

Design Resource

Veena Making

The Craft of Making Musical Instruments

by

Amruthalakshmi Rajagopalan, Anisha Crasto and

J. Antony William

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/veena-making>



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

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Introduction

About Thanjavur:

Thanjavur is one of the old cities in Tamilnadu. It is located 314 Km away from Chennai. Thanjavur is haven for musicians. This place is very rich in cultural art and architecture. Music and Dance plays a major role in the cultural life of Tamilnadu. Brihadeeswara temple is one of the most famous architecture of the Chola dynasty. Most of the temples were built by Cholas. Thanjavur is ranked ninth on foreign tourist visit.

Introduction:

Thanjavur is the center of Carnatic music and famous for musicians. Bharathanatyam- The classical dance of Tamilnadu is originated in ancient Thanjavur. This form of dance is based on songs in Carnatic music. Hence, producing the musical instruments in Thanjavur became a major craft. Among string instruments, the Thanjavur veena and Tambura are very famous. Both the instruments are made of wood from the jack fruit tree. The different parts of instruments are carved and joined together with tamarind seed paste. The instrument Tambura have similar features except that they do not have ground shaped fixture at the further end and have only four strings no frets. The ancient Tamil instrument Silappadikaaram, the wooden Yaazh in boat shape and fish shape, which is similar to harp or lute. This is now replaced by the versatile Veena. These instruments are played in various temples, especially those in Thanjavur. Nayaks and Marathas of Thanjavur encouraged the music. The Families in and around the town of Thanjavur are into the manufacturing of Veena and other musical instruments for generations. The unique traditional crafts of Thanjavur can be classified into musical instruments, Paintings, metal ware, textiles, decorative arts, wood and ivory carving, basketry, sculpture in stone and stucco.



The master craftsman playing the veena instrument.



Pegs of veena to adjust the tuning.

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The master craftsman polishing the veena after the completion of the process.



The master craftsman with his family.

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Artisan involved in shaping the wood.



The closer view of the seven strings of veena.



Display of veena instruments.



The artisans at market place.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The traditional instrument making process is done using different types of manual tools. Jack fruit wood is the raw material used in veena making. Rose wood is used to make the pegs and knobs. Tamarind seed paste is used to join the different parts of instruments. Bees wax is used to fix the pegs and knobs. Lac color is used to color the motifs which are done on the body of veena. Wood dust is used to fill the gaps.

List of Tools:

1. Uli –tool which is used for chiseling. Different types of chisels are used in making process.
2. Holes are made using drilling machine.
3. Hacksaw- It is used to cut the wooden blocks.
4. Types of wood cutting and smoothening tools are used while shaping the body of veena.
5. Measurements are done using right angle and scale.
6. Sand paper is used for smoothening/polishing the surface of veena.



A stand meant for placing the veena.



Color powder used to coat veena.



Charcoal is used as fuel.



Black paste used to fix on the finger board.

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Right angle scale.



Iron containers used in boiling process.



Powder used to polish the Veena.



Files and Smoothing tools.

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Thamur kodu – drilling machine to make holes.



Uli- chisel, Mularam- rough chisel and small chisels.



Rampam-Hacksaw blade used for cutting wood.



Wood dust used to fill the cracks.

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Scale for measuring.



Sand paper

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Frets made of brass.



Acrylic sheet used to decorate the veena.



Blocks of Jack fruit wood.



Lac colors.

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Making Process

The making process of musical instruments is a laborious process. It takes minimum of twenty days to complete the product. The traditional Thanjavur Veena has three parts such as fingerboard, resonator and peg box. Pala maram (called locally)-Jackfruit wood is used to make veena. The entire instrument is carved on a single block of wood. A pot-like shape of the Veena is made out using round chisel called Kolavau uli. The resonator of Veena is made by scooping the wood and then a circular wood piece is made to cover the resonator. The seven metal strings are tied at the end of the bowl to metallic fastenings using metal rings. This helps the musician for accurate tuning. The metal frets of 24 are fixed on the finger board of veena using the mixture of beeswax and charcoal powder. These metal frets are made out of brass. The pegs and knobs for the strings are made of rose wood. These are fitted to the instrument using beeswax. Finally the embellishments of veena are made using lac colors. The performance of finished veena is tested by the musicians of Thanjavur before being sold in the market.



The basic rough shape of veena.



Initially, the carving is done to get the precise shape for the veena.

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Wooden plate to cover the Veena resonator-Kudam.



The inside stuff is scooped.



Artisan scraping out the excess wood.



Measuring is done using compass.

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The side wall of wooden plate is smoothened.



The design is created using chisels.



Fixing the wooden plate.



The other end of veena is decorated by carved animal face.

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Fixing the strings.



The strings are pulled and attached to the other end.



The copper strings are being tied.



The copper strings are being placed on the bridge of the veena.

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Black substance used to fix on the veena finger board.



Black substance is being applied.



Fixing the nails.



The molten solution is being poured on the floor above the water.

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The substance is mixed.



The prepared dough is being placed.



The fixed dough is allowed to cool for some time.



Dough is gently beaten for proper fixing.

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The excess substance is removed.



The metal frets are placed and fixed on the black dough.



The 24 frets are fixed and adjusted.



The design to be embellished is first carved on an acrylic sheet.

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Then the lac colors are filled on acrylic sheet.



This sheet is fixed to the veena surface.



Final checking is done before sending it to the veena to the market.

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Products

The instrument veena is the most sophisticated and famous among all the musical instruments. It is popularly referred as Yaazh. The ornamentation is done beautifully with silver and ivory. Veena has a pluck technique with the use of the nail. Out of seven strings four strings are for music and the three side one are for Talam- maintaining time. The traditional music and the musical instruments of Thanjavur have a great history. Veena is one of the wide varieties of ritual instruments made at Thanjavur. The *Thavil* and the *Nadaswaram* are essential for the temple festivals. The instruments are also played by the group of village potters for a village wedding. Any auspicious occasion is incomplete without the use these musical instruments.



Veena-traditional music instrument of Thanjavur.



The intricate carving done to embellish the Veena.



Design motifs are influenced/inspirations by/from flowers and deities.



The sound holes are called Nada randhra.

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Design done on the resonator.



The artisan with mini Veena.

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Motifs created with acrylic sheets.



A very old artifact displayed at the artisan's place.

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