

Gale Power Search - Document

 go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do

Full Text:

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

More than 5,000 years ago, people living in the Indus Valley of northern India decorated the floors and wall of their homes with elaborate designs of flowers, birds, or geometric patterns. This ancient tradition, known as Rangoli, is practiced today throughout India as an important part of festivals and celebrations. In southern India, women and children still make Rangoli every morning on the threshold of their homes. They perform this daily ritual to welcome guests and bring good luck to the family.

Rang is the Hindi word for "color," but throughout the country, different styles of Rangoli are known by other names. The brilliant, colored powders used to make Rangoli are made from finely ground rock powder, spices, and other kinds of dyes mixed with rice flour. Turmeric, a spice commonly used in Indian cooking, gives a bright yellow. Indigo is a deep blue made from the leaves of a shrub. Vermillion red is made from grinding up a mineral called cinnabar. Plain white rice flour is also part of the color spectrum in Rangoli.

Festivals such as Diwali, or "Festival of Lights," call for a special Rangoli inviting Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, to people's homes. Lakshmi is believed to visit households that have been well cleaned and beautifully decorated. The whole family helps to complete the big Rangoli by filling colors in the intricate patterns.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

A special impression of Lakshmi's footprint is made by dipping the side of a fist into the rice paste, and then adding toes using fingertips.

There are no fixed rules to making Rangoli. Why not try your hand at making one with ordinary materials that you have around the house.

Make Your Own Rangoli

1. Plan your design

Sketch the design, after planning it in your head or referring to the web/books for ideas.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

2. Gather colors for sprinkling

You can use white rice or sawdust dyed with food coloring, dried flower petals, brightly colored spices, or plain white flour. Colored sand can also be purchased at many craft shops. Anything that flows easily through your fingers will work well.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

3. Find a place to make your Rangoli

Patios, sidewalks, or a driveway near the entrance of your home are good spots where there is not too much foot traffic and your artwork can be admired by friends and family. You can also use a cardboard or poster board as the base for an indoor piece.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

4. Sweep the area clean with a broom

One of the intentions of Rangoli is to welcome visitors, both human and spiritual, to your home. Taking care to clean your home is one way to honor your guests.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

5. Outline your design

Using your thumb and forefinger, sprinkle the outline of your design with your lightest color.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Or, make a grid

Another tradition, called kolam, begins with a grid of white dots, made with a small pinch or sprinkle, which is then followed by connecting the dots with lines and loops in a symmetrical pattern.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

6. Fill in your design

Carefully fill in the shapes you have outlined with as many different colors as you like. One way to fill large areas is to put the color in a cone made of newspaper, using your finger as a stopper to control the flow. The more carefully you sprinkle, the more beautiful your design will be. Take your time!

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

7. Light some candles

In India, small clay oil lamps called diyas are used to light the Rangoli at night. You can also use votive candles.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

8. Sweep and start again!

Rangoli is meant to be transient or temporary to help us remember that everything is always changing. In the morning, you can sweep away your old Rangoli and make a new one!

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Hindi is the national language of India.

Did You Know?

Warli murals, made with rice flour paste, decorate walls at Sabarmati Ashram where Gandhi spent his later years. Like Rangoli, Warli folk art has been practiced for thousands of years, but unlike the inherently transient Rangolis, Warli paintings are more permanent.

Shruti Priya has lived in 10 different states of India and loves to explore connections between different cultures.

Katherine Darrow is a writer, artist, and naturalist living in Phoenix, Arizona.