

Picking up glass on **gedda paru**. Techniques used for making the Indo Pacific glass beads using specialised tools seem to have evolved in Papanaidupet. Bead makers, ironsmiths and potters worked together in the making of this unique heritage village.



Beads with husks are packed into a pounder. As in many parts of rural Andhra, pounding is done alternatively by two women. There is considerable need for deep research to understand the technology of bead making including the use of customized potsherds, different types of fuel including cow dung and wooden pounding with husk.



Working with molten glass and preparing it for its pliability to draw glass tubes is a specialized skill. It is the skill used in the Australian Capital Territory to establish an international centre for glass through the creativity of artists.



A range of specialized tools are used in the bead making process. Shaping glass using a spatula, lada for manually blowing, tools for drawing the tubes and so on. Iron smith plays an important role in the village. These tools are yet to be studied adequately within the frame of the traditional evolution of iron technology in Andhra.



Manoeuvring glass to a conical shape. Dr. Kanungo passionately advocates for detailed research to understand the division of labour and expertise needed for an entire village to become a centre for Indo Pacific beads.



Skills using multiple needles with raised hands, the twisting of bead strings and a range of other abilities to work with beads are a women's heritage and perhaps prerogative.

NEXT WEEK Heritage Matters will focus on Ahmedabad, India's first UNESCO World Heritage City and lesson for safeguarding the urban heritage of Andhra people.

HERITAGE MATTERS

GLASS BEADS FROM PAPANAIIDUPETA

Globalisation has its benefits. But it could also diminish our heritage in ways that we may not sometimes even be conscious of. Effective minimization of the negative impacts is possible with timely interventions. Sometimes, it may be too late before significant elements of our culture are endangered or even disappear. It is this concern that led the world community to come together and adopt the International Convention by UNESCO in 2003 for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage.

The living heritage elements of Andhra Pradesh are under serious threat. Artisans are struggling to eke out a livelihood. Rapid prosperity for some has meant the struggle to survive for others.

Highly skilled craftspeople who have been proud carriers of unique signature heritage of Andhra people are abandoning their traditions and moving out in search of non-technical labour work that pays for their survival. Often, external mass-produced imitations are the threat. Also, of threat are the consumers who are not aware that their choices are the main cause of the endangered heritage.

Kondapalli wooden toys are under threat. Chinese made imitations are not the only threat. The preference for machine-made products that are smooth and polished are a bigger threat.

Handmade crafts carry the memories and traditions that have been passed on from generation to generation.

Bommalu or toys from the Etikopaka region on the banks of the river Varaha in Visakhapatnam district of AP are also under threat. Andhra, once famous for muslin, no longer produces the finest of cotton cloth ever produced by humanity.

Evidence-based interventions are critical. Research by Dr. Alok Kumar Kanungo from Odisha and his research from IIT Gandhinagar have thrown a lifeline to the impoverished glass bead makers of Papanaidupeta.

His painstaking ethnoarchaeological work has profiled the skills, advanced techniques for making furnaces, kilns, implements, village structures and associated rituals.

Now it is up to the people of Andhra to take over the baton and work towards the urgent safeguarding of this intangible heritage.

Glass beads were found from very early days in Andhra. Early historical urban centres such as Dhan-yakataka/Dharanikota and Nagar-junakonda have yielded glass beads from about two thousand years ago.

Glass beads were often prestige items and part of ornamentation. While there are different techniques for making glass beads, the drawing method used in Papanaidupeta seems to be the most common across South and Southeast Asia.

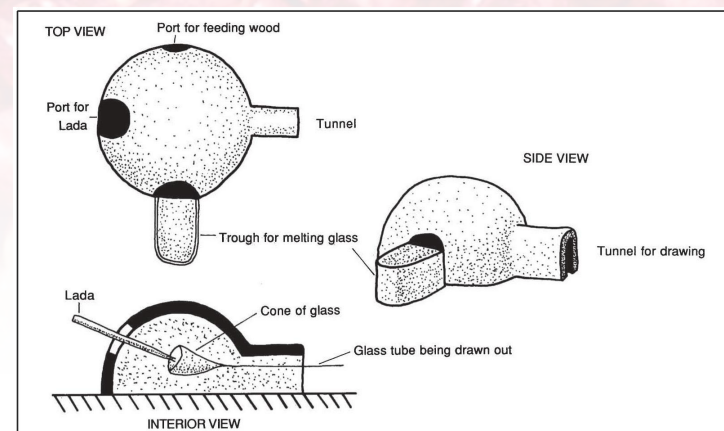
These beads are commonly referred to as Indo Pacific beads.



PROF. DR. AMARESWAR GALLA

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(Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an unhyphenated Indo Danish Australian living in Amaravathi Heritage Town, was a member of the Cultural Council of the Australian Capital Territory)



Traditional techniques of producing glass beads using the drawing method seem to have continued until recently only in Papanaidupeta. One of the early drawings of Papanaidupeta furnace by R.Francis Jr.

Arikamedu, the ancient port town near Pondicherry, appears to be an earlier production and trading site. Papanaidupeta is a major regional production site throughout the history of Andhra.

It is not yet clear when and how the bead-making tradition started. What is certain is that when the craftspeople were forced by market forces and the lack of awareness among the buyers to give up making the glass beads in 2014, yet another part of the heritage of Andhra people started being relegated to oblivion.

Mass orders for the handmade, appropriate training to survive and continue to make the beads and interventions for poverty alleviation could still rescue the intangible heritage of Andhra people.

In this context, urgent action is needed to safeguard the skills, knowledge and practices of making glass beads in Papanaidupeta in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. Perhaps it is too late! Or could we still salvage this unique heritage of Andhra people? Everything is possible is the slogan of AP Tourism.

Could we ban the import and dumping of mass produced beads from China? Rather than blaming overseas suppliers, we should be self-conscious about our own lack of knowledge about our heritage? Consumer frenzy with expanding recreational spectrum is the ultimate threat to any living culture.

Lepakshi, the Andhra Praesh State undertaking for safeguarding handicrafts (<http://www.lepakshi->

handicrafts.gov.in/) could play a major role in revitalising the making of the specialised furnaces and kilns so that artisans could continue making the glass beads. There is room for diversifying the bead-making and design and their use within the village and its networking neighbourhoods.

Direct marketing could help minimise the damage from bulk importing of foreign glass beads. One of the suggestions of Dr. Kanungo is that the speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly and the Chief Secretary could ensure that all the thousands of names and security tags that people carry around the Secretariat could use stringed glass beads from Papanaidupeta.

Lepakshi could facilitate the supply chain to Velagapudi. Such a move would help to revitalize a whole village and save to continue its unique knowledge from extinction. Lepakshi could also supply bead products to far off places like Nagaland where such glass beads were imported, most likely from Papanaidupeta.

Can Papanaidupeta become one of the heritage villages of Andhra Pradesh from Rayalaseema for special interest niche tourism and creative craft development? Having lived in Canberra for a long time, I have been first hand witness to the development there of an international centre of excellence in glass making.

Using the traditional skills and diversifying them through contemporary creativity and knowledge of the local people together with artists on cultural exchanges could make Papanaidupeta viable as an Indo Pacific glass bead making heritage village.

I have often said that one of the best developments in the new state of Andhra Pradesh is the bringing together of tourism, culture and heritage under one umbrella.

Interdisciplinary and cross industry collaborations promise to reinvigorate frozen in time isolationist departments and relaunching them as agencies of cooperation and collaboration in the service of the Andhra people.

Such transformations need best practice and appropriate policy development driven through demonstration projects piloting innovative and creative avenues for locating culture in sustainable development.