

A Study on Lac Bangles: Design View of Society and Cultural Aspects of Hyderabad



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Abstract

The Bonalu festival holds deep cultural and religious significance in Telangana, India. During this festival, women and children adorn themselves with various types of jewellery, among which lacquer (LAC) bangles hold a prominent place. This paper explores the socio-cultural role of LAC bangles, the livelihoods of the artisans, the design processes involved, and the preservation of this traditional craft. It also addresses contemporary challenges faced by artisans and suggests innovative solutions for reviving and promoting this heritage craft.

Keywords: Lac Bangles; Telangana; Bonalu Festival; Craft Livelihood; Cultural Heritage; Design Innovation

Abbreviations: CAD: Computer-Aided Design, LAC: Lacquer

Introduction

Bonalu is one of the most significant traditional festivals celebrated across Telangana, especially in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Typically observed in July and August, Bonalu is dedicated to the worship of Goddess Mahankali. Women and children play a central role in the celebrations by preparing offerings and adorning themselves in festive attire. A key element of this adornment is the wearing of bangles, which include varieties like glass, clay, rubber, wax, brass, silver, gold, and notably, lacquer bangles. This study focuses on the importance and cultural symbolism of lacquer bangles during Bonalu and their impact on community identity [1].

Historical background

The origin of Laad Bazaar near Charminar is linked to the Qutb Shahi dynasty. It is believed that during the marriage of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's daughter, artisans skilled in glasswork were invited from Persia and settled in this area. Over time, this marketplace became a hub for jewellery making, including LAC bangles. Mettika Sher, a nearby locality, houses hundreds of small work

shops dedicated to bangle production using traditional tools and techniques.

Objectives

- To highlight the cultural and traditional significance of bangles, especially during Bonalu.
- To study the materials, tools, and production techniques used by LAC bangle artisans.
- To explore viable strategies for economic empowerment through bangle craft.

Methodology

The study combines primary data collected through field visits to Laad Bazaar, Begum Bazaar, and Mettika Sher with secondary research from academic and cultural sources. Interviews with artisans, documentation of production processes, and observations during local festivals were key components of the methodology.

Raw Materials and Tools (Table 1)

Table 1: Traditional Lac Bangle: Various Raw Materials and Tools Traditional Lac Bangle: Various Raw Materials and Tools.

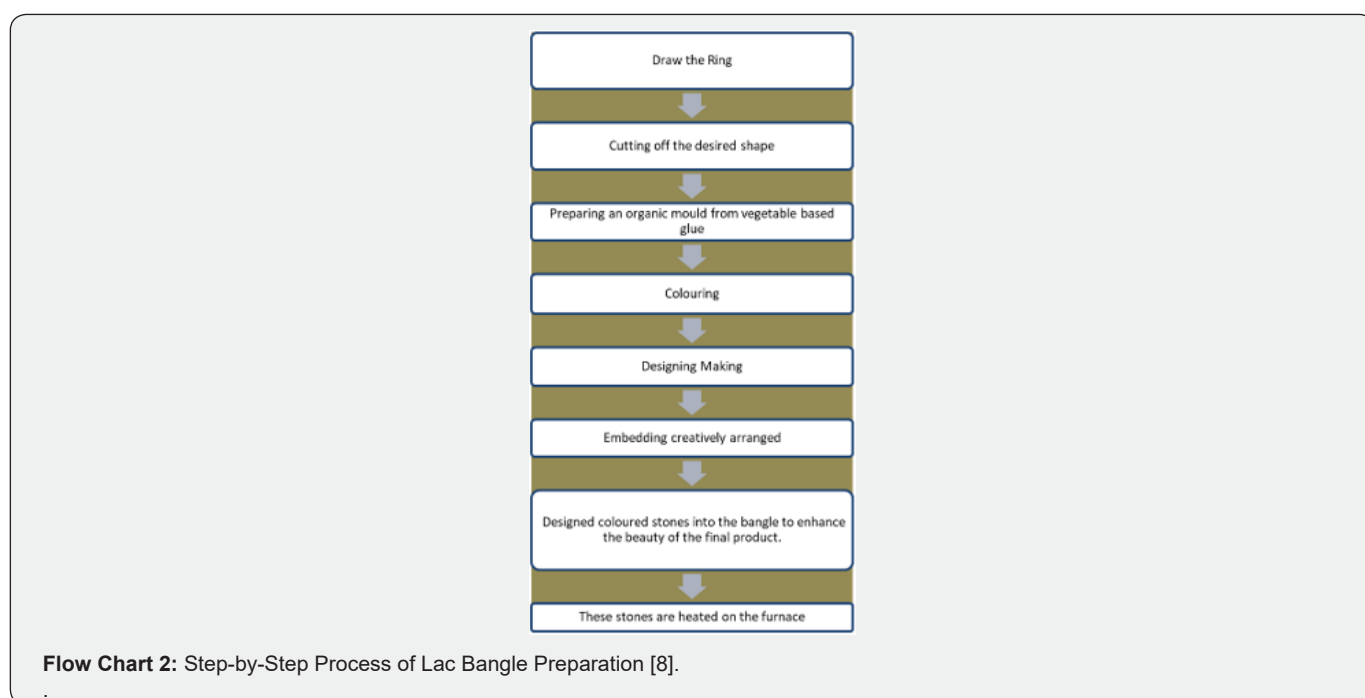
Raw Materials and Tools

Unprocessed Lot	Lat is a natural material procured from the forest and then it goes through several steps of refinement to be finally used in the making products.
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Current Trends in Fashion Technology & Textile Engineering

Processed Brown Lac	It's a natural LAC. Processed LAC in form of brown colour chips brought from Rajasthan. These brown colour chips are called by craftsmen as chapdi.
Synthetic White Lac	This Synthetic Lac, in liquid form. Its look little transparent and is more durable as compared to natural Lac. Hence used more in Product Diversification
Marble Powder	This powder is formed out of Giya stone. This is white in colour used to mix with natural n synthetic LAC to give them a solid form.
Metal Rings	They are made up of brass and is used as the base for the Lac bangles
Decorative Material	Generally the craftsmen use stones, beads, pearls, mirrors for decorating the bangles along with silver and golden powder for shining.
Coloured LAC	This is in form of cube and made up of synthetic LAC used for colouring the natural LAC
TOOLS	
Bhatti	The Bhatti has three sections with 2 wooden parts and the middle section is a hollow area with hot coal in it. On one wooden plank thin lac tubes are formed and on other the thin LAC tubes are coated on the metal rings. The coal is used to heat the LAC and metal rings.
Fan	The fan is used to keep the cool hot during the bangle making process it runs at slow speed.
Tweezers	Used to pick the metal bangle while heating and picking the stones to embellish on the LAC
Flat wooden tool	This is used for pressing and shaping LAC bangles for sizing
Round wooden rod	This is used for sizing the ban gels
Shallow Vessel (Kadai)	This is an iron vessel used to melt LAC either to make colours or normal LAC rod.
Etc.	A tabular representation of essential materials (lac, pigments, metal rods, etc.) and tools (tongs, wooden rollers, coal stoves, etc.) used by artisans in the bangle-making process.

Process of Making LAC Bangles (Flow Chart 1)



Process: Lac bangles are handcrafted using a natural resin called LAC. The process begins by heating the LAC over coal fire until it becomes soft and mouldable. Colour pigments are added, and the material is rolled into thin strips. These strips are wrapped around metal or wooden rods to form bangles. Designs are added using hand tools, and decorative elements like stones, glitter, or mirrors are embedded while the LAC is still warm. Once cooled and shaped, the bangles are polished and ready for sale (Figure 1).

Marketing & Field Observations: During a field visit to Rayadurgam's weekly market, it was observed that bangles remain a popular purchase, especially in the run-up to Bonalu. Artisans and vendors decorate their stalls elaborately to attract buyers. Mohammad Jayed, a senior artisan, mentioned that festival seasons significantly increase demand and bring community members together to appreciate and support traditional crafts (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Live Demonstration of Traditional Lac Bangle Making..

Artisans (Shabeer) are shown actively preparing various LAC bangles, including children's sizes, highlighting traditional methods and craftsmanship.



Figure 2: Rayadurgam Weekly Market Interaction.

Author review "At the Rayadurgam weekly market, artisans shared that the demand for lac bangles surges during festivals like Bonalu, with senior artisan Mohammad Zobed highlighting how festive seasons boost community engagement and sales, while also stressing the need for better market linkages."

Connected to geometrical CAD (Computer Aided Design) innovatively (Figure 3)

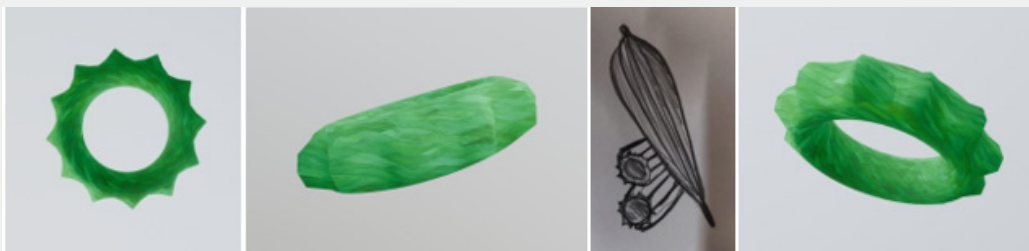


Figure 3: Bio-Inspired Design: Ridge Gourd to CAD.

A sketch of the ridge gourd vegetable alongside CAD-developed bangle designs, showing how natural forms inspired innovative surface patterns.

Review of Literature

Inspiration from Ridge Gourd (Turai) – A Bio-Inspired

Design Approach: the ridge gourd (Turai), known for its natural ridged surface and lightweight structure, served as a creative inspiration for the development of innovative LAC bangle designs. The linear grooves and organic texture of the vegetable were translated into bangle surface patterns through hand-carving and CAD modelling. This approach not only added a fresh visual

identity rooted in nature but also emphasized sustainability and bio-mimicry in traditional craft design [1].

Artisan Community in Mettika Sher: Mettika Sher is home to 200-300 artisans specializing in LAC bangle making. Many of these families have been involved in this craft for generations, maintaining traditional skills and techniques. Despite economic challenges, artisans consider this work sacred and strive to pass their skills on to younger generations through informal training and community-based initiatives (Figure 4) [2].



Figure 4: Artisan Interview at Mittika Sher..

Along author "During my field visit to shabbier bangles collection, place Mittika Sher, artisan Shri. Shabbir, a skilled bangle artisan, shared insights on preserving traditional designs while expressing the urgent need for innovation and support to sustain their ancestral craft."

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Design Innovation and CAD Integration: Design intervention is essential for revitalizing traditional crafts. While LAC bangles in Rajasthan feature intricate patterns like Lahariya and embedded stones, artisans in Hyderabad have limited exposure to such innovations. Integrating CAD (Computer-Aided Design) can help local artisans explore new motifs and techniques while preserving traditional aesthetics [3].

Cultural Representation in Cinema: In the film RRR, a scene depicting the gifting of LAC bangles symbolizes emotional bonding and highlights Telangana's cultural heritage. Such cinematic representations can elevate traditional crafts to a wider audience and promote cultural pride [4].

Role of Women and Socioeconomic Dynamics: Women play a crucial role in LAC bangle production, particularly in shaping and finishing tasks. However, they often receive inconsistent wages due to fluctuating market demand. Limited alternative employment opportunities make it difficult for women artisans to sustain their livelihoods, underscoring the need for economic and institutional support [5].

Health and Ergonomic Challenges: Traditional production methods require artisans to work for long hours in seated positions on the floor, leading to physical strain and skin issues. A proposed solution is the development of absorbent ankle covers that cushion the skin and retain moisturizing oils like coconut oil to reduce discomfort [6].

Recommendations for Revitalization

- 1) **Skill Enhancement:** Train artisans in modern techniques, CAD, and digital prototyping.
- 2) **Digital Marketing:** Enable artisans to use e-commerce platforms and social media for broader outreach.
- 3) **Product Visibility:** Promote products through exhibitions, malls, and museum displays.
- 4) **Government Support:** Provide consistent platforms and funding through exhibitions and cultural programs.
- 5) **Global Branding:** Position LAC bangles as luxury craft items with cultural value.
- 6) **Educational Collaboration:** Partner with government design institutions like FDDI, NID, and NIFT and private institutions like WOXSSEN University, GITAM University, and Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd., like LEPAKSHI Handicrafts, DC Handicrafts, and the Ministry of Textiles, GOI, for projects that encourage innovation and sustainable practices.

Marketing strategies

Traditional marketing remains centered on local bazaars and word-of-mouth.

To expand reach:

- Develop cohesive branding and storytelling for Hyderabad Lac Bangles.
- Partner with platforms like Amazon Karigar, Etsy, and GeM.
- Improve packaging to enhance gifting appeal.
- Organize artisan participation in national fairs and international trade shows.

Conclusion

Hyderabad's cultural richness is deeply tied to its traditional crafts like LAC bangles. Ensuring the survival and growth of this

craft requires multi-faceted efforts, design innovation, financial support, market integration, and recognition of artisan communities. By empowering artisans, particularly women, and connecting traditional skills with modern platforms, LAC bangles can continue to be a symbol of cultural pride and economic resilience.

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