

9. FLOOR DECORATION

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Importance of Rangoli Decoration

9.3 Materials Used

9.4 Types of Rangoli

In India traditional floor decoration is well known as Rangoli in various forms.

9.1 Introduction :

Rangoli is an age old traditional and one of the most popular arts among India. It is a traditional folk art kept alive by the rural and urban women of India by passing the expertise down through the generations. The term RANGOLI is derived from 'Rang' (meaning colour) + avalli (meaning coloured creepers) or 'Rang' + 'aavalli' (meaning row of colours). The term rangoli refers to designs made with coloured powders on the ground in front of the house. The designs vary in different parts of India, but the basic methodology remains the same in all the areas. The designs are mostly geometric and symmetrical, while some natural elements like flowers, birds etc. may be included.

In a traditional household, the lady of the house starts her daily chores after purifying herself, drawing some Rangoli lines in front of the pooja room and the tulsī. Her regular routine begins after this ritual. With this, her entire day remains fresh and lively. Traditionally, such floor decorations were done only on auspicious occasions or festivals. But today they are done on any occasions like; wedding, birthday parties, opening ceremonies etc. irrespective of any caste, creed, religion, region (urban, rural) for enhancing the beauty of the occasion.

Traditionally, rangolis are done by putting dots on the floor in specific number and manner depending on the requirement of a design to be

created. Such dots are connected by straight or curved lines to create desired patterns. Lines are drawn by taking rangoli powder in the fingers and letting it drop on the floor by slowly moving the thumb over the fore finger. Smooth movement of fingers in releasing the powder is very important for creation of fine design. The designs may be kept in white colour or they may be coloured by using coloured powder. The colours may be used in pure form or by adding some white powder to it. A person needs to have some skill for doing good rangoli. It is also possible to acquire the skill through practice. Rangolis can be of any size, they can be pretty small or even as big as to cover an entire room.

Do you know?

Different Indian states have different ways of Rangoli-painting and also have different names in their regional or local languages.

Name of the State	Name of the Rangoli
Maharashtra	Rangoli
Karnataka	Hase
Tamil Nadu	Kolam
Rajasthan	Mandana
Utter Pradesh	Chowkpurna
Bengal and Asam	Alpana
Andhra Pradesh	Mugullu
Gujrath	Sathya
Kerala	Aniyal

Pay attention to :

9.2 Importance of Rangoli : The reasons for doing rangoli and the motifs and patterns used in it are all symbolic in the context of philosophic, religious or ritualistic beliefs of the area.

- There are parts of India where rangoli is freshly done every day on the threshold of homes before sunrise. Such rangoli is done by using traditional motifs, graphic motifs, geometric motifs. It is done as a thanksgiving for a good harvest, for the children of the household to grow strong and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and fortune to smile upon the family.
- Rangoli is considered auspicious as it signifies showering of good luck and prosperity on the house and in the family.
- These floor decorations originated as a form of thanksgiving and an adornment of the earth that nurtures us.
- These floor decorations are auspicious symbols. There are special motifs for different occasions like weddings, festivals, departures. During Diwali festival for example, the feet of Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth are drawn by the door signifying her visit. The whole object of making rangoli in Diwali is to welcome Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth, to individual homes. Thus, small footprints coming into the home, representing the footprints of the Goddess, are also made.
- During festivals, the essence of the auspicious day is represented by a special design.
- On days of fasting, the symbolic motifs are drawn to ward away evil spirits and bad omens.
- As an art form, the creations are decorative and embellish the courtyards and floors of homes. Some of the Rangoli designs are simple and others complex and intricate.

- It has become a new field of entrepreneurship. One can earn handsome income and at the same peruse their hobby.

9.3 Material used :

Can you make a list ?

The materials used are easily found everywhere. Therefore, this art is prevalent in all homes, rich or poor.

- **Rice :** The traditional material used for making rangoli is rice flour. It may be used as the base material to which natural colours may be added. Use of chemical colours is a modern variation. The purpose behind using rice is to offer food to the ants, the birds and the squirrels. Even coloured whole rice can be used for the purpose. It is pretty simple to get rice coloured with food colours readily available in the market.
- **Stone powder :** The use of white stone powder for making rangoli has become very common now days.
- **Red brick powder :** Red brick powder may be used where red colour is required in rangoli design.
- **Saw dust :** Saw dust can also be used to make rangoli patterns. Saw dust has an advantage that it floats on water so it can be utilized to create Floating Rangoli patterns.
- **Other mediums :** Many other materials like whole grain, pebbles, pulses, brightly coloured dyes, flowers and petals etc. can be used effectively.
- **Mixed materials :** The patterns are made with rice powder, crushed limestone, or coloured chalk. They may be topped with grains, pulses, beads or flowers.

9.4 Types of Rangoli :

Do you know ?

The types of rangoli made vary in different parts of India. The difference is usually in the

type of designs, method of drawing the designs, materials used and symbolic motifs.

i. Traditional Rangoli : In the state of Maharashtra, traditional Rangoli involves putting variable numbers of Rangoli-dots in rows and columns on the floor. They are joined together to depict cultural symbols. These white rangoli dots are cast with pinched fingers and the symbolic structures thus drawn are filled with vivid colours.

Traditional designs use symbolic motifs to a great extent. Designs usually include-Laxmi's feet, ceremonial lamps, shells, moon, flowers and leaves, mango, birds-peacock, parrot, fish, tortoise, pictures of God and Goddess etc. Along with these, geometrical figures such as round, square, triangle etc. are also used. The lines are usually curved with no sharp angles.



Fig. 9.1 Traditional Rangoli for Home Decoration

ii. Free Hand Rangoli : Free hand Rangoli drawing is a comparatively contemporary form of Rangoli. In contrast with the traditional form of rangoli, free hand rangoli does not involve casting of dots but involves free strokes of hands and abstract designs with sheer stylized beauty. The designs do not have any metaphorical symbolic representations, the patterns are just creative waves that have pleasing appearance.



Fig. 9.2 (a) Free Hand Rangoli



Fig. 9.2 (b) Free Hand Rangoli

iii. Sanskar Bharati : It is an advanced type of rangoli which is modified from traditional symbols and is used merely for the purpose of decoration. They are generally huge in size and are done with bold, thick and curved lines. Such lines and prominent dots are the special features of this type. The colours used are normally dark and bright with white borders. This Rangoli uses the special technique of using all five fingers and rangoli powder is allowed to flow through them smoothly. It requires special training

and practice to master this art. A sieve is mostly used for the even spread of colours that creates very attractive designs. Designs used may be natural designs, portraits, idols of god and goddess etc. It uses traditional symbols in the design like “go-padma”, “shankh”, “chakra” etc.



Fig. 9.3 Sanskar Bharati Rangoli

The use of this Rangoli is becoming quite popular day by day for a number of occasions for example; national and community-oriented ceremonies, and also ceremonies like a naming ceremony, an opening ceremony of a shop or clinic, housewarming ceremony etc. and for various festivals as well. The functions held in the schools and colleges give an opportunity to the students to exhibit their skills in doing this Rangoli.



Fig. 9.4 Sanskar Bharati Rangoli

iv. Alpana : It is believed that the word alpana is derived from the Sanskrit word meaning **alimpan**. It is quite popular in Bengal and Asam. Traditionally, it is done with rice flour using traditional symbols. In Alpana,

the borders are done with Vallari design. Shantiniketan Alpana is a stylized modern art form of Alpana with unconventional designs and colours. The people of Bengal have expertise in this form of Rangoli.

Method of doing Alpana : Rice is soaked overnight and grind it to a fine paste of liquid consistency. Dip a wad of cotton wool in this liquid and gently squeeze out the liquid on the floor to create elaborate patterns of lines and curves. The use of cotton wad gives a continuous supply of liquid. The traditional way of drawing these patterns is by letting the rice flour slip from between the fingers onto a freshly swept surface.

Lines used in creating alpana designs must be of same width. Normally used designs are- Laxmi's feet, ceremonial lamps, shells, moon, flowers and leaves, mango, birds, peacock, parrot, fish, tortoise, pictures of God and Goddess etc. Besides these, geometrical figures such as round, square, triangle shapes are also used. Alpana may be white in colour or it may be coloured using various colours. Sources of colour are burnt grass, geru or red sand, turmeric or yellow earth and extract of leaves for black, red, yellow and green colours respectively.



Fig. 9.5 (a) Alpana



Fig. 9.5 (b) Alpana

v. Other forms of Rangoli :

a. Painted Rangoli : Now Rangoli has become an art form. It uses paints and the application is usually with a paint brush. The creations are decorative and embellish the courtyards and floors of

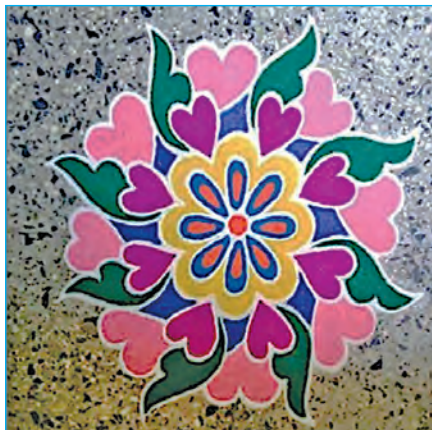


Fig. 9.6 (a) Painted Rangoli



Fig. 9.6 (b) Painted Rangoli

houses. Some are simple and others are complex and intricate. These rangolis can be of any size, from the size of a doormat to covering an entire room. These are used as decorations for any occasions like weddings, birthday parties, naming ceremony, housewarming ceremony etc.

b. Plywood Rangoli : A recent technique adopted by many people is doing rangoli on attractive pieces of plywood, either by cold ceramic technique or by painting with attractive colours. It is not a traditional form, but it gives a similar effect. The biggest advantage is that it can be preserved for a number of months and not just a couple of days like a regular rangoli, which gets spoiled easily. It saves time and the pieces can be conveniently carried and arranged at the place of an occasion.



Fig. 9.7 Plywood Rangoli

c. Acrylic Rangoli : Use of acrylic pieces for making rangoli designs is becoming popular now days. These are light in



Fig. 9.8 Acrylic Rangoli

weight and can be used easily anywhere anytime. Other advantages are similar to plywood rangoli.

d. Flower Rangoli : On many occasions rangoli designs may be created by using fresh flowers. The combination of varied colours make such Rangoli very attractive. Some times petals of flowers are used which are combined with variety of leaves available in varied shades of green.



Fig. 9.9 (a) Flower Rangoli



Fig. 9.9 (b) Flower Rangoli

e. Rangoli on Water : Water rangoli, as the name suggests is a technique of doing rangoli on water. This rangoli is also called as 'Floating rangoli' or 'Under Water Rangoli' Creation of this rangoli requires lot of concentration along with skill. There are various methods of doing this rangoli :

i. Charcoal powder method : As the name suggests the method uses charcoal. Following are the steps for doing this rangoli :

- Fill a shallow vessel with water.
- Spread charcoal powder slowly and evenly on the surface of water.
- Create a desired rangoli on it by using rangoli powder and colour. The design can be done by hand or it can be spread by means of a thin cloth.

ii. Wax method : This method uses wax as one of the main materials. The steps for doing this rangoli are as follows:

- Heat the plate to be used for doing rangoli.
- When it is hot, rub a candle so that a thin layer of wax settles on it. Instead of this one can pour molten wax onto the plate.
- Leave the plate at rest until the wax dries.
- Once the wax is dry, a rangoli pattern of one's choice can be done on the layer of wax.
- After the rangoli pattern is completed, the plate is reheated and the rangoli pattern is allowed to settle down.
- Keep the plate aside. And after it cools down, pour water in the plate.

iii. Oil method : The steps for making water rangoli using oil are as follows :

- Take a bowl and apply a thin layer of oil on its inner surface.
- Pour some cold water into the bowl up to its edges.
- Sprinkle some white distemper powder on the surface of the water in the bowl.
- Draw a rangoli design on the surface of the water and fill in the colours as required.
- Sprinkle glitter on the surface of the rangoli for aesthetic appeal.



Fig. 9.10 Rangoli on Water

f. Stencil Rangoli : This is a ready-made design with perforations. The rangoli powder penetrates through the perforations to create a design. Such



Fig. 9.11 (a) Stencil Rangoli



Fig. 9.11 (b) Stencil Rangoli

stencils are useful for beginners and for those who do not have skill in doing rangoli but have love for rangoli.

g. Sticker Rangoli : These are simply available in the form of stickers. These are ready made rangoli patterns. Those



Fig. 9.12 (a) Sticker Rangoli

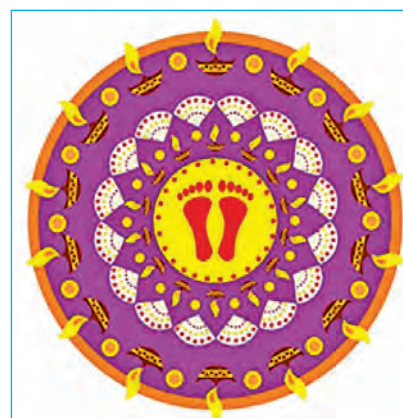


Fig. 9.12 (b) Sticker Rangoli

who do not have the skill in making rangoli or those who do not have lot of time to make rangoli designs, may use

this type of rangoli. These are becoming popular day by day as they help to create detailed and precise designs.

Symbols used in traditional Rangoli and Alpana

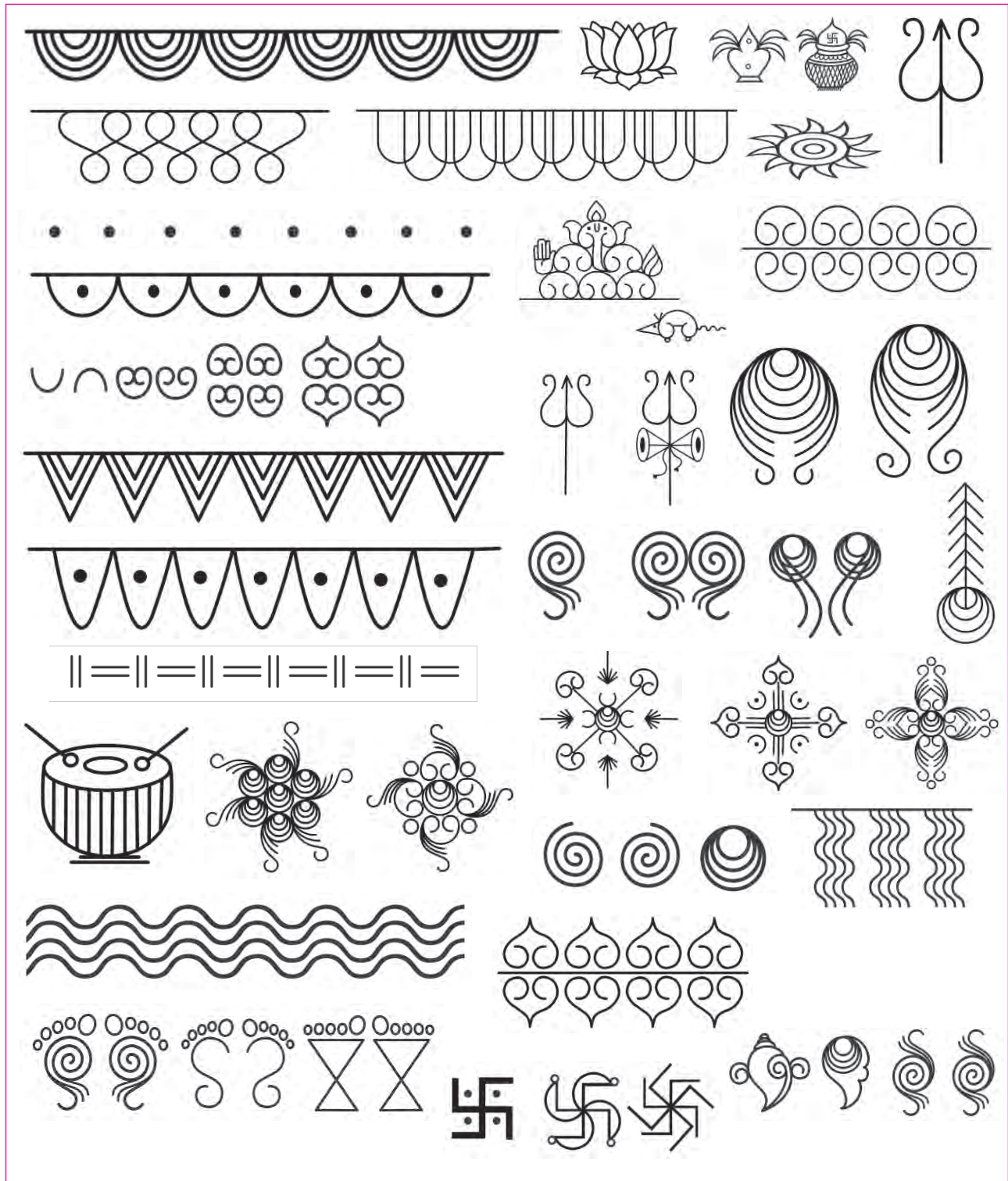


Fig. 9.13 Symbols used in traditional Rangoli and Alpana

Can you recall ?

- Rangoli is an age old traditional and one of the most popular arts among Indian women.
- The term rangoli refers to designs made with coloured powders on the ground in front of the house.
- Different Indian states have different ways of Rangoli-painting and also have different names in their regional or local languages.
- The reasons for doing rangoli and the motifs and patterns used in it are all symbolic in the context of philosophic, religious or ritualistic beliefs of the area.
- Various materials that are easily available everywhere are used for making rangoli.
- Traditional Rangoli involves putting variable number of dots in rows and columns on the floor which are joined together to depict cultural symbols.
- Free hand rangoli involves free strokes of hands and abstract designs with sheer stylized beauty.
- Sanskar Bharati is an advanced type of rangoli which is modified from traditional symbols and is used merely for the purpose of decoration.
- Alpana is a form of floor decoration which is popular in Bengal and Asam. Traditionally, it is done with rice flour using traditional symbols.
- Painted rangoli has become a very popular art form. It uses paints and the application is usually done with a paint brush.
- Plywood rangoli is a technique of doing rangoli on attractive pieces of plywood, either by cold ceramic technique or by painting with attractive colours.
- Acrylic rangoli uses acrylic pieces for making rangoli designs. These are light in weight and can be used easily anywhere anytime.
- Flower rangoli is done on many occasions by using fresh flowers of varied types and leaves.
- Rangoli on water is done in a shallow vessel filled with water. Creation of this rangoli requires lot of skill and great concentration.
- Stencil and sticker rangoli scan be easily used by anyone for doing floor decorations.

Exercises

• Objective questions :

1) Multiple choice questions :

1. Rangoli decoration from Bengal and Asam is called _____.
 a) alpana b) mandana
 c) Sathya d) mugullu
2. The type of rangoli that involves free strokes of hands and abstract designs is _____ rangoli.
 a) traditional b) sanskarbharati
 c) freehand d) alpana

3. The type of rangoli that is modified from traditional motifs is called as _____ rangoli.

- a) sanskarbharti b) freehand
 c) plywood d) shantiniketan

2) Match the following pairs :

A	B
Karnataka	Mandana
Tamil Nadu	Chowkpurna
Rajasthan	Hase
Utter Pradesh	Mugullu
Andhra Pradesh	Kolam

- **Short answer Questions :**

1) Differentiate between the following :

- a) Traditional and sanskarbharati rangoli
- b) Traditional and freehand rangoli

2) Write short notes on the following :

- a) Importance of rangoli
- b) Alpana
- c) Plywood and acrylic rangoli
- d) Flower rangoli and rangoli on water

3) Answer the following in brief :

- a) List out the material that can be used for making a rangoli in front of a house.
- b) Describe the method used for making alpana.
- c) Describe the method used for making any type of rangoli.
- d) What are the various methods of creating water rangolis?
- e) Write in brief about stencil and sticker rangolis.

Projects / Assignment :

Observe various types of rangoli done in your nearby areas, click photographs, take print outs, stick them on blank papers and maintain a file.

Practical / Related Activities :

1. Draw rangoli designs on plain paper and colour them up by using any two colour schemes.
2. Demonstration and practice of various types of rangoli. Try out various colour schemes to colour them up.
3. Try making acrylic, wooden rangoli. Also try out rangoli using other materials like flowers and leaves.
4. Try creating water rangoli by using any one method.

