

STATEMENT OF CASE

NAME OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION: THANJAVUR PAINTINGS

1. SPECIFICATION:

Tanjore or Thanjavur painting would consist of one main figure, a deity, with a well-rounded body & almond shaped eyes. This figure would be housed in an enclosure created by means of an arch, curtains etc. The painting would be made by the gilded and gem-set technique - a technique where gold leaves & sparkling stones are used to highlight certain aspects of the painting like ornaments, dresses etc. The painting would be bright & colourful and breathtakingly beautiful. The impact in a darkened room is that of a glowing presence. While most of the paintings would depict the Child Krishna and his various pranks, paintings of other deities were also created.

2. NAME OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION & PARTICULARS:

Tanjore Art or Tanjore Paintings or Thanjavur Art or Thanjavur Paintings all references to one and the same art form has its origins in paintings in that were contemporary of the medieval ages.

Thanjavur paintings are a unique painting made by Gem-set technique, where sparkling stones (Precious and Semi-Precious) and gilded gold leaves were extensively employed to create a comprehensive canvas portraying, round shaped figures and almond eyes in glorification of presiding deities like Lord Krishna and others. Thanjavur paintings are painted with a purpose and have a religious leaning and the secular art is restricted and limited to the portrait of kings and patrons. The composition of the Thanjavur painting is highly stylized with strict observance of iconography giving no room for innovation and experimentation. On the whole an aesthetic rigidity and ergonomic appeal marked the passage of Thanjavur paintings for more than three hundred years of life of Thanjavur painting. The figures are static and stiff consisting one main figure in complete dominance of the paintings, other figure usually the attendants, devotees and spouses of the main figure or in miniscule and the main figure always set as plump and robust and its seems that the painters of Thanjavur paintings have no leanings for slim people.

'Mahabharath' and 'Bhagavatham' written by Madhava swami (c.1824 A.D.) and an edition of **RIG VEDA** made in the King Serfoji's time.

According to the report of the Madras District Gazetteers published in 1906 on Tanjore, authored by one F.R.Hemingway I.C.S., the Tanjore Paintings are referred as :

Quote

Some good painting is done at Tanjore by men of the Razu caste. They paint on wooden tablets or on cloth made beautifully smooth with a paste of powder and gum, and their drawing is corrects and the tints employed astonishingly delicate and even. But the designs are seemingly grotesquely adorned with sparkling stones or pieces of metal. Painting and drawing are arts which are commoner in this than in other districts. In the large towns the temple walls and even the walls of private residences are often covered with figures of gods and heroes drawn or painted with considerable skill.

Unquote

6. METHOD OF PRODUCTION:

The making of Thanjavur paintings involves these steps which consists of creation of a base on a cloth pasted over a wooden or plywood base, applying a paste of chalk powder/ zinc oxide, mixed with some water soluble adhesive and using a mild abrasive to smoothen the board, the process of image making beginning with, drawing a preliminary sketch of the God on the board decoration of jewellery and apparel with precious, semi-precious and imitation stones followed by semi-relief work with a paste of chalk powder and gum Arabic and pasting gold foil over them and applying the typical colours associated with this school of great Thanjavur painting.

In short the production may be summarized in SEVEN STEPS

STEP 1. Preparing the board to make the painting.

STEP 2 Sketching the figure and fixing the stones.

STEP 3 Filling around the stone work with a thin paste mix of gum and chalk powder. Inlay and relief work around the stone setting with a thicker mix.

STEP 4 Cleaning the work and fixing the gold foil over the stones and relief work.

STEP 5 Cutting the gold foil to expose the stone work.

STEP 6 Painting the figures and the background

STEP 7 Checking for flaws, correcting and fixing the glass and frame.

Method of Paste Preparation:

- ◆ Well soaked Tamarind nuts (2- 3 days in water) are crushed and boiled to make paste.
- ◆ Acacia Gum also soaked (for 2 – 3 days in water) is filtered and collected.
- ◆ The two pastes are mixed with required French Chalk powder and percolated, till it resembles the idly dough/ batter.
- ◆ It is now filtered and collected in a vessel.

Step 1

- ◆ A blank sheet of paper is glued over the drawing board without wrinkles.
- ◆ Another 4 -'5 sheets of paper are also pasted one over the other' in a similar fashion as supra on each having dried well
- ◆ On this substratum a cotton (Gaada) cloth is pasted with Tamarind - Gum paste
- ◆ Thereafter another coating of the tamarind – gum paste along with lime paste is applied on top of the cloth with a 3” flat brush.
- ◆ On drying, a couple of more coats (2 -3) are given.
- ◆ It is always ensured that the prior coating is well dried prior to a fresh application.
- ◆ Now the well dried substratum is polished for a glossy smooth finish using either a smooth stone or No.120 emery paper or abrasive.

The canvas is now ready for the painting.

Step 2

- On this canvas, the artist draws a detailed pencil-sketch.
- Selected gems of varies hues, are inlaid accordingly on this sketched substratum. The skill of laying these selected gems is otherwise known as the Gem-set Technique.

Step 3

- Layers of paste made from glue (obtained from neem trees) and limestone are moulded and applied on the canvas to create a three-dimensional effect in embellishing and ornamentating a theme.

Step 4

- The painting is now cleaned of excesses of the paste embossment and thereafter Gold leaves are affixed on selected areas.
- Gold foils/ leaves are manually pressed into the painting using delicate articulation of the fingers.

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P.S. The shine and gleam on the gold leaves used in the Tanjore style paintings last forever. There are two varieties of gold leaves, those that are made of silver hued with saffron and others made of 22k or 24k gold.

Step 5

- ◆ The Gold foil/ leaves so stuck is now finely cut using cutters to expose the precious/ semi-precious stones that are inlaid. All excesses are removed and the painting is cleaned off the same.

Step 6

- ◆ Now comes the most important stage of applying colours and shades to the various figures sketched and highlighting the background.
- ◆ Meticulous care is taken while applying colour and shades to the costumes, garlands, floral designs and screens
- ◆ The colours used are usually vegetable based dyes. However today chemical dyes are also used for colouring and shading the painting.

Step 7

- Cross check the entire painting, the necessary touchup's are given.
- A ½" black shade is given around the boundary; and
- finally the painting is framed with glass and good wood.

7. UNIQUENESS

1. Tanjore Paintings are the only one of its kind in the world wherein any laborious work is performed on the painting with little use of a paint brush & No two paintings are ever alike.
2. It is the one of the few art forms that exists today which employs precious stones and golden flakes extensively for creating figures with static expressions.
3. The depiction/description of the main figures in the Tanjore (Thanjavur) paintings are with rounded bodies and almond shaped eyes, lighter colour, ornamental jewellery and ornate dresses in the form of precious stones and glass pieces and such others embedded on them; while the other supporting figures are all miniscule.
4. the embellishments made over the basic drawings with precious and semi-precious stones as well as the relief work at times give a 3D effect on a two dimensional medium.

5. The compositions are highly stylised, although there have been many changes in the manner of production.
6. The backgrounds are generally conventionalised e.g. other than arches for a temple, or curtained or borders with repetitive designs, there is no alternative for the stylised effect.
7. These paintings were those which for the first time could be moved as they were small in size and portable. Hence they could be hung on the walls and worshipped. This made them popular for household pooja, as the sastras' allowed only a limited use of icons that had to adhere to strict metrics.

8. INSPECTION BODY:

In order to control the quality and to inspect and maintain the quality, a Quality Control body is being established independently. This body is an autonomous body. The body consists of 7 members who have gained authentic and creditable performance and experience in Tanjore paintings. This body would meet once a month to chalk out the strategies to establish in and maintain schemes for quality control.

9. OTHERS:

Thanjavur Oviya Padugappu Sangam, Thanjavur is actively involved in educating all involved in this profession about the quality control, process of production with effective marketing strategies and other activities related to the development of the artisans, concerned.

Along with the Statement of Case the goods classified under Class 16 (painting) in respect of Thanjavur Paintings, organised by Thanjavur Oviya Padugappu Sangam, whose address 17/58. Manojiyappa Veedhi, Thanjavur is the practitioners of the said art work to which the geographical indication relates, and which is in continuous, since time immemorial.