar, leads the performance, assisted by three to four puppeteers and one or two women who sing, narrate, and perform. Musicians in the troupe play instruments like the muddalam, mridangam, cymbals, harmonium, mukhaveena, and shankha. Puppeteers wear anklets to add rhythmic sounds, and the lead puppeteer uses cymbals to guide the performance,

incorporating dance movements similar to Kuchipudi.

Younger family members take on subsidiary and backstage roles, training for future performances by memorizing epic texts in Telugu. The intricate coordination and immense practice involved highlight the dedication and passion of these performers, ensuring the continuity of this traditional art form.





About the Performance

The Tholu Bommalata performance combines drama, music, puppet manipulation, and lighting to create a mesmerizing visual and auditory experience. Behind a large white screen, shadows of intricately crafted puppets come to life through a vibrant interplay of light and movement. Traditionally, performances feature epic tales from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, along with Vaishnava texts like the Bhagavata Purana. Modern repertoires include educational

narratives and contemporary stories such as those about Gandhi. Historically, entire epics were performed in one night, but now, due to shorter audience attention spans, performances are condensed to an hour or two, focusing on key segments like Sundara Kanda from the Ramayana and episodes like Lava-Kusha and Rama-Ravana Yuddham from the Mahabharata. Each performance involves numerous puppets, originally over 100, now often reduced to 80 or fewer.

Puppeteers control each puppet using rods attached to its back, allowing for intricate movements across up to 13 joints. Handling these puppets, especially during intense battle scenes, requires technical skill and precise coordination with music and dramatic cues. Scenes involving Hanuman in the Sundara Kanda are particularly complex and prestigious for experienced puppeteers.

Conventions in the performance enhance audience understanding: divine characters enter from the right, while demons and villains emerge from above, often with dramatic sound effects. Each puppet's entrance is accompanied by music and dance, and skilled puppeteers may incorporate improvisation to further engage the audience. Puppets are controlled through sticks mounted on their bodies, with additional rods and strings attached to articulate their movements. A single puppeteer manages one puppet, using the central rod in one hand and the additional rods in the other. Precise coordination among multiple puppeteers is essential for

smooth performances, with puppets made to walk, sway, twirl, dance, hop, fight, and even fly. Periodic swaying of the dangling legs enhances the illusion of animation. Before the main play or during intervals, clown or jester characters like Bangarakka, Jettupoligatu, and Ketigadu provide comic relief. They offer tributes to patrons and deliver humorous, sarcastic commentary. These skits often feature improvised dialogues based on current observations, adding a lively dimension to the performance. Historically explicit jokes have since the 1970s been replaced with more sanitized humor, maintaining the jesters' role as entertaining figures.



Hanuman



Rakshasa Lankini

The Portrayal Of Good & Evil

A Study of Design Elements

Portrayal of Good and Evil in Tholu Bommalata :

A Study of Design Elements

The fight between good and evil has permeated our world since time immemorial. This is a theme explored throughout human history, where these stories have been observed first-hand, written down and published, to help humans learn from their past mistakes and prevent history from repeating itself. This prominent theme of the triumph of 'Good over Evil' has also been extensively explored in the great Indian epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The craft of Tholu Bommalata, among various other traditional forms of storytelling has been a significant medium for spreading these powerful themes among audiences.

The Ramayana and Mahabharata, the ancient monumental works encapsulate the essence of *dharma* (righteousness) and *adharma* (unrighteousness). The Ramayana written by the sage Valmiki, narrates the story of Rama, the ideal king, who embodies virtue and righteousness. His journey to rescue his abducted wife Sita from the demon king Ravana serves as an allegory for the triumph of good over evil. Similarly, the Mahabharata, attributed to Vyasa, chronicles the Kurukshetra War between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, exploring themes of justice, duty, and the moral complexities of life where ultimately good triumphs over evil.

While exploring the intricate detailing of each element on the puppets such as clothing, jewellery, facial features and even the backgrounds, it becomes evident that certain key features distinguish the good characters from the evil ones. The reasoning behind these features has been derived from the age-old epics and the Puranas that have been dutifully upheld by the artisans through generations rather than being purely artistic choices. While individual artisans might make some changes, the main characteristics remain consistent and the same.



Ravana, the rakshasa king



Rakshasa Bhatuda

Depiction of Rakshasa (demon)

The rakshasas (demons) in general are depicted with exaggerated and grotesque features. They often have bloodshot eyes or eyes with red corners to show their constant anger, dilated pupils, and a bloodthirsty demeanor. They also have deformed noses that contribute to their hideousness. Their canine and sharp teeth are bared, often with tongues out, to emphasize their fearsome nature. Their teeth are also very long, resembling fangs. Some rakshasas have curved horns on their heads, while others carry huge weapons like curved swords and axes. They are characterized by big, scary mustaches and bushy eyebrows. Their hair is shown as wild and flailing, adding to their crazy demeanor.

To further illustrate their evil intentions, the demons wear Aahaaram (jewelry) such as Chandraharam (necklaces) and Karnakundalas (earrings) made of bones, teeth, and animal heads like crocodiles, lions, and snakes. Their clothes are black or dark in color and made from materials other than silk, which is considered pure and peaceful. The rakshasas also have darker skin tones, all of which emphasize their malevolent nature and willingness to go to any extent. Their physiques are big and burly, and they are shown as large to convey their menacing nature.



To further illustrate their evil intentions, the demons wear Aahaaram (jewelry) such as Chandraharam (necklaces) and Karnakundalas (earrings) made of bones, teeth, and animal heads like crocodiles, lions, and snakes. Their clothes are black or dark in color and made from materials other than silk, which is considered pure and peaceful. The rakshasas also have darker skin tones, all of which emphasize their malevolent nature and willingness to go to any extent. Their physiques are big and burly, and they



are shown as large to convey their menacing nature. Specific to Ravana, the only character having all ten of his heads shown not in profile but facing forward, is always shown covered with Shiv tilak (3 horizontal white lines stacked on top of the other) showing his ardent devotion to lord Shiva. Although Ravana is depicted with a Shiva tilak to signify his devotion to Lord Shiva, other features highlight his demonic nature, such as his fearsome expression, exaggerated attributes, and intimidating attire. Ravana is also often



depicted with a large, thick moustache and, in some cases, a beard that adds to his intimidating presence. Though Ravana is part of the rakshasas, he is depicted with more dignity. He is shown with a normal, lean physique and often portrayed with only two fangs protruding from his mouth. Despite not having the crazy demeanor of other rakshasas, Ravana appears very intimidating with his impressive ten heads and his swords.



Rakshasas are monstrous beings, their appearance a grotesque blend of human and beast. While some, like the mighty Ravana, adorn themselves with opulent jewelry of gems and precious stones, most rakshasas find macabre beauty in their adornments. Their necklaces are often strung with human bones, their bracelets crafted from dried sinew. Their imposing stature, coupled with their wild, untamed appearance, is enough to strike terror into the hearts of even the bravest. With piercing eyes that hold the promise of violence and thick, menacing



mustaches that twist into sinister shapes, they are the embodiment of evil. The primary aim is to portray them as fearsome entities. Their entire appearance is designed to scare and explicitly reveal their vile, cruel, cunning, and evil nature. The portrayal is exaggerated and expanded to emphasize their intent to kill and their terrifying, intimidating demeanor. The demons' grotesque and fearsome attributes, combined with their aggressive postures and formidable weapons, ensure that their mere presence is enough to evoke a sense of dread and apprehension among the audience.



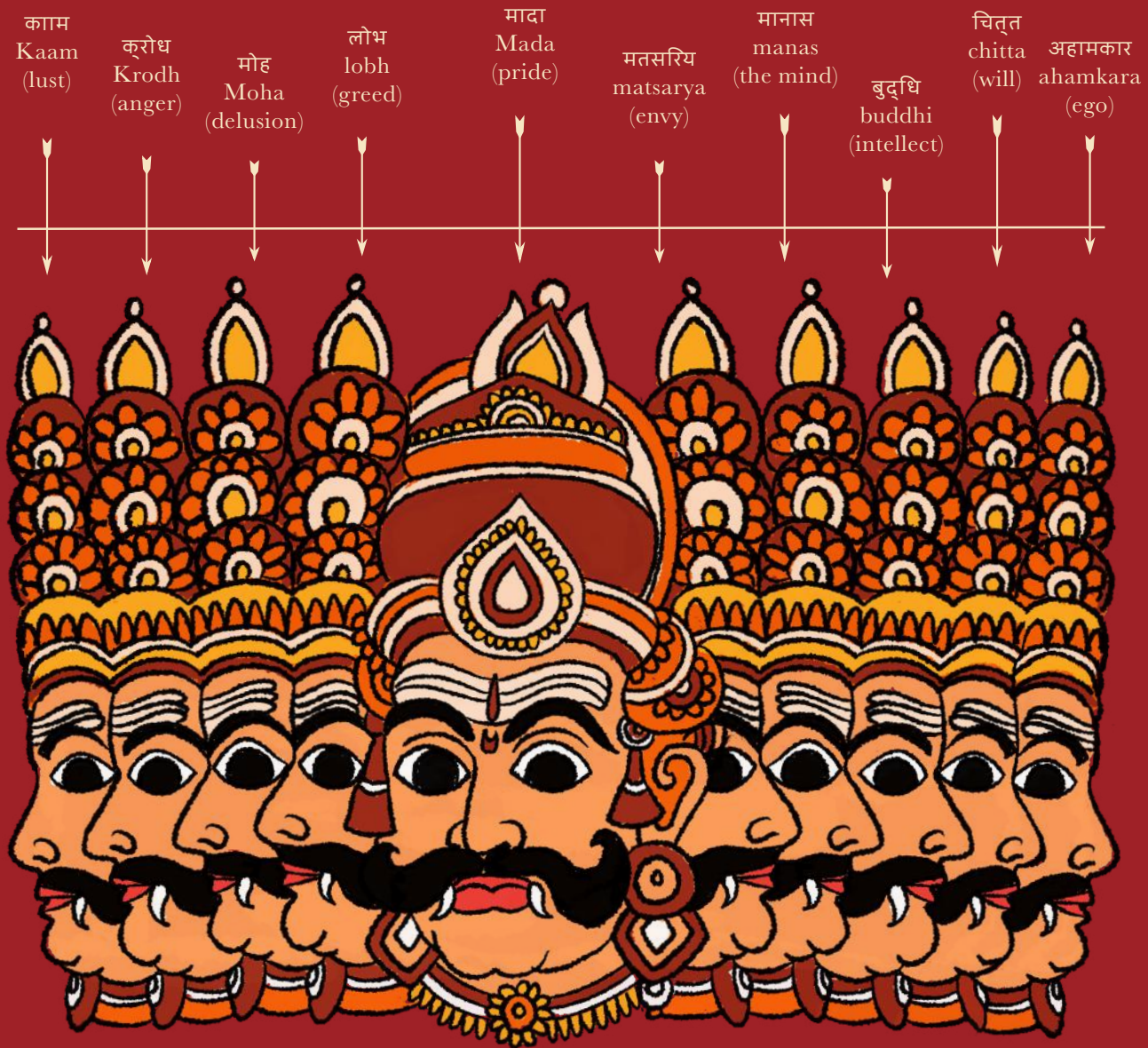
These demons are the epitome of terror. Their faces are twisted, nightmarish masks of pure evil, with glowing eyes that seem to pierce the soul. Deformed noses add to their grotesque appearance, and unkempt beards frame their wild, savage expressions. Their mouths hang open in an eternal scream, revealing rows of jagged, yellow teeth that promise agony. Their bodies are unnatural and distorted, with long, spindly limbs that end in sharp, overgrown claws. Every inch of their being is designed to instill fear, and their mere presence is enough to curdle the blood.

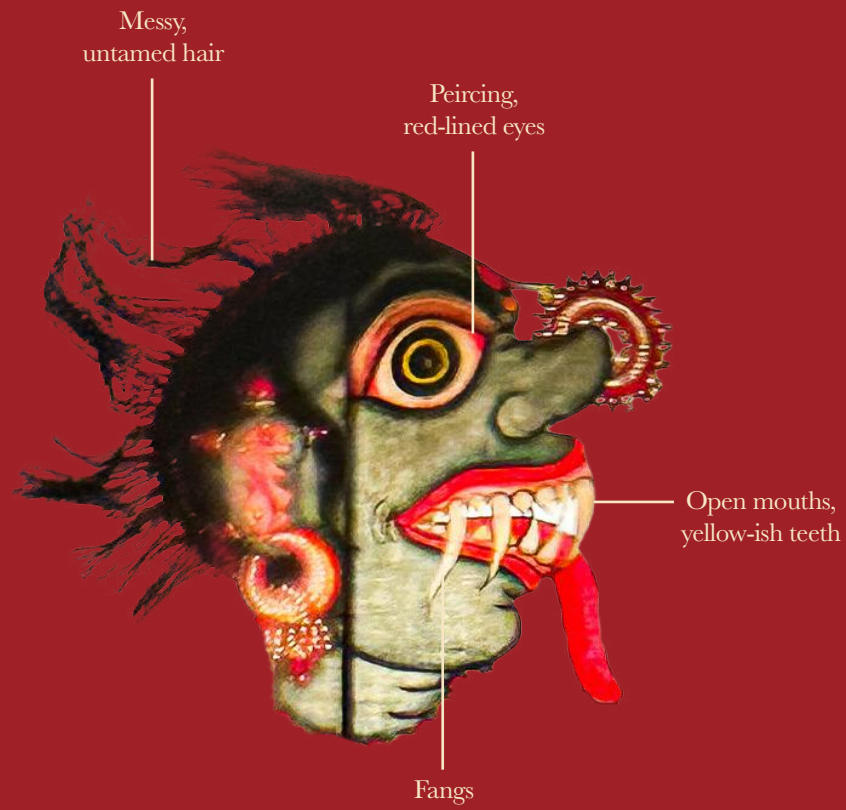


Ravana, the antagonist

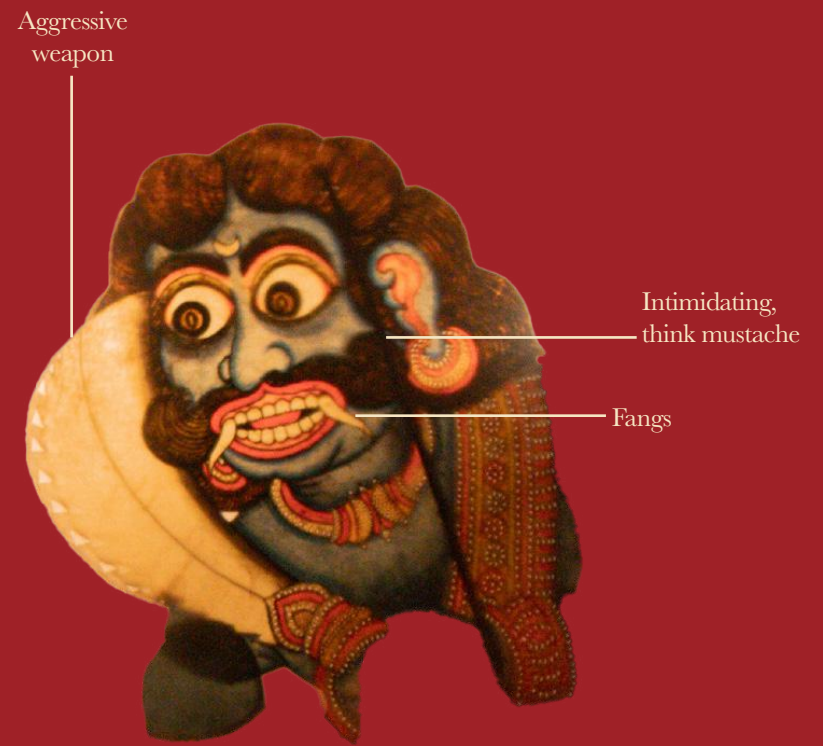
In Tholu Bommalata performances, Ravana, the ten-headed Rakshasa king, is a central antagonist whose multiple heads symbolize various facets of his complex personality. Each head of Ravana represents different traits and emotions, such as immense knowledge, power, greed, anger, and lust, reflecting his multifaceted nature. The ten heads also signify his two-faced personality, showcasing his capability for great wisdom and intelligence on one

hand, and his diabolical and destructive tendencies on the other. This duality is masterfully depicted in the intricate details of the puppets, with each head often displaying unique expressions to highlight the diverse aspects of Ravana's character. This portrayal not only emphasizes his formidable presence but also serves as a narrative device to explore the themes of inner conflict and the consequences of unchecked ambition and desire.





Rakshasa Lankini



Rakshasa Bhatuda







Hanuman with Rakshasa Lankini



Depiction of the Protagonists

The main protagonist characters in the Ramayana that appear during the performances are Rama, his loyal brother Lakshmana, his devoted wife Sita, his fervent devotee Hanuman, and Sugreeva with his Vanara (monkey) army. To signify their devotion and divine allegiance, Hanuman, Lakshmana, and even Rama's body are marked with the imprint of Lord Vishnu's Tilak (U-shaped symbol with an ovoid center, symbolizing the sacred tulsi leaf). The performances often highlight

their unwavering dedication through vivid storytelling and vibrant visual representations. Each character embodies specific virtues and qualities, with Rama symbolizing righteousness, Lakshmana exemplifying loyalty, Sita representing purity, and Hanuman demonstrating unwavering devotion. The interaction between these characters creates a compelling narrative that captivates audiences and reinforces the moral and spiritual lessons of the Ramayana.



Rama

Lakshman

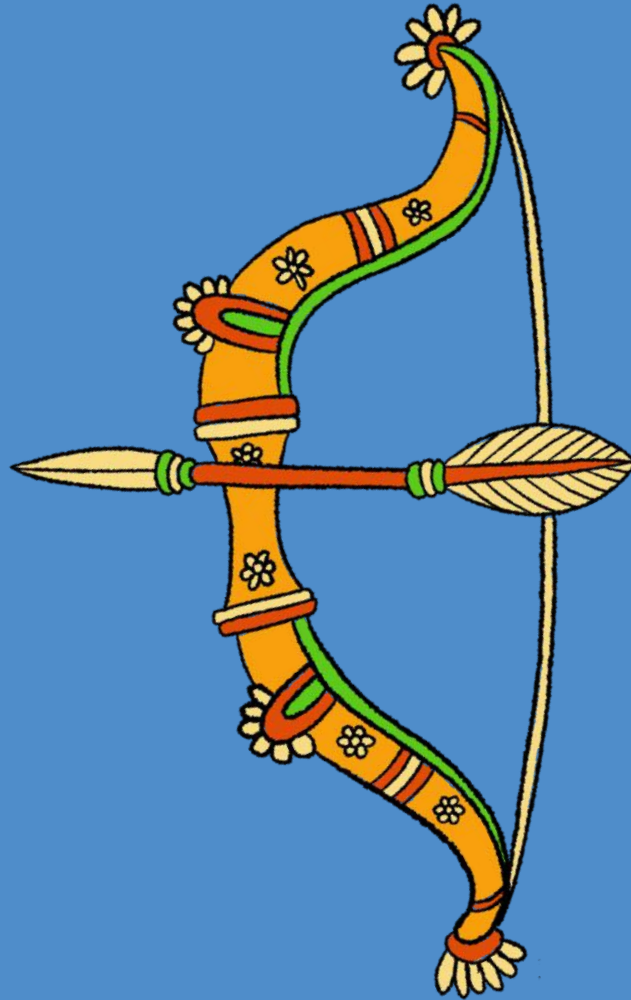
Hanuman

Sita

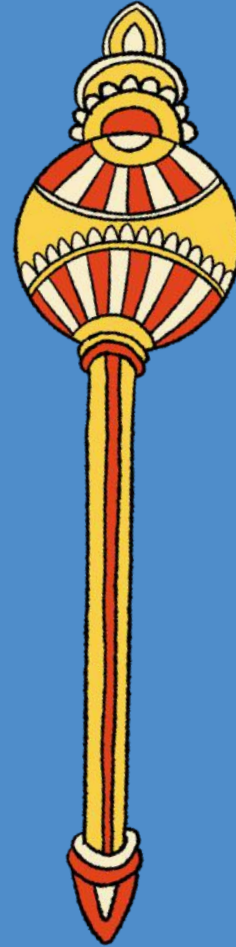


Hanuman & Rama

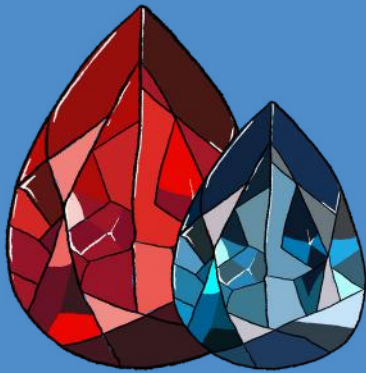




Bows & Arrows



Gadhai



Manikam

Pushparagam

To show their virtuous nature, they are adorned with beautiful ornaments and jewellery like intricate headgears, necklaces and earrings made of expensive stones like vajram (diamonds), kanikam (gold), vajralu (gems), vaidhudiyalu (pearls), gomedhikam (hessonite), pushparagam (topaz), maragatham (emerald), and manikam (rubies). Their attire is depicted to be made of the finest and purest silk reflecting their nobility and peacefulness.



Gold adorned necklace

They also have flower motifs in their jewellery, adding to their divine and serene appearance. The protagonist characters' puppets are clean and precise, featuring normal, pure eyes, sharp noses and delicate pink lips. They also have shaven and clean faces and well-kept nails giving a groomed and pleasant look. Their expressions are characterized by pleasant, serene smiles. Their weapons are usually bows and gadhai (maces), with Hanuman specifically depicted with a gadha.



Pure eyes

The virtuous characters are shown with regular white eyes, symbolizing purity, innocence, and righteousness. These meticulously drawn eyes express calmness, inner peace, and moral integrity. They convey wisdom and clarity, highlighting the characters' noble and enlightened nature. This subtle yet powerful detail enhances the audience's connection to the protagonists, making their virtues prominent and relatable, and serving as a visual symbol of their goodness.

Depiction in Vanvas

In an important scene from the Sundara Kanda of Ramayana, Hanuman discovers Sita in the Ashoka Vanam. Initially being skeptical of Hanuman's claim of friendship with Rama, Sita asks him to describe Rama and Lakshmana's physical and moral attributes. To prove his brave claim, Hanuman then begins to sing and praise Rama as the Neela Meghashyama, one with a beautiful blue complexion. He also touts him to be the

great hero that he is, one who's extremely beautiful and exceptionally talented, and about his great forgiving nature even towards his treacherous foes. Hanuman speaks with such devotion that Sita is moved to tears, feeling a renewed sense of hope. He then goes on to describe Lakshman as being even more handsome than his brother Rama, with his red complexion and perfect features, and one who has qualities that shine as gold.



Sita in Vanvas



Lakshman in Vanvas

Rama in Vanvas

Even during their exile in the forest (Vanavas), Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana are depicted in simple orange attire, with rudraksha beads binding their hair, emphasizing their humility and piety. Their backgrounds often include chariots and motifs of peacocks and parrots, further highlighting their divine qualities. Therefore Rama is shown in this serene blue that reflects his noble and radiant nature while Lakshmana is shown with golden or red tones,

reflecting his moral and honorable qualities.

These ancient descriptions from the Ramayana are now used as references for the making of the puppets of Tholu Bommalata. The pure, unblemished features of the protagonists, combined with their peaceful and normal nature, starkly contrast the exaggerated and grotesque characteristics of the demons, thus effectively conveying the timeless struggle between good and evil.



Rama



Ravana



Inference

The intricate and contrasting portrayals of characters in Tholu Bommalata puppetry underscore the ancient struggle between good and evil, vividly represented through detailed artistic elements. The grotesque features of the rakshasas, with their menacing eyes, fangs, and wild demeanor, starkly oppose the serene, noble depictions of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman, adorned with pure symbols and divine ornaments. This contrast highlights

the artisans' meticulous storytelling craft, using exaggerated and detailed attributes to convey moral and ethical narratives from the Ramayana. The visual dichotomy between protagonists and antagonists in Tholu Bommalata not only enhances the dramatic impact but also maintains the rich cultural heritage and spiritual depth of these epic tales, showcasing the artisans' skill in bringing these stories to life.



Hanuman's devotion to Rama seen during the puppet show



Analytical Study of the craft

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis of traditional puppetry highlights its unique educational value and artistic style, rich with vibrant colors and expressive movements. Rooted in Andhra Pradesh's cultural heritage, puppetry attracts tourists and promotes cultural exchange. However, challenges include declining interest due to modernization, limited market

reach, and economic hardships for artisans. Opportunities exist in leveraging digital platforms, product diversification through contemporary collaborations, and educational programs to engage younger generations. Yet, threats from modern entertainment, economic instability, and the loss of traditional knowledge pose significant risks to this art form.

Strengths

Educational Value: Puppetry can be used as an effective educational tool for children and adults.

Unique Artistic Style: The use of vibrant colors, detailed patterns, and expressive puppet movements creates a distinct form of traditional art.

Rich Cultural Heritage: Has a deep historical and cultural significance, being an integral part of Andhra Pradesh's traditional arts.

Cultural Tourism: Attracts tourists and culture enthusiasts, contributing to the local economy and promoting cultural exchange.

Weakness

Declining Interest: Modernization and changing entertainment preferences have led to a decline in the popularity of traditional puppet shows.

Limited Market Reach: The market for traditional puppetry is limited, and there is a lack of widespread commercial avenues to sell these products.

Economic Challenges: Artisans often face economic hardships due to inconsistent income and lack of financial support.

Opportunities

Digital Platforms: Leveraging digital platforms for performances and sales can expand the reach and attract a global audience.

Diversification of products : Partnering with contemporary artists, designers, and brands can create fusion products that appeal to modern tastes

Educational Programs: Introducing workshops and educational programs in schools and colleges can help in reviving interest among the younger generation.

Threats

Competition from Modern Entertainment: The rise of digital entertainment and modern art forms poses a significant threat to the relevance and demand for traditional puppet shows.

Economic Instability: Fluctuations in the economy and market conditions can impact the livelihoods of artisans and the sustainability of the craft.

Loss of Traditional Knowledge: With younger generations moving away from traditional crafts, there is a risk of losing valuable skills and knowledge that have been passed down through centuries.



Outlining of puppet done by Mr. Maruthi Rao

5 Ps of Marketing

Place

Nimmalakunta in Anantapur district, along with Madhavapatnam near Kakinada, DC Palli in Nellore district, and Narasaraopet in Guntur district, are the major clusters for leather puppets in Andhra Pradesh. However, Nimmalakunta leather puppetry is particularly renowned and widely recognized for this craft, so much so that the craft itself is known as Nimmalakunta Leather Puppetry.

Product

Nimmalakunta Leather Puppetry is celebrated for its exquisite leather puppetry products. Originally focused solely on traditional puppets, the craft has now diversified into a wider range of commercial items. Today, the product range includes not only puppets but also lamps, clocks, bookmarks, and various accessories such as necklaces, earrings, and bun pins.

People

Artisans are the primary personnel involved in selling Tholu Bommalata products, typically showcasing their work during exhibitions, mostly organized by governmental bodies. In addition to the artisans, retailers and traders may also be involved, offering the products through both offline stores and online platforms.

Price

- Large Paintings: (Length ranging from 2 ft. to 6 ft. and breadth ranging from 1.5 ft. to 5 ft.)
 - Price Range: Rs. 10,000 - Rs. 1,50,000*
 - Larger Puppets: (4 ft. to 6 ft.)
 - Price Range: Rs. 8,000 - Rs. 20,000*
 - Smaller Puppets: (2 ft. to 3 ft.)
 - Price Range: Rs. 400 - Rs. 4,000*
- Lamps:
- Price Range: Rs. 900 - Rs. 2,500*
 - Accessories: Including earrings, pendants, necklaces, and small items like wall hangings
- Price Range: Rs. 100 - Rs. 500*

Mentioned prices are retail. Wholesale prices might be lesser. The range can slightly differ according to the artisan selling the products.

Promotion

Nimmalakunta Leather Puppetry receives significant support from various government agencies, including: Ministry of Textiles – Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India (HHEC), Sangeet Natak Akademi to name a few. These bodies assist artisans by enabling their involvement in exhibitions and offering guidance on product and design improvements, which helps in promoting and raising awareness about the craft at both national and international levels. By participating in these exhibitions and selling their products, artisans effectively promote their craft and raise awareness about it.



Government Policies

With a decline in interest and support for Tholu Bommalata, government initiatives, policies, and schemes become crucial in preserving this traditional and cultural heritage. It is essential for the government to play an active role in supporting the craft to ensure that it does not fade into obscurity. The following initiatives and policies are noteworthy in this regard.

Central Government Initiatives

The Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) serves as the primary agency within the the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India responsible for craft and artisan-based initiatives. It provides support in the development, marketing, and export of handicrafts, as well as in promoting various craft forms and skills. This assistance is offered through technical and financial support, including schematic interventions carried out by its field offices.

As the leading agency, the Development Commissioner leads national efforts to advance the handicrafts sector. The office supports artisans and the industry through various development schemes, managed by its six regional offices in Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow, Chennai, Guwahati, and New Delhi, along with its 61 field units.

The handicrafts sector plays a crucial role in the nation's economy. It offers employment to a

vast number of craftspeople in rural and semi-urban areas and generates significant foreign exchange while preserving the country's cultural heritage. Handicrafts possess tremendous potential, as they are essential not only for sustaining millions of existing artisans across the country but also for accommodating the growing number of new entrants into the craft industry. Currently, handicrafts significantly contribute to employment generation and exports. Despite its importance, the sector has faced challenges due to its unorganized nature, including lack of education, limited capital, poor access to new technology, absence of market intelligence, and a weak institutional framework.

To address these issues, the National Handicrafts Development Programme (NHDP) and the Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) have been launched. These initiatives focus on a project-based, need-driven approach for the

integrated development of handicrafts, ensuring craftspeople participation at all stages of scheme implementation with the ultimate goal of their empowerment and sustainability. The NHDP and CHCDS schemes include the following components:

Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India details two programs aimed at supporting the Indian handicraft sector: National Handicrafts Development Programme (NHDP) and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS).

Objectives of NHDP & CHCDS:

- To empower artisans and ensure the sustainability of the handicraft sector.
- To provide marketing platforms and skill development for artisans.
- To preserve India's prestigious traditional crafts.

Components of NHDP:

- Marketing Support & Services (MSS)
- Skill Development in Handicrafts Sector
- Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY) - Scheme for the development of Leather Crafts
- Direct Benefit to Artisans (Welfare)
- Infrastructure and Technology Support
- Research & Development

Focus of NHDP Schemes:

- Marketing: Providing artisans with various platforms to sell their products, including domestic exhibitions, international fairs, and online platforms.
- Skill Development: Training artisans in new designs, production techniques, and business skills.
- Empowerment: Bringing artisans into the mainstream economy and ensuring social security.
- Preservation: Supporting traditional crafts and preventing them from disappearing.

Crafts Council of India

Established in 1964 by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, the Crafts Council of India (CCI) aims to protect and enhance India's traditional crafts, ensuring sustainable livelihoods for artisans through education, training, and market adaptation.

Mission and Objectives

CCI focuses on fostering the economic, social, and cultural importance of crafts, integrating technology, design, marketing, and entrepreneurial skills to empower artisans.

Support for Artisans

CCI raises awareness and provides resources and training to enhance artisans' skills, preserving traditional crafts while improving their economic status.

Key Initiatives for Artisans

CCI organizes exhibitions and sales events, allowing artisans to sell directly to consumers, reducing middleman dependency, and improving market negotiation skills.

Educational Programs and Training

CCI offers workshops, training sessions, and design education to make traditional crafts marketable and relevant in modern contexts.

Collaborations and Partnerships

CCI partners with various organizations, including state councils and NGOs, to create platforms for artisans to showcase their work and expand their reach nationally and internationally.

Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh

Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh (CCAP) is a non-profit organization committed to preserving and promoting the rich tapestry of traditional crafts and handlooms that define the cultural heritage of Andhra Pradesh. By fostering collaborations between artisans, designers, and the market, CCAP endeavors to revitalize fading crafts, empower artisans, and create sustainable livelihoods. Through a range of initiatives, including skill development, market linkages, and awareness campaigns, the council strives to ensure the continuity of these invaluable artistic expressions for generations to come. It also has a variety of programs focused on preserving and promoting traditional crafts and handlooms of Andhra Pradesh. Some of them are:

Vasantham: A two-day celebration to showcase the stories of weavers and craftspeople.

Aarogya: Health camps focusing on prevention and healthy eating habits for weavers.

Handloom Bazaar: A platform to celebrate local handlooms and weavers.

Workshops: Bringing in experts to impart new ideas, design development, and training to artisans.

Corporate Gifts: Curated craft products for corporate gifting.

Krishna Kamalam Sanmanam: Awards to honor artisans and their work.

Lepakshi Handicrafts

Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited is a government-owned corporation established to preserve, promote, and develop the rich handicraft heritage of Andhra Pradesh. Lepakshi Corporation, an enterprise of the Andhra Pradesh Government and operating under the Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation (APHDC), established in 1982, is dedicated to promoting, developing, and marketing handicrafts while implementing welfare schemes for artisans. Guided by the vision “An Empowered Artisan Community Thriving in an ‘Enabling’ Environment,” Lepakshi operates 12 showrooms in Andhra Pradesh and additional

ones in Kolkata and New Delhi, embodying the cultural and artistic heritage of the state. Lepakshi has become synonymous with Andhra Pradesh’s artistic identity, promoting arts and crafts through retail showrooms and expos. For over three decades, it has introduced various art forms of Andhra Pradesh to the world, creating economic benefits for artisans and craftsmen involved in producing these masterpieces. The emporium offers a diverse range of products, including musical instruments, paintings, jewelry, and purana depictions, appealing to art enthusiasts. Lepakshi showcases quality handlooms, bags, sarees, and various household items.

Objectives:

Develop and promote handicrafts.
Undertake marketing of handicrafts.
Establish showrooms and organize exhibitions.
Publicize handicrafts and implement welfare activities for artisans.

Marketing:

Retail showrooms.
Craft bazaars, exhibitions, craft melas, and expos.
Participation in domestic and international trade fairs.
Opening new sales outlets.
Reciprocal arrangements with other State Handicrafts Development Corporations.

Promotion & Development:

Training artisans to upgrade skills.
Increasing production and reviving languishing crafts.
Common Facility Service Centres (CFSCs) providing infrastructural support.
Design and technical workshops.
Publicity through various media channels.

Welfare:

Pensions for economically disadvantaged artisans over 60 years.
State Level Excellence Awards for outstanding artisans.



Comparative Study

Regional

Out of the many forms of puppetry that exist in India, such as the string puppetry of Rajasthan, the glove puppetry of West Bengal, and the rod puppetry of Assam, the shadow puppetry of southern India is also considered one of the cultural gems. This art form, believed to have spread from coastal Maharashtra to Karnataka and then to the southern states of

Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Odisha, is renowned for its intricate craftsmanship and storytelling. While there may be slight differences in their specific techniques and regional styles, these diverse shadow puppetry traditions share a common goal: to uphold and celebrate the ancient tales of epics and heritage through their distinctive regional art forms.

Tholpavaikoothu (Tamil Nadu)



Tholpavaikoothu, meaning “the play of leather puppets” in Tamil, is a tradition in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Salem and Dharmapuri districts. Practiced by the Vanniyar and Devar communities, this art form uses goat or deer skin puppets, about 2 to 3 feet tall, known for their fine texture and translucency. The performances, featuring vibrant colors and intricate designs, depict stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, focusing on the heroes’

valor and virtues. A typical troupe includes puppeteers, musicians, and a narrator from the same family. The stage features a white cloth screen with shadows cast by oil lamps, accompanied by music from instruments like the thavil and nadaswaram, creating a unique Tamil cultural experience. Tholpavaikoothu is distinguished by its vibrant puppet colors and slightly smaller size compared to Kerala’s Tholpavakoothu, with specific Tamil musical elements enhancing the performance.

Tholpavakoothu (Kerala)

Tholpavakoothu, meaning “the play of leather puppets” in Malayalam, is primarily practiced in the Palakkad, Thrissur, and Malappuram districts of Kerala by the Pulavar community, who also engage in temple rituals and farming. Made from translucent and durable deer skin, these vibrantly painted puppets, about 3 to 4 feet tall, depict intricate designs and movable joints for expressive storytelling. Performances, centered on

the Ramayana, use traditional texts and involve a team of puppeteers, musicians, and narrators. The stage features a white cloth screen lit by oil lamps, casting dramatic shadows, accompanied by live traditional music. Unlike Andhra Pradesh’s Tholu Bommalata, Tholpavakoothu emphasizes intricate puppetry and shadow effects created by oil lamps, creating a unique, ethereal atmosphere.





Chamdyacha Bahulya (Maharashtra)

“Chamdyacha Bahulya,” meaning “leather puppetry” in Marathi, is practiced in Maharashtra, particularly in Pune and Satara. Pursued by the Chitrakathi and Bahulya communities, the craft uses buffalo or goat leather to create 1.5 to 2-foot tall puppets, painted in bold colors with intricate details. Performances focus on stories from the Puranas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata,

delivering moral lessons. A typical show includes puppeteers, musicians, and narrators from the same family, using a white cloth screen and oil lamps to cast shadows. The music, provided by traditional instruments like the dholki and tuntune, adds to the mystical ambiance. Chamdyacha Bahulya stands out for its vibrant colors, smaller puppets, and traditional Maharashtrian music.

Togalu Gombeyatta (Karnataka)

“Togalu Gombeyatta,” meaning “leather puppet play” in Kannada, is prevalent in Karnataka, especially in Mysore and Mandya districts. Practiced by Gombeyata families, who are agriculturalists and craftsmen, the puppets are made from treated and painted buffalo hide. These puppets range from 1 to 4 feet in height, enabling diverse storytelling. Performances depict scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and local folklore, focusing

on heroic tales and moral values. Guided by ancient texts and oral traditions, family members serve as puppeteers, musicians, and narrators. The stage uses a white cloth screen with shadows cast by oil lamps or electric lights, with music from instruments like the mridangam and harmonium. Togalu Gombeyatta is notable for its buffalo hide puppets, varied sizes, and mix of traditional and modern lighting techniques.





Rabana Chhaya (Odisha)

“Rabana/Ravana Chhaya,” meaning “shadow of Ravana” in Odia, is a form of puppetry found in Odisha, especially in Ganjam and Puri districts. Practiced by the Ravan Chhaya community, the puppets are made from thin, translucent deer or goat skin, ranging from 0.5 to 1.5 feet tall. Performances depict scenes from the Ramayana, focusing on Ravana’s stories, using the Vichitra Ramayana

and local folklore as references. A typical show involves a small team of community puppeteers and musicians, using a simple white cloth screen and oil lamps to cast detailed shadows. Music is played with traditional Odia instruments like the dhol and kansi. Ravana Chhaya is distinct for its intricate shadow puppets and emphasis on traditional Odia music and storytelling.

Comparative Study

International

Indian shadow puppetry has significantly influenced puppetry traditions internationally by introducing intricate storytelling techniques, elaborate puppet designs, and unique performance styles. This ancient art form has inspired various puppetry traditions around the world, enriching them with its vibrant narratives and technical mastery.



Karagöz and Hacivat (Turkey):

This traditional Turkish shadow play features two main characters, Karagöz and Hacivat, who engage in humorous and satirical dialogues. The puppets are made of camel or water buffalo hide, painted with vibrant colors, and manipulated against a white screen illuminated from behind. The origins of Karagöz are believed

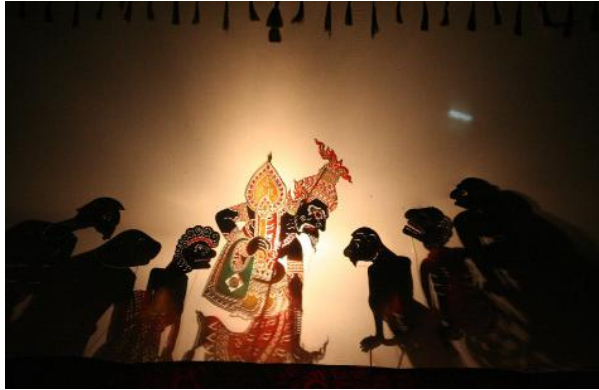
to be influenced by Indian shadow puppetry, particularly in the use of intricate puppet designs and the emphasis on storytelling through dialogues and songs. The performances often incorporate social and political commentary, making them a significant part of Turkish cultural heritage.

Wayang Kulit (Indonesia):

This traditional form of shadow puppetry is prevalent in Java and Bali. It involves intricately carved and painted leather puppets that are used to narrate tales from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, similar to Indian shadow puppetry. The puppets are controlled by a dalang (puppet master) who manipulates them behind a white

cloth screen, illuminated by an oil lamp. The performance is accompanied by a gamelan orchestra, which adds a unique musical dimension to the storytelling. The influence of Indian epics and puppetry techniques is evident in the narrative structure and artistic expression of Wayang Kulit.





Nang Yai and Nang Talung (Thailand):

Nang Yai, the larger form, involves life-sized puppets, while Nang Talung features smaller, more portable puppets. Both forms depict stories from the Ramakien, the Thai version of the Ramayana. The puppets are intricately carved from cow or buffalo hide and are manipulated behind a lit screen.

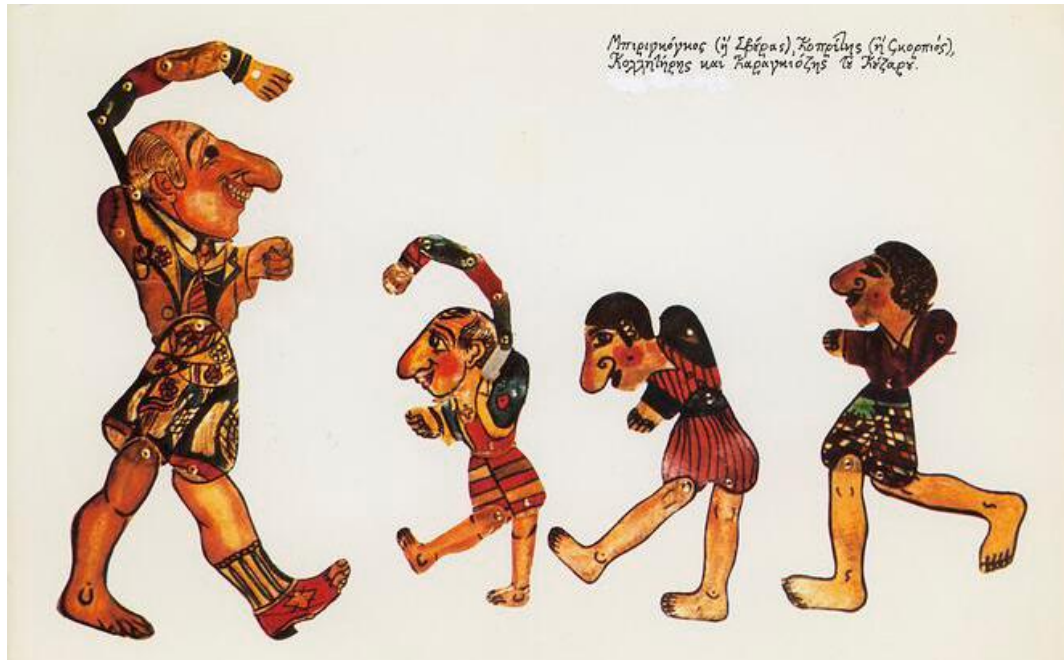
The performances are accompanied by traditional Thai music and narration. The Thai shadow puppetry tradition has drawn heavily from Indian epics and techniques, adapting them to local cultural contexts and aesthetics, thereby creating a distinct yet related art form.

Pi Ying (China):

Chinese shadow puppetry, known as Pi Ying, involves translucent leather puppets that are manipulated against a white cloth screen. The stories often depict Chinese folklore, historical events, and legends. The puppets are intricately crafted, with movable joints that allow for detailed movements.

The performances are accompanied by traditional Chinese music and singing. The influence of Indian shadow puppetry is seen in the narrative styles and the technical manipulation of the puppets, which have been adapted and integrated into the rich tapestry of Chinese performing arts.





Shadow Theater (Greece):

Known as Karagiozis in Greece, this form of shadow puppetry features a central character named Karagiozis, who engages in comedic and often political dialogues. The puppets are made of animal hide, painted, and manipulated behind a white screen. The performances are accompanied by music and often

include improvised dialogues that reflect contemporary social issues. The Greek shadow theater has been influenced by Eastern shadow puppetry traditions, including those from India, and has evolved to incorporate local cultural elements and themes.



Conclusion

Nimmalakunta, a prominent hub for traditional leather puppetry, stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Andhra Pradesh. This research provided a profound insight into the intricacies and significance of Nimmalakunta leather puppetry, revealing both the craftsmanship behind the puppets and the evolving dynamics of the artisan community.

Our research aimed primarily at two key objectives: first, to explore the elements of the puppets and their representation

of moral concepts such as good and evil, and second, to examine how artisans are adapting to contemporary trends and how new design interventions could enhance their business processes. The study unveiled the meticulous artistry involved in crafting these puppets, which serve not only as vehicles for storytelling but also as symbols of deeper philosophical and cultural themes. The first objective was to delve into how the design and craftsmanship of Nimmalakunta puppets reflect the

dichotomy of good and evil. The puppets are meticulously designed to embody characters from epic narratives such as the Ramayana, with distinct visual attributes denoting their moral alignment. This visual differentiation not only enhances the storytelling experience but also emphasizes the moral undertones of the narratives. The rich color palette and intricate designs, influenced by historical and religious iconography, contribute to the portrayal of these moral themes.



Our second objective focused on understanding how artisans are navigating the challenges of modernization while preserving traditional techniques. The artisans of Nimmalakunta have demonstrated remarkable resilience and creativity in adapting their craft to contemporary trends. The integration of synthetic dyes and innovative designs into traditional puppetry has allowed them to cater to a broader audience, including tourists and collectors. The research also provided invaluable insights

into the livelihoods of the artisans. It highlighted the socioeconomic challenges they face, including the need for sustainable materials and the impact of declining patronage. Understanding these challenges has underscored the importance of supporting artisan communities through strategic interventions that address both their artistic and economic needs. Moreover, this research has illuminated the potential roles that students and designers can play in the growth and preservation of Nimmalakunta leather

puppetry by them engaging with the craft, and contributing to preserving traditional techniques while combining them with contemporary design sensibilities. Collaborative projects that bridge the gap between traditional artisans and modern designers could foster innovation, leading to new avenues for the craft's evolution. Designers can also assist in developing market strategies that enhance the visibility and appeal of Nimmalakunta puppetry, ensuring that it remains relevant and economically viable.

Glossary

A)

1.1 *Aabarnam* - Jewellery

1.2 *Aare* - Marathi dialect distinct to the people who have migrated from Maharashtra to Andhra Pradesh (here, specifically the artisans from Nimmalakunta, Andhra Pradesh)

1.3 *Aare Kapu*- Prominent agrarian group primarily found in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

1.4 *Annam*- Rice

B)

1.5 *Bhagavatar*- Lead puppeteer

1.6 *Bajji*- Crispy, deep-fried snack made from vegetables dipped in a spiced gram flour batter

C)

1.7 *Chamdyacha Bahulya*- It is the art of shadow puppetry practiced in the state of Maharashtra. It literally translates to leather (Chamdyacha) figure (Bahulya).

1.8 *Chandraharam*- Necklaces

1.9 *Cheernam*- Chisel

1.10 *Chenda*- Drum

1.11 *Cherukuzhal*- Reed Pipe

1.12 *Chhaya Nataka*- Shadow drama

1.13 *Chukanti*- Tool similar to a brush/comb

D)

1.14 *Dalang* - Puppet master

1.15 *Daskathi* - A type of drum

1.16 *Dhanyam*- Grain (e.g. Rice, Ragi)

1.17 *Dholki*- A type of drum

E)

1.18 *Ezhupara*- A type of drum

G)

1.19 *Gadhai*- Mace

1.20 *Ghanta*- Cymbals

1.21 *Gomedhikam*- Hessonite

1.22 *Gulusu*- Anklets

I)

1.23 *Ilathalam*- Cymbals drum

K)

1.24 *Kanda*- Part or section

1.25 *Kanikam*- Gold

1.26 *Karagiozis*- It is the form of shadow theatre practised in Greece.

1.27 *Karagöz and Hacivat*- It is the form of shadow puppetry practised in Turkey.

1.28 *Karnakundalas*- Earrings

1.29 *Katthi*- Knife

1.30 *Koothumadam*- Especially constructed platforms or stages where the Tholpavakoothu performances are staged

L)

1.31 *Lekhini*- It translates to scribe. Here, refers to the bamboo stick used for inking the silhouettes.

M)

1.32 *Maddalam*- Barrel drum

1.33 *Manikam*- Rubies

1.34 *Maragatham*- Emerald

1.35 *Mardal* - Tambourine

1.36 *Mridangam* - Percussion drum played during a musical performance

1.37 *Muddalam* - Percussion drum played during a musical performance

1.38 *Mukhaveena*- Reed pipe

N)

1.39 *Nang Talung*- It is the form of shadow puppetry found in Thailand and one that involves the use of smaller, more portable puppets.

1.40 *Nang Yai* - It is the form of shadow puppetry found in Thailand and one that involves the use of large life-sized puppets.

1.41 *Natu Kodi*- Traditional Andhra chicken curry made with country chicken and a blend of spices

1.42 *Neela Megashyama*- Translates to blue (Neela) and cloud (Megashyama). This refers to Lord Rama who is said to have a dark complexion like a rainy cloud.

P)

1.43 *Pappu*- Lentil stew cooked with spices and vegetables

1.44 *Pi Ying*- It is the form of shadow puppetry practised in China.

1.45 *Podi*- Spicy powder used as a condiment for rice or seasoning for different dishes

1.46 *Pulavar*- It refers to an experienced and skilled individual, well-versed in both the narrative texts and the technical aspects of puppetry.

1.47 *Pushparagam*- Topaz

R)

1.48 *Rabana Chhaya*- It is the practised form of leather puppetry in the state of Orissa. It literally translates to 'The shadow of Ravana'. Ragi Mudde- Nutritious ball made from finger millet flour

1.49 *Rakshasa* - Demon

S)

1.50 *Shankha*- Conch shell

1.51 *Sūdi*- Needle

1.52 *Sutradhar*- Lead puppeteer

1.53 *Sutti*- Hammer

T)

1.54 *Tadakadutaham* - It is the process of clearing and cleaning the skin of an animal.

1.55 *Tholpavakoothu/Tholpavaikoothu*- It is the traditional forms of shadow puppetry found in the states of Kerala and Tamilnadu. It literally translates to play(koothu) of leather (thol) puppets (pava).

1.56 *Tholu Bommalata*- It is a form of traditional shadow puppetry, practised prominently in the village of Nimmalakunta, Andhra Pradesh. It literally translates to dance (attam, ata) of the leather (tholu) puppets (bommalu)

1.57 *Togalu Gombeyaata*- It is Karnataka's traditional form of shadow puppetry. It literally translates to dance (aata) of leather (togalu) puppets (gombe).

V)

1.58 *Vaidhudyalu*- Pearl

1.59 *Vajralu*- Gems

1.60 *Vajram*- Diamond

1.61 *Vanara*- Monkey

1.62 *Vanavas*- Exile

1.63 *Vastra Dhaanam*- Donation of clothes as a reward or price

W)

1.64 *Wayang Kulit*- It is the traditional form of shadow puppetry prevalent in the regions of Java and Bali in Indonesia.

References

1. MAP Academy Encyclopedia of Art. (2022) Tholu Bommalata. [Online]. Available at: <https://mapacademy.io/article/tholu-bommalata/>. (Accessed: 27, July, 2024)
2. <https://sarmaya.in/spotlight/tholu-bommalaata-stories-in-light-and-shadow/> (Accessed: 3, August, 2024)
3. <https://www.thetalentedindian.com/shadow-puppets-an-exploration-of-a-timeless-performing-art/> (Accessed: 1, August, 2024)
4. <https://www.keralatourism.org/kerala-article/2011/tholpavakoothu-shadow-puppetry/130> (Accessed: 28, July, 2024)
5. <https://gaatha.com/leather-puppets-of-andhra-pradesh/> (Accessed: 4, August, 2024)
6. <https://lepakshihandicrafts.gov.in/artisans/dalavai-chalpathi-rao.html> (Accessed: 29, July, 2024)
7. <https://www.sahapedia.org/tholu-bommalata-telugu-shadow-puppet-theatre> (Accessed: 30, July, 2024)
8. MAP Academy Encyclopedia of Art. (2022) Ravana Chhaya. [Online]. Available at: <https://mapacademy.io/article/ravana-chhaya/>. (Accessed: 3, August, 2024)
9. <https://sangeetnatak.gov.in/> (Accessed: 31, July, 2024)
10. <https://handicrafts.nic.in/Page.aspx?MID=BOII5FUynjpl5RZJJ8nW1g==> (Accessed: 1, August, 2024)
11. <https://www.myscheme.gov.in/schemes/cccsaw> (Accessed: 5, August, 2024)
12. <https://yourstory.com/smbstory/indian-handicrafts-artisans-schemes-boost-exports> (Accessed: 1, August, 2024)
13. MAP Academy Encyclopedia of Art. (2022) Togalu Gombeyaata. [Online]. Available at: <https://mapacademy.io/article/togalu-gombeyaata/>. (Accessed: 28, July, 2024)

14. <https://sarmaya.in/guides/tholubommalata/> (Accessed: 2, August, 2024)

15. <https://sarmaya.in/spotlight/tholubommalaata-stories-in-light-and-shadow/> (Accessed: 5, August, 2024)

16. <http://www.nimmalakuntaleatherpuppetrycraft.com/index.html> (Accessed: 5, August, 2024)

17. <https://wepa.unima.org/en/india/> (Accessed: 1, August, 2024)

18. <https://www.goethe.de/ins/in/en/kul/lak/til/22798153.html> (Accessed: 30, July, 2024)

19. <http://tholpavakoothu.in/> (Accessed: 31, July, 2024)

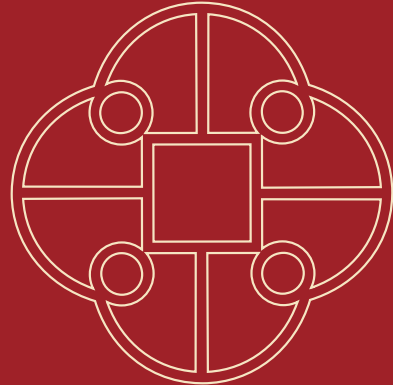
20. Pundir Sanskriti, Where Shadows Come Alive: Discovering the Beauty of Chamadyache Bahulya in Maharashtra, Haara, 2024

21. <https://dhaaramagazine.in/2023/12/08/where-shadows-come-alive-discovering-the-beauty-of-chamadyache-bahulya-in-maharashtra/> (Accessed: 3, August, 2024)

22. Nimmalakunta Leather Puppetry Craft Catalog

23. A Celebration of Masks, Puppets and Picture Showmen Traditions of India, Akhyan, 2010

24. <https://www.craftmark.org/cms/public/uploads/1595674170.pdf>. (Accessed: 1, August, 2024)





BENGALURU

No. 21st, 16th Cross, Street, 27th Main
Rd, Sector 1, HSR Layout, Bengaluru,
Karnataka 560102

Nidakala, A Craft Document

