

Design Resource

Traditional Indian Lanterns - Nasik, Maharashtra

Kandeel

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/traditional-indian-lanterns-nasik-maharashtra>



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Introduction

Humankind's invention on the supplementary sources of light depended on the availability of substances and it got evolved over the years. When men lived in caves, the form of light source was to burn oily nuts in clay saucers, handful of moss soaked in animal fat. It is found that during the Iron Age, the Canaanite Oil Lamp saucer lamp was used from 1500BC to 600BC. Till 1700s only oil lamps, oil lanterns and candles were the only source of light until the petroleum was developed. After that the kerosene lamps/lanterns that lasted for longer time was used. The non-electric lanterns used in these days in the form of candle lanterns, kerosene lanterns, oil pots were discovered thousands of years ago. These oil lanterns were developed to replace candles.

Lanterns were invented to act as a protective enclosure for light source. This is the easier way to carry candles/diyas and to hang up. These are perfect for outdoor decorations also used in drafty interiors such as passages and staircases where unguarded candles were blown out easily by gusts of air, not only by the wind also while opening the door or windows. The lanterns were of eight, five and six sides but four sides used to be standard. They are usually made using translucent material but some antique lanterns were made out of metal grids. Though the primary reason for inventing lanterns is to prevent light from being extinguished later it was equally important for functioning as the risk reducing gear that avoids the spark leap from the flame or the light be dropped. This was essentially needed below deck on ships. These lanterns were also used as torches and for signaling apart from using it as general outdoor light sources at night. The term "lantern" is commonly associated with the Chinese paper lanterns.

Lanterns are used in many Asian festivals. Chinese captured fireflies in translucent containers and used them as lanterns. This was also practiced in ancient India. During the Lantern festival numerous designed and sized lanterns are displayed on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month throughout China. It is usually held between September or October month and celebrated as the Mid-Autumn festival. This festival originated as the thanksgiving for successful harvest that reflects the China's history as an agricultural society. The tradition of this mid-autumn festival's paper lanterns dates back to the Tang Dynasty (A.D618 – A.D907). Emperor Tang commissioned to construct thirty enormous lantern-towers which were of 1500 feet high each. These lanterns were also decorated ornately with silver, gold, precious gems and jade. Though such lanterns were never being replicated in the later days still the tradition of lantern took hold in the form of transparent paper on thin silk. Hence even on other Chinese festivals, lanterns are floated in sky. During the Ghost festival at China, lanterns of lotus shape are set floated in rivers and seas to represent it as a symbolic guide for the lost souls of forgotten ancestors to the afterlife. Lanterns are the central theme of the Seoul Lantern Festival as well!

Prashanth Rajaram Pardeshi from Nashik is well versed in making Traditional Indian Lanterns. He has learnt this craft from his ancestors since childhood. Diwali being the festival of light and colors has the utmost significance in Indian culture. Considering this point, colorful handcrafted lanterns are made in this manufacturing unit.

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Initially these lanterns were manufactured in the artisan's house. Earlier bamboo sticks, color papers and natural glue were used to manufacture the lanterns. But in later days, it became the dying craft of India. Thus by considering this point, the idea of getting the old tradition back, the manufacturing of these traditional Indian lanterns was started in 2007. Thus the childhood hobby turned out to be the serious profession for the artist in the later days.

As the handcrafted lanterns were very rare during the establishment of this manufacturing unit, they got the very good response. This enabled them to capture the business well in market. Further for the improvement of lanterns by doing research they got to know that the shelf life of the bamboo sticks is less and manufacturing the lanterns using bamboo sticks was also very difficult. Thus the artisan came up with the idea of using wooden sticks. But realizing the cost-efficiency and the contribution to the deforestation by using wooden sticks, artisan started to use recycled wood. Thus the wood was allocated from the large-scale industries. For example: the wooden sticks used at packaging industries were allocated.

The recycled wooden sticks used to make the lanterns are cut into required form. These traditional lanterns are created using the mathematical formula of cubic theodrome. This shape of lanterns was given by the ancestors, as it is the oldest form of geometrical shapes. Those old geometric forms are now a days studied in engineering syllabus. The shape of this traditional Indian lantern has ten sides. These ten directions/sides have utmost importance in Hindu Vaastu Shastra (Science of architecture). Thus it is considered that the legends used this form wisely by knowing its importance.

Initially the making of these traditional lanterns begun using bamboo sticks and color papers. But as per the research and adoption of modern techniques bamboo sticks were replaced by wooden sticks and color papers were replaced by fabrics due to the lack of sustainability. Again as the company faced the problem of cost efficiency and to avoid textile waste, lanterns were made using the waste fabric from large-scale industries. Though this was the initial stage of establishing this manufacturing unit later as the company established well these handcrafted traditional Indian lanterns were exported to other places. The company also thrived for the women welfare association by appointing women employees in this industry. As the modernization took place in the making of these lanterns, canvas gun, circular saw and stick gum were used for preparing the lantern. Using the basic shapes like triangles, rectangles and squares traditional lanterns are made. It consists of eight triangles, eight squares and eight triangles, by using these shapes a traditional Indian lantern is made that consists of ten sides/directions. On the armature, paper is stuck as the emission of light through paper is more and on that is the fabric stuck which is used for the durability purpose. Usually it takes 4-5 days to create a lantern. They also conduct traditional Indian lantern making workshops throughout Nashik.

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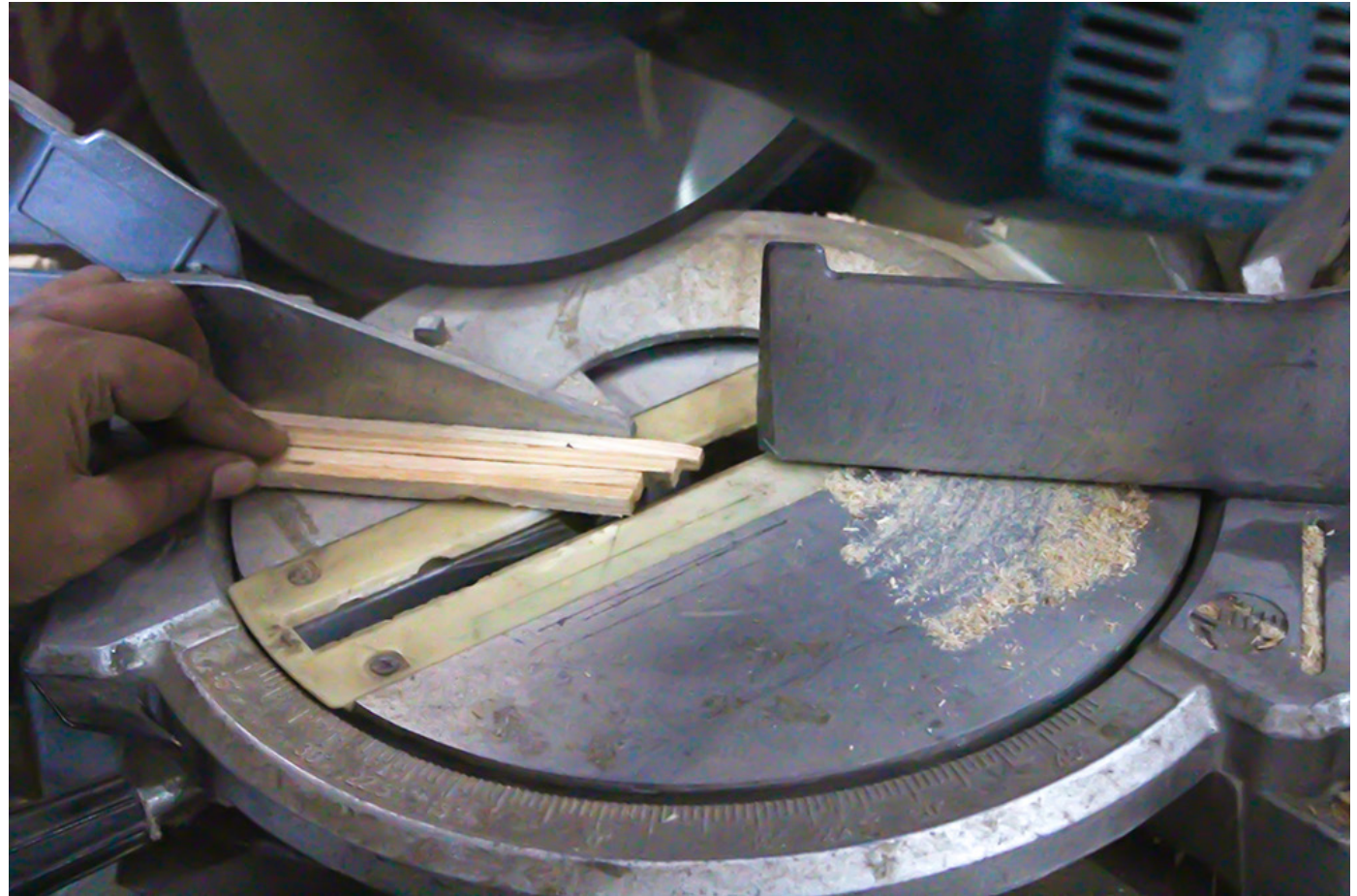
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Wooden sticks are being arranged in the wood cutter to be cut in a specific size.

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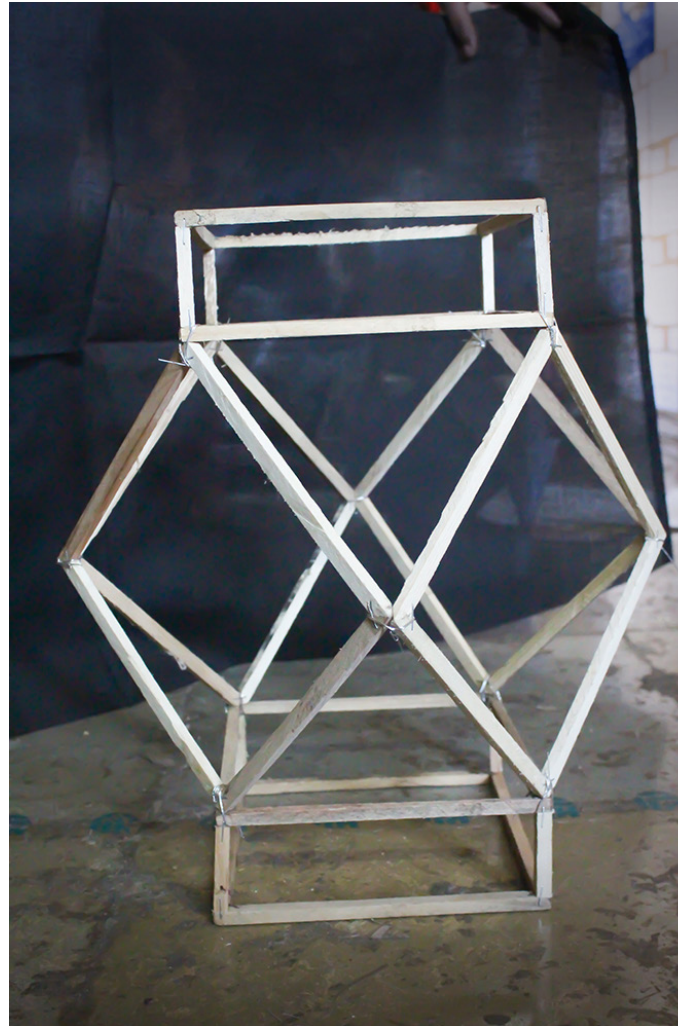
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Armature of the lantern kept ready for the next process.



Artisan cutting cloth to stick it on the armature of the lantern.



Extra cloth is being cut by the artisan.

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Lanterns having colored paper stuck on them are kept for drying.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools and raw materials that are used for making traditional indian lanterns is:

- **Wooden Sticks:** They are the basic materials that are used for preparing the armature of the traditional lanterns.
- **Paper:** Paper is stick on the wooden armature of the lantern.
- **Fabric:** It is the outer most layer of the lantern that is stuck to beautify the product.
- **Scissor:** Scissor is used for cutting the required size of the paper and fabric.
- **Glue:** Glue is used for sticking the paper and fabric on the wooden armature of lantern.
- **Thread:** Thread is used for tying the wooden sticks to each other.
- **Pencil:** Pencil is used for marking the length of the wooden sticks, paper and fabric pieces.
- **Scale:** It is used for measuring the length and width of the materials that are used in preparing the Traditional lantern.
- **Canvas Gun:** It is used for stapling the paper, fabric and wooden sticks together.



Wood cutting machine: This is used to cut wooden sticks for the base of the lanterns.

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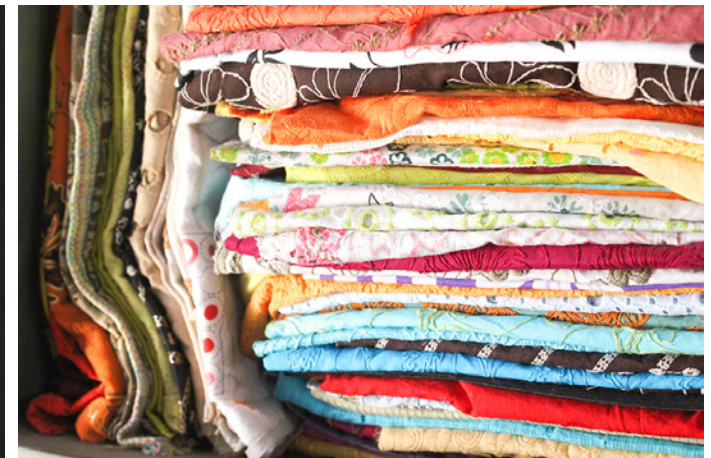
Stapler: To staple two wooden sticks together;
cutting plier: To cut the binding wires;
Wooden sticks: to make the armature of the lantern;
String roll: string is used to hang the lanterns;
Scissors: To cut the extra string and cloth material.



Binding wires: This is used to bind two wooden frames together.



Colored paper: Colored papers are cut and stuck on the armature of the lantern.



Textured cloth material: Cloth material is cut and pasted according to the measurement of the frame.

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Decorative lace: Lace is used as a decorative element to make the lantern attractive.

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Glue gun: Glue gun is used to stick cloth and lace.



Adhesive: Adhesive is used to stick colored paper to the frame.

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Making Process

Lanterns are the attractive decorative pieces that enhance the beauty of any functions like parties, birthday celebration, wedding receptions etc.

Wooden sticks are cut into smaller pieces with the required length. The length of the wooden sticks depends on the size of the lantern to be made.

- Initially thirty-two wooden sticks of same size to be taken.
- Four more sticks are taken of same width but with the double length of those thirty-two sticks cut earlier. For example: If the thirty-two sticks are cut with the length of 15cms. Then these four sticks are to be cut for the length of 30cms.
- In thirty-two sticks, four sticks of the same length are chosen and are joined to make a square.
- Such eight square are made.
- While joining the stick to make a square, two sticks are tied with the thread in the form of “x”.
- Further these four squares are tied to a long stick (double sized stick) individually.
- These four squares tied to the long stick are further joined together.
- The other two squares are tied one at the top and another at the bottom.
- Upon these two squares is the square tied at the top most and another square at the bottom most part.

Thus the wooden armature of the traditional Indian lantern is prepared. On this armature is the desired color papers are stuck. Upon these papers are the beautifully printed fabric pieces are stuck. According to the design complementing colored fabric pieces or the color fabrics that carry the harmony of the product are stuck on the paper. These are stuck by using synthetic stick gum gun. Further as per the design, at every corner of triangle/ square various designer laces are stuck and frills are created. These frills are either done using paper or fabric that enhances the beauty of the Indian traditional lantern.

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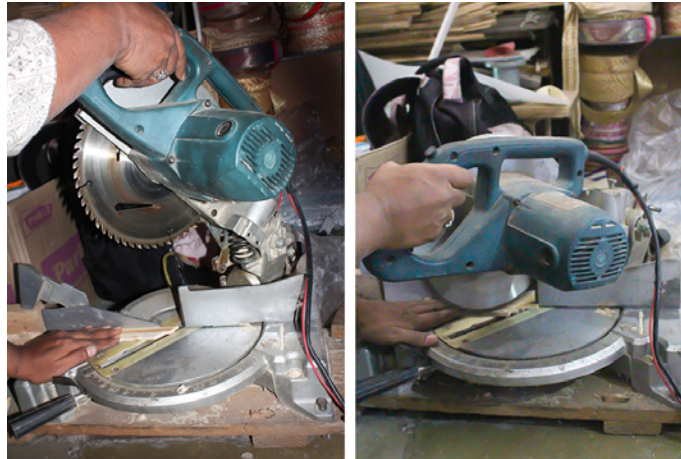
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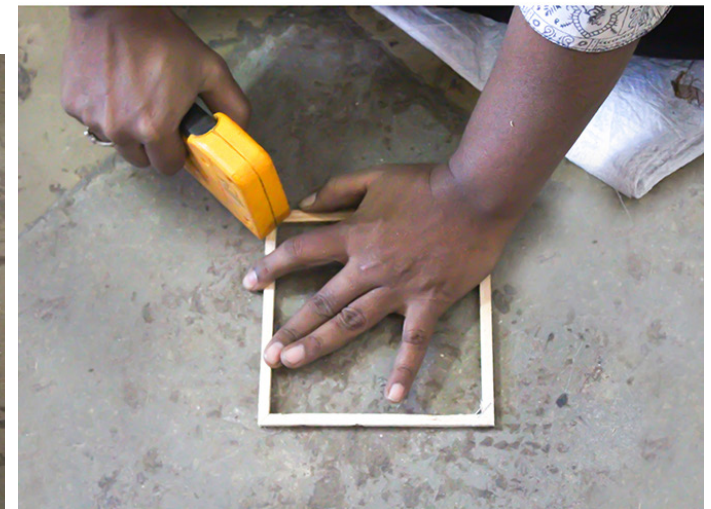
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Wooden sticks are placed in the wood cutter machine and are cut according to the measurement.



Two wooden square frames are stapled together by small wooden pieces.

Wooden sticks which are cut are now being stapled together in the form of a square.

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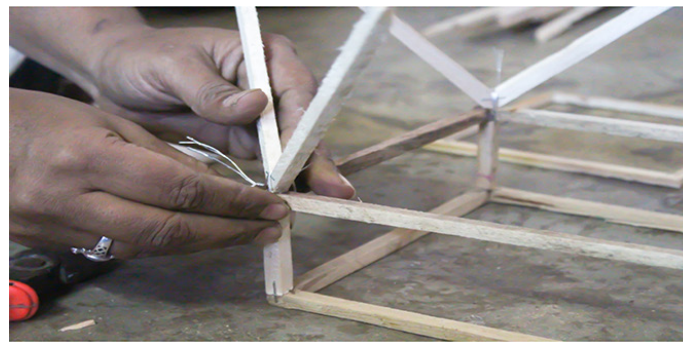
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Artisan is joining two frames together with binding wire.



The excess binding wire is being cut with a cutting plier.

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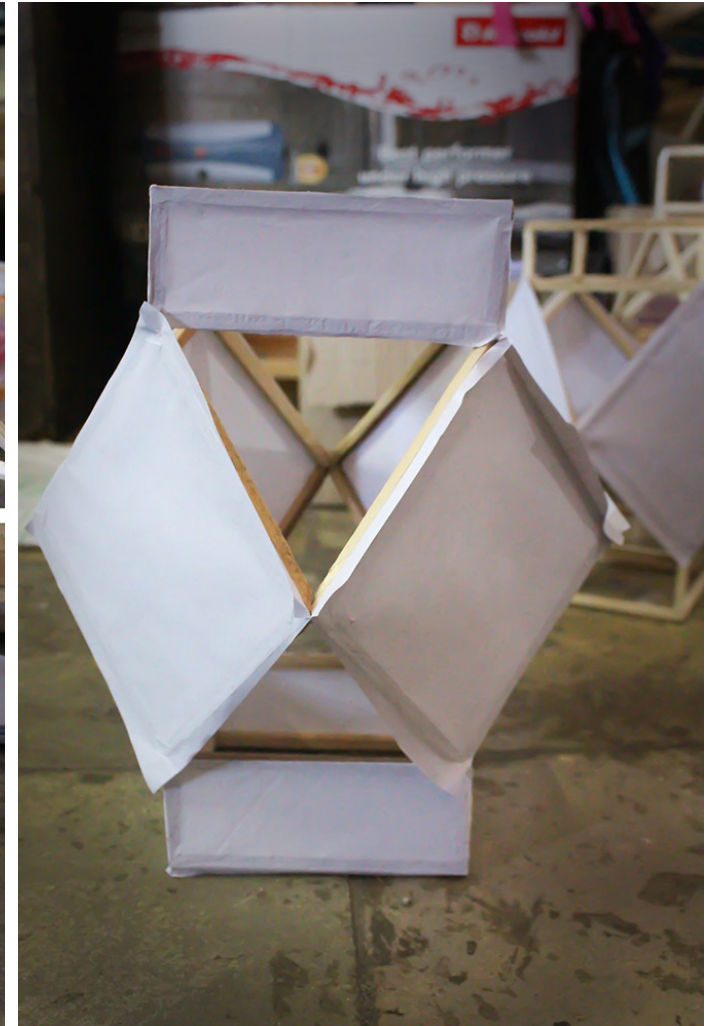
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Adhesive is brushed and colored paper is pasted on the armature.



Lantern having colored paper pasted on all the sides has been kept for drying.

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Textured cloth is cut and pasted on the lantern in square cubes.



Designed textured cloth is cut and pasted on the triangles.

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Decorative lace is being pasted on the lantern on top of the cloth.



Plain red cloth is being cut into strips as danglers for the lantern.



Danglers strip is placed on the lantern and is pasted.

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Glue is put using glue gun on the cloth and decorative lace is pasted on it.

String is being pierced in the frame to hang the lantern.

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Completed lantern hung and ready to be sold.

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Products

Traditional Indian lantern is made as per the requirement of the clients. The size of the lanterns varies from half feet to twenty-five feet. These lanterns are made using jute, khadi cloth and cotton as well. Lanterns at this shop are available in various sizes. They vary from 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 inches. The cost of the lanterns depends on the size and variety of the material that is used for manufacturing the product. The cost of these lanterns start from INR.10 to INR.15,000. These lanterns are hung from buildings and are also placed on ground for the decorative purposes.

The biggest lantern prepared by the artisan is of about 45feet, which was considered to be the biggest lantern of the country.



Elegant looking white lantern with a pink dangler having shimmery lace.



A lantern which is hand painted and another made of jute.

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Lanterns made of bamboo strips adorned with decorative lace.



Bright colored Indian lanterns also known as akasha kandil hung for display.



Rectangle shaped lanterns made with textured cloth and mirrors.

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Video



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