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### Nettipatam Making -Thrissur, Kerala

Forehead Decorations on the Elephants by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and Sandhya B.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

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### Introduction

Netti means forehead in Malayalam and nettipatam meaning forehead decorations on the elephants. Some years ago elephant was a part and parcel of life, they used to be grown generally by the wealthy person only. Earlier elephants were used to transfer the log of wood to required locations, nowadays it is mostly transferred through the machineries. Elephants are an integral part of India during festivals, in other parts of India elephants are painted on their foreheads but in Kerala they are usually decorated with the nettipatam. They are usually made of copper and finished with gold. Nettipatams are mainly put for the male elephants during the festivals that have the elephant pedantry.

Most of the Nettipatams are found to be more done in the Thrissur regions of Kerala in India. It is said by the people of Thrissur that the elephants that usually have the big heads are very happy in wearing this nettipatams during festivals and moving about with it. There are many local festivals were the elephants are made to wear the nettipatams, one of the famous local festival is the Thrissur Pooram. In Thrissur Pooram there will be of about fifteen elephants with the centre elephant (Thedambha Aana holding the images or idol of the deities) that generally wears the Churapooli nettipatam. The left and the right of the Thedambha elephant will wear the Naagapadam Nettipatam and the remaining twelve elephants generally wears the Vandoodae Nettipatam.

Churapooli will have some long decorative designs since it will be put on the long and the biggest elephant. Naagapadam nettipatam will have some symbols of the snake on them and worn to the elephant that is little tall and next bigger elephant to the centre elephant that carries the deity. The Vandoodae nettipatams is said to be similar to the shape of the wasp therefore referred to as the Vandoodae. The Nettipatams for the elephant are referred to as the traditional nettipatams generally made with copper material finished with gold. Nettipatams made of the polymer, plastic material is generally referred to as the trendy or the fancy nettipatams.

It is said as per the Hindu mythology the nettipatam has to have two vatakinan resembling Bagavathi and Saraswathi. Mookanan placed in the middle of the vatakinan resembling the Trimurthi's (Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara(Shiva)) and the eleven Chandrakala placed in the descending order resembling the planets, semi circle's filled through the nettipatam is to be resembling the 33 crore of gods/goddess. This was previously kept in the palaces and the big land owner's homes, since it was made of the copper giving the gold finish. But few of the craftsmen of Thrissur have transferred this same work to the polymer and plastic material of smaller size with lesser cost, making it available for all the people of the region.

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A workshop place of the Netti Pattam artisan.

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A model of Netti Pattern wall decor.



Artisan in the process of making the woolen fringes.

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A wall decor Netti Pattam exhibited by the artisan Ms. Kumari.



A closer vision of the hand crafted Netti Pattam.



A display of variety of car decors in the artisan's workshop.

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A picture of Hand crafted fancy Netti Pattam wall decor.



A colorful wall decorative Netti Pattam.

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### **Tools and Raw Materials**

Following are the tools and raw materials required for Nettipatam making at Thrissur:

- Scissors: It is used to cut the paper, cloth, threads to the required shapes and sizes.
- Pliers: It is used to cut the beads of various sizes.
- Woolen Coloured Threads: It is used as fringes, kaalangiyam for the nettipatam.
- Golden Papers: It is pasted on the canvas to fix the beads as per pattern.
- Gum: It is used to fix the beads on the pattern.
- Pen: It is used in marking the required sizes of the Nettipatam.
- Small Bead Chain: It is coiled around the big beads of the pattern.
- Board to Stick the Beads: Stiff and flat surface required for spreading the beads on the pattern.
- Fancy Twine Thread: It is used to fix the two ends of the pattern for hanging.
- Canvas: It is used as the base on which the golden papers are pasted.



A canvas cloth used as a base and stiffness for the Netti Pattam.

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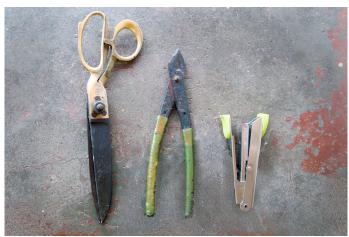
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Decorative half sphere glossy gold polished

embellishment articles and handmade embellishments. and a stapler.



Basic hand craft equipments, a scissor, cutting pliers and a stapler.



Colorful woolen yarn used in making the fringes for the Netti Pattam.



Variety of embellishments used in enhancing Netti Pattam.

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A synthetic rubber adhesive is used as a glue agent in sticking the embellishments.



A golden paper is used as a upper base of the Netti Pattam.

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A fancy twine is used making the holder of the Netti Pattam and the tassel holders.



A diluted glue used in sticking the embellishments.

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Handmade embellishments out of one or two articles.



A Velvet cloth is used in covering the white canvas cloth from behind.



A bell lyre tassel holder used in making of the tassel.

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### **Making Process**

Small Nettipattams are made with a canvas as a base for stiffness on which the golden paper cut of the required pattern of nettipatam is pasted and kept aside for drying. Beads are pasted on the outlines of nettipatam for two rounds and then filled with beads throughout in the left over portions. The bigger beads are placed on the two corner portions of the borderer portion of the nettipatam and in the middle it is placed with the triangle shaped fixed beads in between. The separately made woolen thread decoration of various colours as a chain on the string is spread on the nettipatam pattern with spreading the colours coinciding to the colours of the thread on both the sides are pasted to fix properly.

Few woolen thread is cut to even sizes and tied to make the kuchaela (Kuchu in the Kannada language). It is then stitched to the bottom portions of the nettipatam. Red velvet cloth cut of the pattern size is pasted on the back-side covering the canvas. Plastic pipes as per the border portions are cut half and then the fancy twine is inserted as a holder, covered with the red velvet cloth. The extra string of the coloured woolen thread is cut and pasted firmly on the pattern made. It is then ready to be hung at homes and even in cars.

The materials required are jute material, Jagathnath cloth (thick cotton cloth locally called) and the red cotton cloth material cut to the forehead length and width. These materials are further stitched together along with the semicircles of copper plated with gold in small size throughout the pattern. After this is evenly spaced the two big semi circles called the vaatakanan or the vaatakinan (locally called) are placed. Mookanan (Trimurti) is placed in between, then the material like the crescent moon shape called Chandrakala locally are placed in the descending order and fixed. There will be about 11 Chandrakala in the traditional nettipatams. The woolen threads of different colours are tied along the edges and then the final finishing of gold is given to the traditional nettipatam.

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#### Flow Chart:

#### Trendy or Fancy Nettipatam

- 1. The base material are canvas, golden papers, beads, small bead chain etc.
  - 2. Canvas is cut as per the required length of the nettipatam to be made.
    - 3. Beads are pasted on the corners of the pattern and then filled in between.
- Two bigger beads referred to as the vatakinan are placed, then the Mookanan is placed in middle and pasted.
  - Crescent shaped material is pasted and the material is kept aside for drying.
    - The woolen thread is spread throughout the nettipatam pattern by arranging the threads evenly.
- 7. Red velvet cloth is pasted to the bottom and the plastic half piece, fancy twine thread is inserted for the handle purpose.
  - The fancy or trendy nettipatam is taken to the whole sale for the availability of the required people.

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#### Traditional Nettipatam

- 1. Nettipatams for the elephant are made with jute material, Jagathnath cloth (locally called) and red cloth stitched together with the semi-circle copper material.
- 2. It is then stitched with the vaatakanan, mookanan and the crescent shaped chandrakala's in descending order.
- The woolen thread is spread throughout as the outline and the kuchaela is fixed.
  - · 4. The final gold finish is given to the traditional nettipatam.



The Golden paper is stuck on the canvas cloth in appropriate ratio, size and shape.



A sheet of half sphere polymer embellishments used in enhancing the craft.

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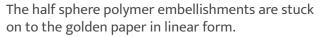
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The embellishments are stuck correspondingly to each other.

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The glue is first spread with the help of the glue bottle from the nozzle tip and the embellishments are stuck one by one.

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The half sphere polymer embellishments are stuck completely onto the golden paper.



Big half sphere polymer embellishments are cut off the cast runner.



Handmade embellishments are made out of big sphere polymer embellishment and a chain of small golden beads stuck on the golden paper.

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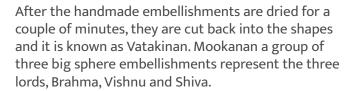
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The handmade embellishments are glued and stuck on the small half sphere embellishments of the Netti Pattam consequently.

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Crescent shaped polymer embellishments which represents lord Ganesh are in gold in color is also used in enhancing the craft.



Crescent shaped polymer embellishments and other handmade embellishment are also stuck onto the Netti Pattam.



The colorful woolen yarns are used in making the fringes to the Netti Pattam. They are hand knitted to a binding wire.

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The colors of woolen yarn is hand knitted in a way that the colors are correspondently both the sides and it is stuck around the golden paper on to the canvas base.

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Tassel is made out of woolen yarn and hang to a bell lyre tassel holder.

Tassel is trimmed and stuck onto the Netti Pattam below.

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The extra velvet cloth is cut and shaped accordingly.



The tassel is ensured and glued to the Netti Pattem from behind and covered by the velvet cloth.



A small thin pipe is cut into half and a fancy twine is used in hanging the Netti Pattam.

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The fancy twine is hosted into the half pipe and stuck onto the top of the Netti Pattam.



Finally the hand knitted woolen fringe is stuck to cover the pipe. Later the artisan assures the stuck embellishments and fringes.



The complete handmade wall Decor Nettipatam Patam is ready for the sale.

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### **Products**

Traditional Nettipatam of Churapooli and Naagapadam will cost about INR. 80,000 to INR. 1.25 lakhs minimum and the Vandoodae Nettipatam will cost of about INR. 75,000 to INR. 1 lakhs minimum. It takes minimum of about eighteen days to complete one nettipatam for the elephants as said by the craftsmen.

The fancy or the trendy nettipatam which the craftsmen make are generally from 3-4cms, 8", 10" to about 3 1/2 feet costing of about INR 50- 75 for the smallest size and about INR.13,000 – INR.15,000 for the bigger size. The craftsmen of the fancy nettipatam says she makes of about 100 – 150 pieces in a month. These nettipatam are generally used for wall decorative, hangings etc.



Various colorful Netti Pattam car decors displayed in artisan's workshop.

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Artisan exhibiting handmade Netti Pattam wall decor.



A close picture of a complete Netti Pattam wall decor.

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Flamboyantly made Netti Pattam wall decor.



Ornamentally shaped and colorfully made Netti Pattam.

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A close picture of a complete Netti Pattam glittering car decor.



Netti Pattam is protected with a transparent polythene cover and kept for sale.

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Variety of embellishments are used in making these beautiful car decor Netti Pattam.

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### **Contact Details**

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and Sandhya B. at NID Campus, Bengaluru.

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