

Design Resource

Athangudi Tiles

Making of Athangudi Decorative Floor Tiles

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, J. Antony William and

Susanth C.S.

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/athangudi-tiles>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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Introduction

The Athangudi tiles are popular handmade decorative floor tiles, originating from a village called Athangudi in the Chettinadu region of Tamil Nadu. Athangudi tiles are completely handmade floor tiles, which add charm to the interiors of a house. These floor tiles of Athangudi stand out for its class, bringing forth the rich cultural heritage of the Chettiar community.

The art of making these tiles is a traditional activity at Chettinad. The raw materials used for making athangudi tiles are the local soil, cement, baby jelly and synthetic oxides. It is unique and supreme, as it comes in a variety of colors and patterns made by a distinctive process of making tiles. The charisma of the tiles lies on the local sand used and for the right composition. Cement, baby jelly and sand along with synthetic oxides make the composition of the tile. Due to the relatively slow manufacturing process and less shelf life, the demand for these tiles has drastically declined.

The artisans possess expertise in manufacturing these traditional tiles of great quality. The process of making these tiles is done by initially choosing the designs and colours from the existing designs, followed by adding of different colours on the glassed frame in a sequence and designing it. It is layered with a coat of dry mixture of sand and cement and overlaid with mortar.



Athangudi village has housed a number of artisans involved in making tiles.



Sometimes whole family is involved in the business.

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3. Making Process
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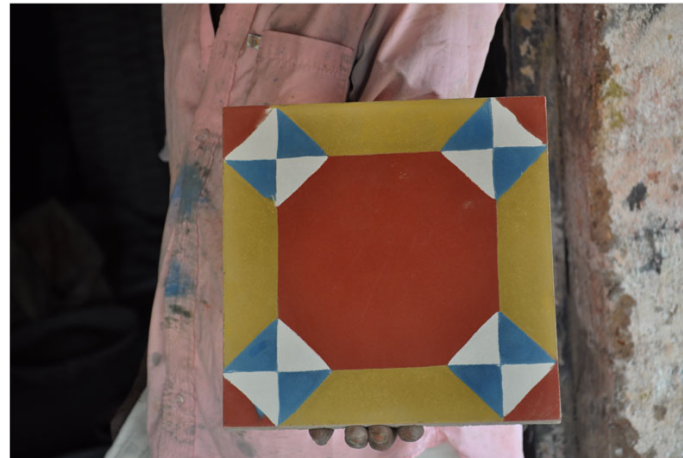
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The iron frame through which the colored paste are poured to make the designs.



Artisans make several design using different vibrant colors.



Traditionally geometrical designs are made.



Artisan in his work shop showcasing a tile.

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3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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A typical house of Athangudi tiles maker along with the tiles.



Artisan family involved in making the tiles.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details

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Tools and Raw Materials

The craft employs varieties of tools necessary in the entire process tile making to obtain the Athangudi tiles. The raw materials include local sand that is conducive to the process, cement, glass for the foundation material. Apart from this, the designs and patterns are still conventional but a few modern modifications are available in the market due to consumer demand.

1. Frame: Used to clasp the glass square on which the process is carried out.
2. Colors: To make the motif. These are chemical oxides mixed with cement to add viscosity.
3. Ladles: To transfer the color on to the tiles.
4. Local Sand
5. Cement
6. Spade: Used to spread the mix over the glass frame with the coloured pattern.
7. Jigsaw Blade: Used to remove superfluous material and smoothen the tile.
8. Water Tank: Used to submerge the tiles for curing.
9. Mixing Machine: Used to mix cement and sand.



Local sand is sieved/ filtered to remove unwanted material.



Clay is procured locally and used while making the tiles.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

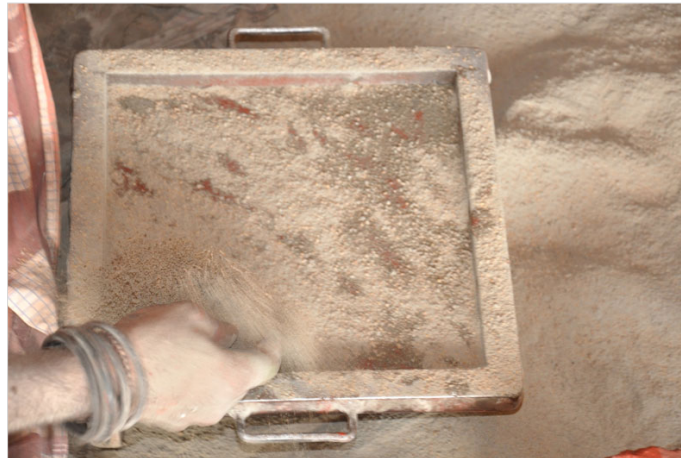
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Cement is the main ingredient of the tiles.



Different designs of frames are used to make designs.



A wooden frame is used to hold the glass and fire frame.



Glass frames are cleaned after every use.

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Frame with a motif of flower. Geometrical patterns and floral motifs are the main design patterns.



Black color is rarely used in designs.



Artisans mainly use basic colors to make beautiful designs.



Spade is used to properly spread the cement in the frame.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
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2. Tools and Raw Materials
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Mixing machine used to mix the raw materials.



Tiles are dipped in water once these are made. Artisans build water tank in the vicinity for this purpose.

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Making Process

The manufacturing process is carried out with immense skill and precision. This simple yet dexterous process involves creating the tile from scratch to the point of creating designs and finishing the product. Locally procured sand and clay are sieved/ filtered together and then grinded to form fine powder. Cement is mixed with water and then converted into dough. Glass frames are cleaned and placed on a raised structure. A square wooden frame is placed over the glass to form the tile.

Metal frame which is designed according to the motif is placed on the glass to obtain the design. Artisans pour different colors as per the requirement in different compartments to form the desired motif. Sometimes the color is dropped/ poured directly on the glass top and swirled/stirred manually to obtain a freestyle design. Once the pattern is filled with color a mixture of dry sand and cement is sprinkled on it. This helps in holding the colors.

A mixture of sand, cement and baby jelly is prepared with bare-hands. Thereafter a layer of mortar is spread on the tile with the help of a spade and the tile is leveled. Extra cement is removed with the help of blade. The frame is eased out from the tile after the cement is partially set. The tile is dried overnight and dipped in a water tank for curing. It is then taken out and the edges are finished.



Colors, sand and clay are grinded and sieved.

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2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details

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The frames are cleaned before use to avoid any kind of damage.



Color is mixed properly with the help of big spoon.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. Contact Details



Wooden frame is kept on the glass and wire frame is placed to start the tile making.



With the help of big spoons artisans pour colors in different blocks to form the desired pattern.

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The frame is filled with colors.



Mixture of dry cement and sand is sprinkled on the surface in order to set the design.



After a little drying mortar put and equally spread with the help of spade.



The mortar is checked for leveling with hands.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
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Dry cement and sand is added to fill the gaps and then leveled.



Extra mortar is removed with the help of blade.



The frame is turned upside down.



The frames are taken out and dipped in water for cleaning.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
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Tiles are placed in sunlight to dry.



Once dried all the tiles are dipped in water tank to soak water (curing) and avoid breakage.



After that the tiles are taken out and the edges are smoothed with the help of stone.



Tiles are stacked one on top of the other for selling purpose.

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3. Making Process
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Products

Products made are mainly tiles. Since ages the artisan communities are involved in making tiles of various sizes and patterns. Geometrical patterns and floral motifs are the main design made on these tiles. Tiles are laid in a way that they create tessellations. Plain textured tiles are also in high demand currently and are made in various patterns.



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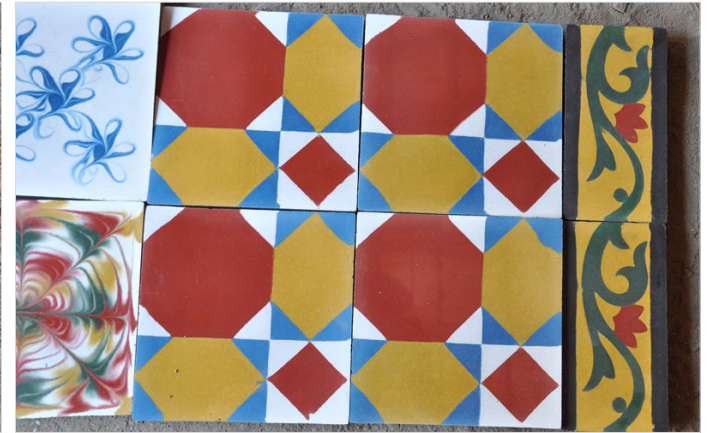
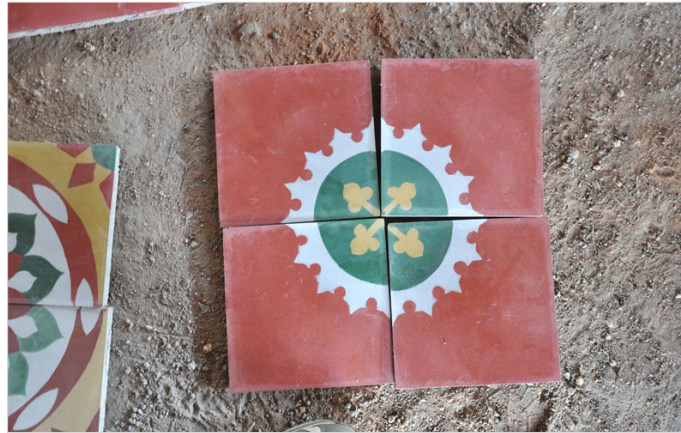
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3. Making Process
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3. Making Process
4. Products
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3. Making Process
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Contact Details

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You can get in touch with him at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu)

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1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. Contact Details