

{ THE SWADESHI SPARK }

From Gorakhpur's wheels to state capital's markets, a terracotta tale

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LUCKNOW/GORAKHPUR : As Diwali nears, Gorakhpur's Kumhar Gali buzzes with spinning pottery wheels and the scent of wet clay, while Lucknow's markets overflow with shoppers hunting for idols. Artisans craft earthen lamps, pots, and Laxmi-Ganesh figures in Gorakhpur, and from Bhootnath to Lakdamandi, colourful terracotta (baked clay) creations, from tiny figurines to towering idols, catch buyers' eyes. The Swadeshi campaign has rekindled interest in traditional crafts, and terracotta items are witnessing a surge in demand.

In Lucknow, shoppers navigate bustling markets crowded with terracotta idols ranging from 1-inch figures to 18-foot statues. Artisans display clay, cow dung, silver, and gold creations, but terracotta is the unmistakable favourite for eco-conscious buyers. Abhishek Prajapati, an idol-maker from Lucknow's Khajua, said, "Demand for UP-made terracotta idols has risen sharply,



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with prices ranging from Rs 25 to Rs 18,000 depending on size."

Back in Gorakhpur, the revival is visible across workshop floors. Soni Prajapati, another idol-maker, said, "For the past two weeks, buyers have returned, eager for handmade clay items." Manish Kumhar added that traditional kulhads and decorative pieces are in high demand, with customers requesting both classic and modern designs.

"This Diwali season alone, more than 100 truckloads of terracotta items worth nearly Rs 10 crore were dispatched from

Gorakhpur to cities including Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, and Chittoor. For local artisans, the festival of lights began early, with orders pouring in from across the country," said district industries officer AK Pal.

"Potters are abandoning traditional methods and using modern electric wheels. What once took a full day can now be completed in hours. The ODOP initiative has equipped craftsmen with resources, loans, and exposure through national exhibitions, making Gorakhpur terracotta a sought-after symbol of

Uttar Pradesh's cultural heritage," he added.

Chief minister Yogi Adityanath's One District, One Product (ODOP) scheme has given Gorakhpur's terracotta national recognition. Rajan Prajapati, a President's award-winning craftsman, said, "The CM has truly turned our clay into gold," adding that his workshop alone shipped 18 truckloads this year.

In Lucknow, Manoj Kashyap, whose family has sold idols at Bhootnath market for 22 years, said, "The idols made in UP these days have become identical to ones made in Bengal, which are preferred by people. Made of terracotta, these idols are a bit eco-friendlier than others." Prem Sagar Rastogi, a Lakdamandi seller for 60 years, said terracotta idols last longer than non-baked ones.

Several families across Gorakhpur's Aurangabad, Gulariha, Bharwalia, and Padri Bazaar areas continue preserving this centuries-old craft. From spinning wheels in Gorakhpur to crowded markets in Lucknow, terracotta is lighting up Diwali with tradition, durability, and eco-friendly charm.