

Rejuvenating Legacy: Ancient Handicrafts And Textile Revival

Dr.R. Sudha¹, Dr.M. Rajalakshmi²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, Coimbatore Institute of Technology, udha@cit.edu.in, Orcid no: 0000-0003-2671-942X

²Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, Coimbatore Institute of Technology, rajalakshmi@cit.edu.in, 0009-0006-3691-6274

Abstract

Indian handicrafts are a testament to the country's vibrant cultural heritage and traditions, encompassing a diverse range of artistic and functional items. This article delves into the production methods and characteristic features of select traditional Indian handicrafts, including (Tamil Nadu)Aimpon idols, Thanjavur dancing dolls, (Kerala) Kasavu sarees, Aranmula glass, (Karnataka) ivory work, and Lagnada tholi, (Bihar) madhubani art. By examining these unique crafts, this study highlights the richness and diversity of Indian handicrafts, underscoring their significance in preserving cultural traditions and supporting artisanal livelihoods. Additionally, these handicrafts also play a crucial role in passing down traditional knowledge to future generations, fostering community identity, and celebrating India's rich artistic legacy.

Keywords: Aimpon idols, Thanjavur dancing dolls, Kasavu sarees, Aranmula glass, ivory work, Lagnada tholi & Madhubani art

INTRODUCTION

India is a country known for its rich culture and creative traditions. One of the most special corridors of this heritage is its crafts and fabrics. These aren't just particulars made for trade – they are a meaningful workshop of art created using skills that have been passed down through generations. In numerous corridors of India, people use accessories from their original surroundings – like complexion, wood, fabric, or thread – to make beautiful effects with their own hands. For illustration, the detailed Aimpon icons, the various Thanjavur dancing dolls, and the graceful white and golden Kasavu sarees of Kerala all tell stories of their region's history, life, and values

These crafts are much further than just decoration. They are a part of daily life and are deeply connected to carnivals, traditions, religion, and indeed the seasons. The process of making these particulars is respectful of nature and frequently done in ways that cover the terrain. Unlike machines or big manufactories, hand wrought crafts are created sluggishly and precisely, frequently with love and tolerance. This not only makes them unique but also gives a sense of newness and mortal connection that artificial products cannot offer.

Across every state in India, you can find different styles of crafts that reflect original beliefs, customs, and cultural chops. Whether in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, or Bihar, crafters continue to produce extraordinary pieces using simple tools or indeed just their hands. These crafts give income for numerous families, especially in pastoral areas, and help keep our culture alive.

This paper will explore the traditional knowledge behind some of the well-known crafts from these countries, showing how they connect culture, terrain, and frugality in an important and meaningful way.

Crafting Devotion and Motion: Tamil Nadu's Timeless Treasures

Tamil Nadu is known for its wide variety of traditional art forms like dance, music, oil, form, and theatre. These trades aren't only creative expressions but also reflect the region's ancient culture and way of life. Among them, crafts and cloth work have a long-standing significance. One special area within this tradition is metalwork, which has been used both in daily life and religious practices. Metal Products such as lights, servers, icons, and ornamental pieces carry deep meaning and beauty. From this rich tradition, we have chosen to explore two unique exemplifications – Aimpon, a traditional five - essence amalgamation used to produce sacred particulars, and the notorious Thanjavur tipping dolls, known for their fascinating movement and royal appearance. Both of these show how Tamil Nadu's art forms

connect beauty, belief, and diurnal life in meaningful ways. Let us see the Aimpon icons and Thanjavur dancing dolls.

AIMPON (Panchaloha): A Sacred Blend of Science and Spirituality



In Hindu tradition, numerous deity icons are made from Panchaloha, a sacred amalgamation of five essences – generally gold, silver, copper, iron, and lead or zinc. This ancient practice goes beyond religious symbolism; it is a thoughtful mix of spiritual meaning and scientific mindfulness.

Each essence in Panchaloha carries emblematic energy: gold represents chastity, silver reflects peace, copper stands for vitality, iron provides strength, and lead or zinc grounds and purifies. When combined, these rudiments are believed to balance the five rudiments of nature – earth, water, fire, air, and space – creating harmony in the terrain and within the sucker

Scientifically, this amalgamation is known for its strength, resistance to erosion, and capability to repel high temperatures, making it ideal for long-lasting icons, especially in tabernacles. Essence like bobby and tableware also have antimicrobial parcels, helping maintain hygiene during daily deification rituals

Panchaloha icons are believed to emit subtle climate that calm the mind and balance the body's energy, especially during prayer and contemplation. Ancient craftsperson intimately understood metallurgy, health, and energy balance – long before ultramodern wisdom could explain them.

Whether displayed at home or worshiped in tabernacles, Panchaloha icons reflect India's dateless knowledge, where faith, art, and wisdom come together in harmony.

Thanjavur Dolls – A Blend of Art, Balance, and Tradition



The Thanjavur tipping doll, or 'Uruttu Bommai' in Tamil Nadu, is a delightful creation that reflects the artistry, cultural roots, and timeless wisdom of its makers. These dolls are generally drafted in dyads – representing a royal couple, frequently inspired by the lords and queens of Thanjavur's history dynasties. There are two main styles: the classic tipping doll and the more ultramodern boob - head interpretation. What makes the Uruttu Bommai special is its clever design grounded on the principle of balance and stir. The top half of the doll is featherlight and concave, while the lower half is made heavy with a rounded base. Its cleverly balanced base keeps it from falling, making it rock gently and return to standing each time it's touched. As it moves, the doll appears to "dance," creating graceful, slow oscillations. The wisdom behind this lies in the center of graveness. Because the doll's weight is concentrated at the bottom, it naturally seeks to return to equilibrium after being disturbed. This is simple yet intelligent use of drugs shows a deep understanding of mechanical balance that dates back to the early 1800s.

Over time, this conception was acclimated to the sportful boob-head interpretation, yet the original continues to charm observers with its elegant movements. Thanjavur dolls are handcrafted from a feather light dough of sago, wood pulp, cataplasm of Paris, and paper mâché. Artisans press rolled dough into two earth halves, allow them to dry, support them internally with paper wastes, and also join them with a tapioca flour glue. The assembled figure is fixed to a rounded base made of the same dough, filed smooth, and hand painted in gouaches or canvases. Mastery lies in balancing the doll so it tilts gracefully without tripping, and in painting suggestive faces that bring each piece to life. There are also creative versions of these dolls:

- Chettiar Bommai ('bobble head') A fixed body supports a spring linked head that nods when tapped, reflecting original Chettiar community styles.
- Dancing Girl Doll Comprising four divisible corridor(head, torso, skirt, base), this interpretation uses internal strings so that a gentle touch sets the skirt – and therefore the figure – swaying like a classical cotillion (e.g., Bharatanatyam or Kathakali).

Despite earning a Geographical suggestion, Thanjavur dolls face stiff competition from cheap, mass-produced plastic and battery powered toys. Still, they remain favored remembrances especially during Navratri Kolu displays and serve as enduring symbols of Tamil Nadu's artistic heritage. Studying these dolls strengthened my appreciation for Thanjavur's living craft traditions and inspired me to partake them with a wider followership.

Kerala's Kasavu Sarees – Where Purity Meets Elegance



Kasavu sarees, also known as 'Kasavu Pudavaikal,' are traditional garments from Kerala that reflect the region's rich culture and fineness. These sarees are proudly honored by their out-white or cream-colored body and shining golden borders, known as zari. The word 'Kasavu' refers to the real gold or bobby vestments traditionally used in the borders. These sarees are substantially worn by women during important occasions such as carnivals, marriages, tabernacle visits, and classical concert performances like Mohiniyattam and Kaikottikali. The off-white color stands for chastity, while the golden border represents wealth and grace – together emblemizing Kerala's deep artistic pride.

The fabric of Kasavu sarees is substantially made of cotton, which is light, permeable, and suitable for Kerala's warm and sticky rainfall. Some ultramodern variations also blend silk with cotton to add a smooth texture and luster. The sarees can be as simple as sleek gold borders or embellished with rich artistry—peacock designs, temple motifs, checked patterns, and graceful stripes. Now, some sarees indeed include colored borders, thread work, or embroidery to suit changing fashion trends. The range of the gold border can range from thin to broad, depending on the wear and tear's choice and the significance of the event.

Kasavu weaving is substantially done in three renowned clusters in Kerala – Balaramapuram, Chendamangalam, and Kuthampully – each with its own style. Balaramapuram is known for fine cotton and silk sarees with plain but elegant gold borders. Chendamangalam sarees may include stripes, checks, and motifs like tamarind leaves, made using a tight weave and high thread count. Kuthampully is notorious for the needlewomen of the Devanga Chettiar community, who continue traditional kasavu ways. The original style of draping, called mundu-neriyatum, uses two separate pieces, but moment, most women prefer the ultramodern one-piece saree drape for convenience. Whether traditional or ultramodern, Kasavu sarees continue to be a dateless symbol of Kerala's heritage.

Aranmula Kannadi – Kerala's Magical Metal Mirror



Kerala's Magical Essence Mirror Aranmula Kannada is a special handwrought glass from the vill of Aranmula in Kerala, India. What makes it truly unique is that it's n't made of glass. Rather, it's drafted using a secret amalgamation of substance, primarily copper & tin which are melted, putrefied, and also polished by hand until they shine like a regular glass. The result is an ideally reflective face that multitudinous people believe shows a clearer image than a normal glass.

The creation of an Aranmula mirror begins with patience and precision, where the special alloy is heated until molten and then gently cast into molds to form its initial shape. Also, crafters hammer and polish it for several days or indeed weeks to get a perfect reflection. Utmost specs are round- shaped, but they come in different sizes. These specs are further than just beautiful objects; they are symbols of luck, substance, and tradition. In Kerala, they're constantly blessed during marriages, temple rituals, and fests. Aranmula Kannadi is so special that it has been given a Geographical suggestion(GI) marker, which means it can only be made in that region and is defended by law.

The glass is nearly linked to the Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple and the notorious Aranmula Boat Race. Since it's made entirely of substance, it'seco-friendly, longlasting, and unbreakable. Although these specs are primarily sold in Kerala, they're now available in named shops and online platforms across India. Because each piece is handmade and rare, Aranmula specs are precious but treasured as a precious piece of Kerala's art and heritage.

Ivory Handicrafts of Karnataka – A Fading Legacy



Karnataka has long been known for its professed crafters and rich tradition of handmade art. One of the most luxurious and detailed forms of traditional handcraft from the state was the creation of particulars made from elephant tusks, also known as ivory. Ivory is a hard, smooth material that comes from the tusks of mammoths and was formerly considered a symbol of wealth and fineness.

Artisans used ivory to produce numerous beautiful particulars such as small sculptures, jewellery, ornamental combs, hairpins, and religious icons. The material's natural shine and strength made it perfect for drawing fine patterns and shapes. Particulars like ivory printing blocks were also used for stamping designs on fabrics or paper. Each piece was made by hand, often taking days or even weeks to finish.

However, Still, due to the ban on ivory trade and increased mindfulness of beast protection, ivory crafts are no longer made. The practice is now illegal in India, and being ivory artworks are only set up in

galleries or antique collections. Though the tradition has ended, it remains a part of Karnataka's literal art heritage, showing the high position of skill and creativity of its traditional crafters. Piecemeal from its literal ivory artist, Karnataka is well known for its traditional leather crafts, especially in pastoral artisan communities. Professed workers in these areas produce a variety of leather products, such as bags, wallets, belts, sandals, and leather.

These particulars are generally hand-sutured, decorated with various patterns, and occasionally combined with accessories like wood or essence to add beauty and strength. Leather goods from Karnataka are popular for their continuity and cultural designs, and they continue to be offered in original requests and craft exhibitions.



One of the most notorious cultural uses of leather in Karnataka is shadow puppetry, known as Tholu Bommalata. In Kannada, "Tholu" means leather, "Bomma" means puppet, and "Ata" means performance. These leather dollies are especially treated to become semi-transparent and are painted in bright colors. They are used behind a white cloth screen with a light source to produce moving murk. Puppeteers use these to tell stories from Indian epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, often with music and history. This folk art is a unique combination of liar, artist, and tradition. Karnataka's leather heritage shows the binary strength of its artisan communities – the capability to produce both practical leather goods and artistic art forms. Crafts like Tholu Bommalata aren't just performances but also living exemplifications of Karnataka's rich folk traditions, passed down through generations

Madhubani Painting – A Folk Art of Bihar



shutterstock.com - 2402706629

A Folk Art of Bihar. Madhubani painting is a beautiful and traditional art form from the Mithila region of Bihar, India. It is known for its various designs, detailed patterns, and natural themes. People in the region, especially women, have been rehearsing this art for generations. They used to paint on slush walls and bottoms during carnivals, marriages, and special occasions. Now, the art is also done on paper, cloth, and oil so it can last longer and be shared with the world.

The Paintings frequently show scenes from stories like the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, along with images of gods and goddesses, creatures, trees, and flowers. Everything is painted with bright natural colors made from leaves, turmeric, flowers, and indeed rice paste. Artists use simple tools like fritters, outgrowths, and matchsticks instead of skirmishes. The entire face is generally filled with patterns so that there is no space left.

Madhubani painting is further than just decoration; It is a way for artists to express faith, feelings, and stories from their culture. There are different styles within this art – like Bharni, Katchni, and Godna – each with a unique way of delineation and coloring. This art has gained public and transnational recognition over the times, and indeed though it began as a household tradition, it is now displayed in galleries, exhibitions, and art books around the world.

CONCLUSION

India's traditional crafts are not bare objects they are vessels of memory, skill, and identity, shaped by generations who have worked with tolerance and purpose. From the golden gleam of Kerala's Kasavu sarees to the dateless balance of Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur dolls, from the sacred strength of Aimpon icons to the delicate reflections of the Aranmula glass, and from Karnataka's pictorial leather puppetry to the vibrant patterns of Bihar's Madhubani oils, each creation speaks of the land, its people, and their way of life. These crafts are embedded in the soil, shaped by original coffers, and amended by stories, rituals, and seasonal measures.

In a period of speed and uniformity, they stand piecemeal as slow art – made by hand, guided by tradition, and invested with meaning. They bring livelihoods to pastoral communities, save indigenous individualizes, and offer a ground between once and present. Securing them is not just a matter of profitable support but of artistic responsibility, icing that unborn generations inherit not only objects of beauty but also the values, chops, and stories that give them life. When we choose to recognize these crafts, we choose to keep alive a living heritage – one that continues to speak in the language of color, texture, and dateless mortal creativity.

REFERENCES:

- [1] Aditi Ranjan and M. P. Ranjan, editors. *Handmade in India: A Geographic Encyclopedia of Indian Handicrafts*. Crafts Council of India / Ministry of Textiles, 2009.
- [2] Banerjee, N.R., and P. Gupta. *Indian Ivories: A Survey of Indian Ivory and Bone Carvings from the Earliest to the Modern Times*. National Museum, New Delhi, 1979.
- [3] Balasubramaniam, R. (2008). *Traditional Indian Toys and the Science Behind Them*. Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur
- [4] Blackburn, Stuart. *Inside the Drama-House: Rama Stories and Shadow Puppets in South India*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1996.
- [5] Contractor, Meher. "Various Types of Traditional Puppets: Shadow Puppets – Karnataka Shadows." In *Marg: Arts of India*, Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts / Marg magazine, 1988..
- [6] Dayal, Bharti. *Madhubani Art*. Niyogi Books, 2015.
- [7] Kapoor, Subodh. *Encyclopaedia of Ancient Indian Sciences*. Cosmo Publications, 2002.
- [8] Rao, M. S. Nanjunda 'Leather Puppetry' in Karnataka. Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath Trust, 2000.
- [9] Richman, Paula. *India's Mithila Painting*. University of Washington Press, 2025.