

## Bamboo Chimes: Rajeev's Creation of Marvel!

Written by Valsala Menon  
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V.K Rajeev welcomed us warmly to lush and verdant Thattekani in Idukki district. A gentle river flowed past his house and seated nearby, he traversed back in time as to how he started his one man venture. Right from childhood, Rajeev had displayed an artistic bend of mind. All genre of crafts interested and fascinated him. While pursuing his diploma in telecommunications at Malappuram Cheladi Polytechnic, he knew his heart was not in it.

All his spare time was devoted to drawing, sketching and water colours. He experimented with paper craft and pulp craft. Even on holidays while at home he noticed that bamboo trees were in abundance all around his residence.

'Bamboo intrigued me. I wanted to learn more about it systematically' – Rajeev. With that aim in mind, he sought out and worked with some NGO's which were into promoting bamboo products. Every working minute was spent studying in depth about the availability of bamboo and its physical properties, behaviourance. 'I gathered a lot of information. I wanted to do something different, traveled all over India, worked in different shops to find out what people were working with in bamboo.

Rajeev realized that not many people had put bamboo to good use. It was originally the Chinese who had brought to light its spiritual properties.' The empty space in the bamboo is like our mind – hollow and empty....I was deeply fascinated by the spiritual connection associated with the bamboo.'

Rajeev finally struck on a novel idea of creating wind chimes out of bamboo.'It was at Vaithiri resort that I met Mr.Manjila who was manager there.' He spoke to me in length about wind chimes and the spiritual connotations associated with it. It was then that the idea struck me that I could make wind chimes out of bamboo.'

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Sound can influence the mind of man in many ways. For 3 - 4 years Rajeev worked on bamboo designing and creating and selling various bamboo products. Each day he diligently set apart to work with bamboo and fine tune them into wind chimes.

Wind chimes originated in south East Asia 500 years ago. Rajeev studied the Bali , Chinese wind chimes and noticed how finely tuned they were.' No one makes wind chimes like mine. The Chinese wind chimes crack within 2 – 3 years. Mine does not. I have devised my own measures of preserving and sustaining my chimes over the years. I am confident that mine can compete with and excel those made in china or Bali'-proudly proclaims Rajeev.In a month Rajeev is able to make only 3 bamboo wind chimes. They are priced between 1000 and 3000Rs.

He does not believe in advertising and it is sole of purely word of mouth 'It is a spiritual and artistic quest for me. I can't market it. It is tantamount to selling my creativity. It's sold purely by word of mouth and people who buy it treasure it. 'smiles Rajeev.' wind chimes can help remove emotional blockages in the body'.Rajeev handed us a two and a half feet long bamboo pole and asked us to twist it. A random noise, very soothing emanated from it.. The other products created and sold by Rajeev include the tribal flute with tribal pictures hand painted on them. Each flute is priced at Rs.100

Warly paintings done on flutes, bamboo mates with pictures of horses, elephants similar to cave drawings, incense sticks, utility lamp shades – creativity reined supreme in Rajeev's workshop.

'I buy khadi cloth and paint tribal art on them. My products are showcased and sold at several choice outlets in the state'- Rajeev explains. Odds and ends in Rajaji Road Ernakulam , Organic hotel ( Luminaire) in Panampilli Nagar , Kochi are the two outlets which mainly promote Rajeev's bamboo craft.

Rajeev is a sole entrepreneur.'To make bamboo chime requires immense patience , concentration and utmost devotion .the bamboo has to be soaked , rough tuned, again dried , moisture inside the bamboo should stabilize with room temperature .then again it is fine tuned. I use a self designed knife and sand paper to fine tune it again. It is all hand made. No machines are used'

It was time for Rajeev to leave for his workshop. He took out a flute and played mellifluously on it. The tunes lingering in our ears, long after we left thattekanni and its unique entrepreneur.

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