



## Nurture through nature

We chat to Gaayathri Periasami, the founder of Baby Peppers, to discover the importance of ethical and sustainable baby wares.

### What was your initial vision for Baby Peppers?

My initial vision for Baby Peppers was to create a beautiful baby brand with a focus on a niche market that was relatively untouched. I drew inspiration from vintage craft: making a product in the same way it was made hundreds of years before.

The main motivation for Baby Peppers was the birth of our son, Kieran. His birth urged me on a journey to create something meaningful; to acknowledge other families and communities that have preserved centuries-old art forms by sharing their craft.



### Please share with us the philosophy of Baby Peppers.

We believe in ethical consumerism and sustainability. We buy from small local businesses that provide a fair-trade working environment and also help single mothers from developing nations empower themselves with financial independence.

To us, sustainability means generating a healthy income for our featured artists, plus providing products that will last eons. The handmade products we stock can last for generations as they're not mass-produced from cheap materials that deteriorate quickly.

### Where do you source your products?

Our handwoven recycled polyethylene baskets are ethically sourced from Baladarshan, a world-renowned Fairtrade organisation that helps single mothers living in the slums of Chennai, India.

Our vegetable-dyed handmade wooden toys are created using a 200-year-old turnwood art form and are sourced from a Fairtrade artisan group based in Channapatna, India.

We commission a small design studio in Uttar Pradesh, India, to handmade elephant plushies and matching quilt sets. The fabrics used on these products are known as kalamkari fabrics and are coloured with natural vegetable dyes

through a very labour-extensive process. These fabrics also come from a Fairtrade artisan group based in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Our cot quilts and bedding sets are handmade in Jaipur, India, by women who work from the comfort of their own homes to ensure that their work revolves around their childcare and family needs. The softest voile is used and the fabrics are hand-block-printed — the oldest and most laborious form of textile printing.

### How do you find products that fit the Baby Peppers ethos?

Research, research and more research! While on maternity leave [from my current full-time job], I spent my nights conducting meticulous research on and investigating Fairtrade artisans and communities. From those long nights of research, I learnt not to be afraid to ask curly questions to suppliers. I asked about the fabrics, the dyes, the processes, the workers and for the company to send samples. Representatives of Fairtrade artisans and communities are usually well informed but, if the supplier was dodging a question or giving vague responses, I moved on.

**You stock Kateson garments. Please tell us about those.**

We are proud to be the only Australian store to partner with Kateson, an American brand which has redefined the meaning of "pure organics".

When we first heard about Kateson, we were blown away by their mission and brand philosophy. Drawing on the expertise of organic farmers, Kateson uses a hand-dyeing process that is entirely chemical-free. They infuse their organic onesies with some of the most beneficial and sacred herbs in the world, like indigo, sandalwood, tulsi, neem, turmeric and vetiver. The dye waste after the process is

recycled to nourish the surrounding land and the buttons on their garments are made from coconut shells.

### Why is it important for Baby Peppers to stock handmade items and steer clear of mass-manufactured products?

Every handmade item tells a story and no two items can be alike. Handmade items are different from the ones produced in sweatshops with robots, expensive machinery and cheap labour. Ensuring we stock items made slowly and with love is one of the most important values of Baby Peppers.

### What's next for Baby Peppers?

This year, we'll be collaborating with other Fairtrade and not-for-profit organisations. We're also looking for more stores to stock our beautiful products. Currently we're only stocked in Launceston, so we're looking to expand our reach throughout Australia.

We are also in the midst of discussing collaboration ideas with Precious Wings, a beautiful not-for-profit organisation which was founded by two bereaved mothers. The organisation donates blankets and memory boxes to grieving families who have lost babies or children of any age or gestation. Precious Wings is very close to our hearts and we're excited for this collaboration. 🌸