



BUDA FOLKLORE

A CATALOGUE OF ARTISANS

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1. Kallavva Metri Durgappa.



Contact information: +91 9164241783.

Livelihood: Kallavva Metri Durgappa is a strong-willed woman who lives with her mother. When her husband died after 62 years of marriage, she moved back to her house while her siblings moved out. Ever since then, it's just been her and her mother that live in Haliyal, a small town where people mainly do construction work, act as *coolis* and also work at PHC Mangalwad, Haliyal. With this melancholy in the air, the only time there is some joy in her house is when she celebrates various festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Deepavali and Panchimi. Her childhood wasn't very colorful either as she was married off at a young age and her son also died at the age of three. Thankfully, to pass time as well as earn daily wages, she took on the practice of quilting from her mother.

Quilting: She has been using old clothes, needles, threads and sarees for quilting for 30 years now. No wonder her quilts are beautiful! Until now, she has made approximately 50 quilts, most of which have been sold to Savitha Akka, and other buyers from Pune and Chennai.

She mainly does this transaction from the comfort of her home itself. She makes 2-3 quilts in a year, for which she has gotten ₹3000 maximum. I think it's quite less but it's great that she keeps her passion going! The raw materials that she needs are brought to her by other people from nearby villages; Savitha Akka too has a hand in this. Kallavva Akka makes these quilts by using colorful threads in the borders and patterns such as leaves (*Elegalu*) and flowers (*Hoovugalu*) in the middle. In order to make this, she uses all kinds of fabrics, may it be cotton or silk. She loved talking to Basavaraj sir about her life in general and her experience with quilting, which felt good. However, it was heartbreaking to know the kind of trauma she has been inflicted with.

2. Shantavva Parasura.



Contact information: +91 9380918923.

Livelihood: Shantavva, also known as Shantamma in her village, lives with seven people including her sons and five grandchildren who are four girls and three boys. Her family, like everyone's, is involved in construction or *coolie* work in Mangalwad. She has been married for over 50 years, so she and her family vividly celebrate several festivals like Christmas, Deepavali and Yesu though she didn't elaborate much on the process. What's worse is that she used to go to the village landlord's house

everyday as a daily labourer and continued with this job for many years just to raise her children in the best way possible. Since she hasn't had the opportunity to go to school herself, she earns only ₹500 per day. It doesn't help that the pandemic has made their situation worse - it was sad to hear how these people don't even get to go to their jobs most of the time.

Quilting: So as a means for additional money, she does quilting and has been for the past 10-15 years. She is the only family member who quilts, so they are quite dependent on her for additional income. Why has she continued this practice? Well, because she has been used to it and she can't live without doing it every once in a while. Out of the 100-150 quilts she has made so far, she has sold around 4-5 of them each month to people from Bangalore (mainly villagers). The maximum price she has got for selling her quilts is ₹2300, which I think is fair since she spends at least 2-3 months to finish one quilt itself. Since she makes *kaudi*, she uses old clothes that she has, small pieces left from tailoring shops and new materials she buys from nearby villages to make these quilts. They are beautiful, aren't they? I wish I could let her know that she's doing a great job and she totally deserves appreciation :).

IN CONCLUSION ~

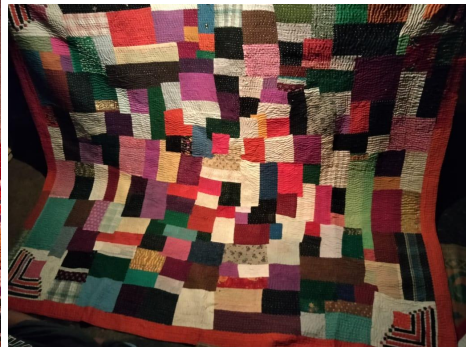
The village, Mangalwad (specifically Taluk jilla) seems to be filled with cultural practices and lifestyles. They all seem to celebrate different festivals, may it be of the Hindu or the Christian culture. This makes it apparent that many people are Hindus but some (rarely) have converted to Christianity. This adds on to the diversity of the village as people celebrate different festivals ranging from Diwali to Ganesh Chaturthi to Christmas. It was nice to see how these women get together occasionally and quilt while sharing the village gossip amongst themselves.

Other than being composed of pro quilters, this village is mainly composed of farmers, construction workers and daily labourers. So, overall, their income is unsteady and they all live in poverty. This is unfortunate but these women have not attended school in their childhood; they had all been married off in their teenage years. On a happier note, at least their children are seeking education. Hopefully, a different fate awaits them.

Moreover, though they are facing many challenges including unequal salary, structural unemployment and lack of raw materials, they seem very happy (as seen in the family pictures). This was really nice to see and was very motivating in general!

Moving on to the quilting..

It is estimated that more than 1 million tonnes of textiles are thrown away every year in India. What is one of the ways to get rid of this problem and still make beautiful clothes and other essential items? Simple answer: **quilting**.



Before I took on this project, I am ashamed to say that I didn't know anything about quilting. I knew that quilting was a form of art but I really knew nothing in depth. I have always been interested in the concept of 'sustainability' so throughout this project, I have gained much insight on this topic.

Well, modern textiles require clothes to be bought, manufactured and then thrown away after use. However, the traditional art of quilting in Mangalwad and many other villages in Uttar Karnataka, are completely based on sustainable resources. What this means is that all the materials that are used in making a quilt are recyclable and not wasted - they make use of scrap, unused and old clothes in making these beautiful masterpieces. Extraordinary, right? Of course, sometimes they require new clothes to make it look *extra* beautiful but they make sure that it doesn't go to waste - it gets passed on to the next generation or they get recycled (since they are not made up of synthetic materials or plastic, it is completely biodegradable).

In this village (in particular), the practice of quilting is handed down from generation to generation - mothers or mother in laws teach it to their

daughters. Unfortunately, it is only the women who invest their time in this art and this may be because all the men have their daily jobs to perform (*cool*i work, tile work, construction, farming). At least, that is what I have understood from my interactions with them so far. Moreover, even children don't quilt and this raises the question, "why?". Perhaps this is because some go to school or the mothers consider the procedure of quilting dangerous for their children as it involves needles and scissors. Again, this adds on to the reason for the declining status of the artwork. Additionally, quilters face tough competition from people who sell blankets made from sewing machines as those textiles are made in a shorter period of time. This has had the effect of reducing the demand for their quilts partially, not completely as people in the rural areas preferred hand-made quilts because they're warmer and more durable. This saddened me. All these women deal with so many difficulties in their lives, and their families barely earn enough money to survive; they at least deserve to earn more than Rs.500-600 per piece, considering the effort and hard work they put into it. This inspired me to come up with a solution for this particular problem. Hence, I have been planning on making a website to make the transaction of goods between the buyers and sellers easier and more effective. This is more important in today's case with the prevalence of the pandemic. Many women during the interview told me that they face many difficulties in acquiring the raw materials, finding customers and earning money on a daily basis due to Covid. The only problem with making a website is not knowing how to create incentive for quilts. What if there is not enough demand? What if people prefer alternatives? What if they are not aware of quilting? These are the questions I will have to get around when I finally start to implement this choice.

Furthermore, quilting generates much happiness on their faces and hearts alike. This passion for this type of art has changed from a mere hobby to a source of income. Agreed, what they earn is relatively less but they get money from what they like doing. Very inspiring! It has a feminist perspective associated with this as well because they changed their lifestyle from just being subjected to the kitchen and attending house chores to actually earning money on their own! I find this very enriching for the society and I believe that if this skill is carried on to reach more people, more women can be independent and not dependent on their husbands who can be violent and abusive in the case of Sevanthi Akka for example.

I can say wholeheartedly that the future of this art will not be threatened if it is actively taught to the next generation. I think it's a beautiful form of art that has its roots in Africa. This must be preserved.

WRITER



I am so glad I got this opportunity to work with Buda Folklore. It was definitely a ride, but I acquired quite a lot of skills such as writing, editing, patience and determination. The hardest challenge was of course, not speaking the artisans' language but I overcame it by getting a translator who I am utterly thankful for. Other than that, I made a friend in the village and we talked every other day - it was really nice. I am going to miss this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



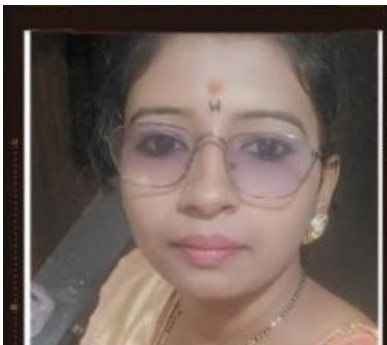
Savitha Akka has aided me in a lot of ways. You have given me clear-cut details on what it is that I needed to do, have offered encouragement and helped me complete this project. It's amazing what you've done for the quilters in this village and I hope this work continues. I am glad I got to work with you and your foundation. Please force my school to make me visit Buda Folklore as I'm dying to see these quilts and the people who make them.

It was lovely to work for you :) - **Savitha Uday.**



I don't know how to thank you for the work you've done. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to understand what the quilters are trying to say and I definitely couldn't have completed this project without you. I'm very grateful for your translation and your vivid enthusiasm even at times of despair. It really helped me move forward and carry on this project. You're always optimistic and cheerful, which is something that I have tried to assimilate throughout our journey.

Thank you for your participation :) - **Basavaraj Sajjanar.**



It was your "love" to help that facilitated my project in the right direction. You gave me pictures, more contacts and other information that I required. Without your help, my project would have been incomplete and uninteresting. So, thank you very much for all the help :). Talking to you felt like talking to a friend.

- **Veena B. Kumar.**



Thank you Soham, for your spontaneity in helping me talk with Marathi quilters. You were quite nervous to talk with them but you did great and I couldn't have catalogued quite a few people without you. We had our laughs and you were easy to work with.

Thanks for your cooperation :)

- **Soham Lohakarey Vishwajeet.**

Of course, **Aparna** ma'am (my mentor) played a huge role in making me get this opportunity and succeed rightly. Thank you for the encouragement, advice and appreciation that you gave me throughout the course of this project.

-- The End --