

Design Resource

Tanjore Painting - Tanjore, Tamil Nadu

Tanjore Painting

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Manasa K H
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/tanjore-painting-tanjore-tamil-nadu>

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Introduction

Tanjore is a city located in southern part of India in Tamilnadu state. Scholars believe the name Thanjavur is derived from “Tanjan”, Tanjan referring to a legendary asura in Hindu mythology. The town first rose to prominence during the reign of the Medieval Cholas when it served as the capital of the Chola Empire. After the fall of the Cholas, the town was ruled by various dynasties like Pandyas, Vijayanagar Empire, Madurai Nayaks, Thanjavur Nayaks, Thanjavur Marathas and the British Empire.

Tanjore has been the center for the art and architecture during the various rulers of the region. It particularly has been dominating for centuries a great centre of dance, music, architecture, and arts – sculpture, woodcraft, metal-cast, mural painting, etc. “Most of the Great Living Chola Temples, which are UNESCO World Heritage Monuments, are located in and around Thanjavur. The Chola dynasty built various temples in this city and the surrounding cities. The most famous temple in Tanjore is Lord Brihadeeshwara Temple. Tanjore is also famous for a Tanjore Wobble head doll and Tanjore Paintings. Tanjore painting is a traditional art form originating in the region of Tanjore. This art form dates back to the 1600 AD during the rule of the Nayaks. The temples built by the Chola rulers had a large number of murals paintings depicting various scenes from the Indian Mythology. From the Chola temple of the region, the Ramasway Temple one of its mural painting that portrays the Crowning of Lord Rama was adopted as a Tanjore Painting by the artists during the Nayaks’ rule. Tanjore Painting is primarily composed of a main subject characters from Indian mythology such as Ramayana and Bhagavada Purana Common themes were various depiction of Krishna, Rama’s coronation and variations of Vishnu and Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) or used to be royalty. Secondary subjects are elephants, horses, cow and parrot.

Tanjore paintings are known for their surface richness, vivid colors, compact composition and especially the glittering gold foils used to give the paintings their rich look. “Tanjore paintings are mainly panel paintings done on solid wood planks, and hence referred to as palagai padam in local parlance.

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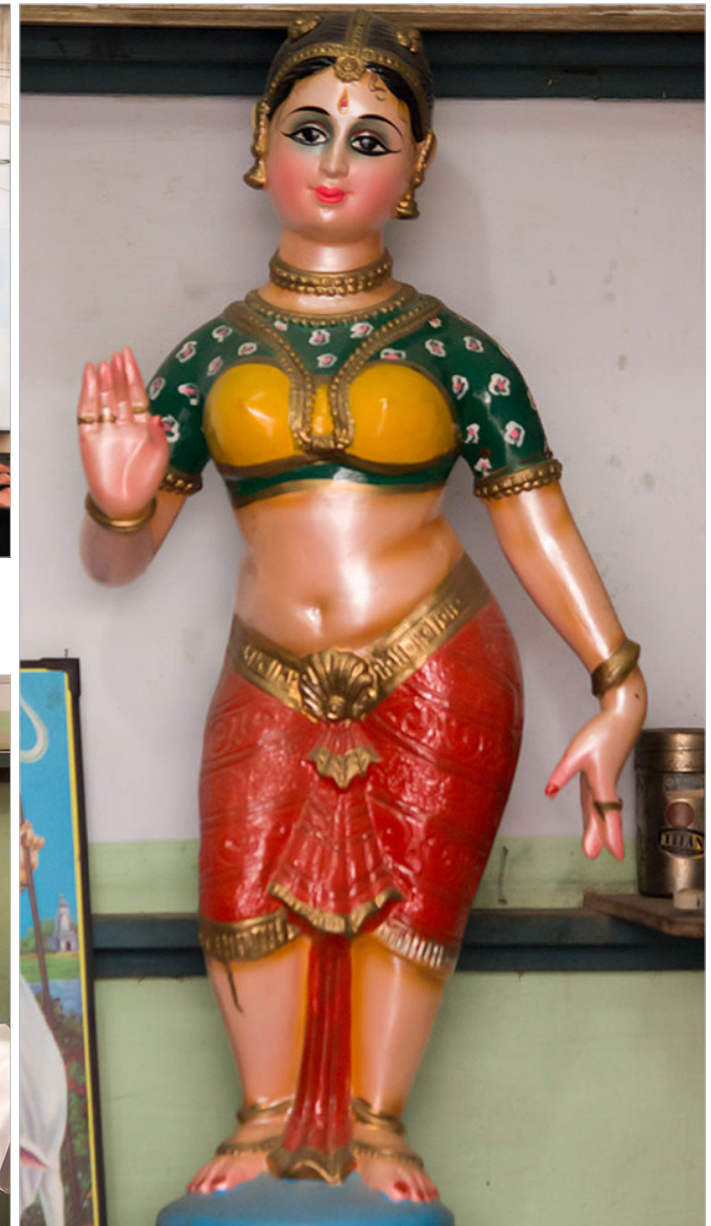
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The artisan's traditional art outlet at Tanjore.



Artisan named KALAMANI Shri.Venkatesa Raja is a national award winner for his traditional painting and titled as "KALAMANI"



A welcome doll is located opposite to the doorstep for attraction, painted by the artisan.

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The origin of painting art is from Vijayanagar dynasty.

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Tools and Materials

Following are the tools and raw materials required for Tanjore Painting:

- **Chalk Powder and Tamarind Seed Powder (Molding Paste):** It is used to make relief work on canvas.
- **Paints:** It is used to paint the figure according to the design.
- **Water:** It is used for mixing purpose.
- **Squeeze Bottle:** It is used to Squeeze out the molding paste over the the design elements.
- **Brushes:** These are used for painting
- **Cotton Fabric:** It is used as a layer on plywood
- **Stencil (Elephant or Peacock)**
- **Gems/Semi Precious Stones or Kundan:** It is used for decoration purpose.
- **Pencils:** It is used for marking
- **Jack Fruit Wood:** Traditionally, wood of the jack fruit tree is used as it does not rots easily and the
- **Polishing Stone and Emery Sheet:** For smoothening the coated board in preparation for tracing the image
- **Gum:** Gum from a root used for sticking cloth to the wooden base.
- **Gold / Silver Foil:** A thin film of flattened gold. Made by artisans in the past by beating an 18 gold bit by placing it on an animal skin. In the 1930s and 40s it was imported from China.
- **Teak Wood:** It is used for frame
- **Glass:** It is used while framing the Tanjore painting to frame.

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Attaching the three pieces of wood made from Jackfruit tree forms the wooden board.



Canvas cloth is used to sketch and paint the image on it.



The paint, which is used for painting are natural organic colors.



A small plastic bowl is used to contain the water drops to smooth the density of paint.

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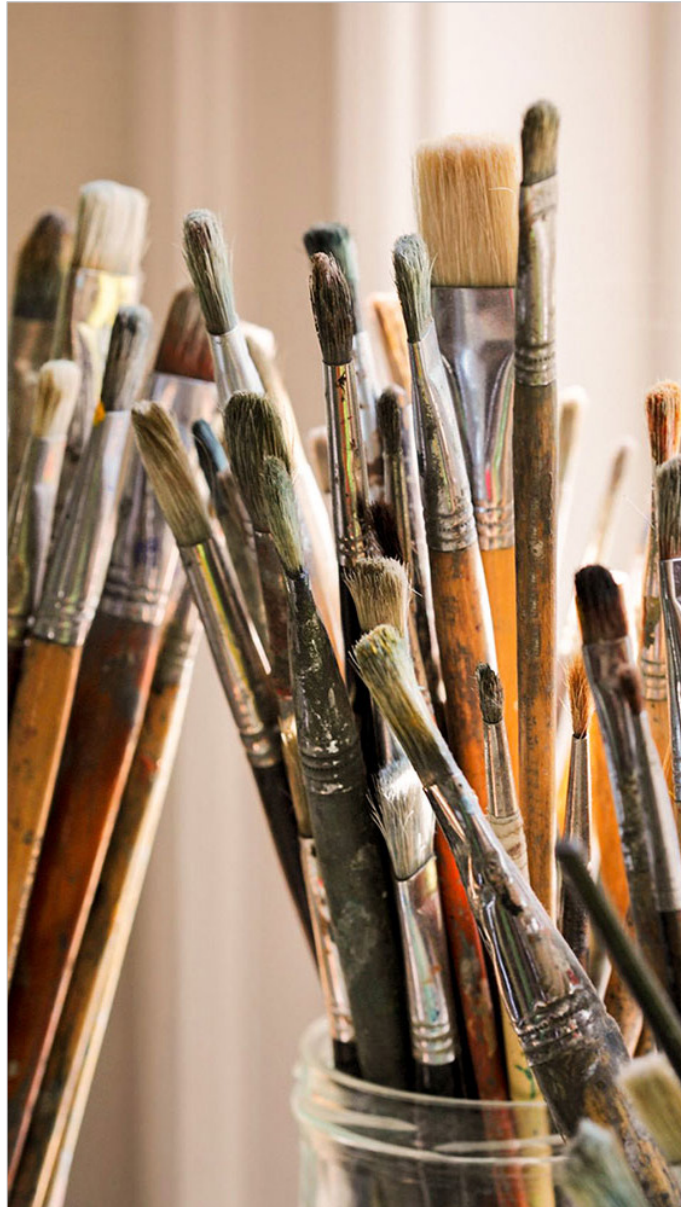
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Artisan uses different types of paintbrushes.



Limestone is used to apply completely on the wooden board before artisan starts to paint.



Original gold is plated on golden foil to ornament the image.

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Making Process

Initially work begins by preparing the wooden board of required size and cardboard is placed over the board after the cardboard is pasted to wooden board, Cotton fabric is then stretched and pasted on the board using an indigenous gum. After the fabric attached well to the board, the process of coating the cloth begins. Then cloth is coated with the paste, which is prepared by mixing chalk powder and tamarind seed powder. This paste applied over the canvas to multiple coats.

This coated area is then rubbed with a smoothening stone and emery sheet to obtain a surface with mild sheen and good texture. Coating of the cloth board helps prevent the painting from damage caused by moisture and heat. After the canvas is ready painter draws the Sketch over the canvas using the templates of religious themes. The template will be in the form of a tracing sheet with pinpricks on the outlines. This tracing sheet is placed on top of the cloth board and dusted with charcoal dust. Molding paste is made by mixing quantity of a paste made of chalk powder and glue with Gold paint and water. It is then filled in a squeezing bottle to create the relief work. To give a fine detailing even fine brushes are used.

In brush, the first layer of the paste is applied to create a raised effect for the chosen areas of the work. Once this layer is dry, finer details are painted using the same paste to create raised patterning. They are Pated using the glue. Once dried, the embossed areas are covered with gold leaf. Gold leaf work is made by using gold foil, a thin gold foil is placed on an embossed area and the foil is then cut to shape. Glue is then applies to the back side of the foil and it is then applied over the embossed area.

Using the pointed back of a paintbrush, the foil is pressed down to reveal the embossed details. In this manner, all the embossed areas are covered with gold leaf. Painting is then enhanced by pasting the Kundan/ gems or precious stones along with mirror in the border. Colors are then painted in several coats over the design and it is allowed to dry. A fine outlining is done for features. The painting, once it is complete, it is framed using the teak-wood with glass on top.

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Flow Chart



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Canvas cloth with the basic sketch of Butter Krishna ornamented with multi color stones.



Artisan is scrambling the paint by adding little amount of water to get the absolute density.



The artisan has placed the canvas cloth on the wooden board and started to paint a pattern.



The paint brush is being dipped into the paint gently.

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The artisan is giving the layers of design to his art.



The brush in the artisan's hand benign with paint and the cloth.



The artisan has completed one pattern of a traditional flower formation.



Artisan starts up with a new pattern to give intuit of ancient culture.

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A soft finish of the second petal is given.

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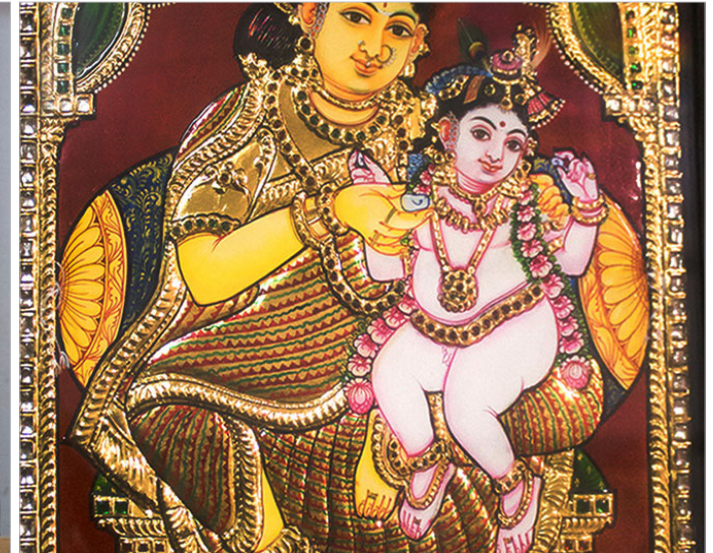
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A contrasting background with a naturalistic art of mother pampering lord Krishna.



The elongated painting of baby Krishna with king and queen in vibrant colors, which allure the importance.

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A dramatic abstraction of the lord Krishna makes the art monumental.



The aesthetic paint which have been ornamented with a pure gold plated on golden foil.

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Contact Details

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