As modernization is seeping into our culture, we are slowly losing touch with our traditional customs and rituals. It has indeed become difficult to follow the traditional routine regularly due to lack of time, space or interest. With this fast pace of life that we are adapting to, maintaining religious standards is becoming difficult. Today, the traditional belief-system, customs and manners are succumbing to the pressures of urban life-style. The cement-concrete flats hardly offer any scope for the collective creativity of earlier days. Nevertheless, the tradition of making \textit{rangoli} continues to inspire women in the villages and towns to revive the traditional art.

With respect to the floor art, it is observed that women of all socio-economic levels continue to produce \textit{rangolis} that even today hold particular guardian qualities and are placed before thresholds and on the floors inside the house. \textit{Rangoli} still forms an indispensible part of festivals, religious and life sacrament rituals all over India. In the Southern states, particularly Tamilnadu and up to some extent in Maharashtra, drawing of \textit{rangoli} remains a part of daily routine of the women.

The survey conducted in various parts of India reveals the changes in beliefs and techniques with respect to this art. Currently we are at a stage when the art of \textit{rangoli} is practiced in both the ways – traditional as well as modern. It is practiced in the traditional way by the ladies at homes where as it acquires an all new form when done by professionals.

Given below is the region-wise observation of the current status of this art.

\textbf{Northern and Eastern parts of India:}
In the northern region, particularly in the rural areas, the likhnoo, aipan, aripan, mandana and chowk-purana are made religiously on festive and life-cycle rituals even today. It is observed that the dreaded belief, that leaving the newly plastered ground without any decoration, forbade evil, is keeping the art alive. The ancient symbols and motifs that are still used in these rangolis are metamorphosed and most women do not remember their original meaning or significance. Fortunately, in many cases the names of the motifs survive which gives clue about their meaning and significance.

The use of Poster and oil paints has also become common. This imparts relative permanency to the art.

The traditional motifs of rangoli, just like the Madhubani paintings are being transferred on paper and canvas and sold in the domestic market as well as exported.

The Rajasthani mandanas in particular are being adapted for mural paintings, canvas paintings, textiles etc. Artists like Manju Mishra of Vanasthali University, Virendra Sharma from Palai, Bhawani Singh Sharma, Pradyuma Tanna from Jaipur, Jyoti Bhatt from Baroda, Lakhichand Jain from Mumbai and many more have experimented with the adaptation of mandana motifs in various fields.

Sanjhi:

The Sanjhi art of U.P. and Rajasthan has undergone a major transformation. Today, the art of Sanjhi is mainly practised in the three temples of Vrindavan - Radha-Madanamohana, Radharamana, and Radhavallabha442 and the Ladililala temple at Barsana- believed to be the birth place of Radha and few temples in Rajasthan. Besides these temples the sanjhi is prepared in few houses, particularly of the Goswamis.

442 According to Shri Neelmani Bhatt Goswami, earlier 27 gharanas in Vrindavan practised this art. The art is slowly dying out and only the above mentioned three gharanas of temple priests practise it.
Further types of temple *Sanjhis* are prepared from dry colors on water and beneath water.

A major change which has occurred with respect to the *sanjhi* art is that, the stencils used for creating *sanjhi* patterns are no longer used for making *sanjhi*. Rather the stencils itself has become a piece of art and are now referred to as *sanjhi*. Earlier the negative part of the stencil made the pattern of colour powder. Instead, now the negative and the positive of the stencil, together make the picture through the play of light. Besides paper, plastic is also brought into use to make the cut outs for commercial use. The maker of this commercial *Sanjhi* has also changed from temple priests to local artists.

The theme of the images has moved away from those associated with Krishna and *Brajabhoomi* to more secular images like the Warli art, art, images of Buddha, Christmas motifs etc. There is more emphasis on the technique rather than the content. Also, individual artists are becoming popular in contrast to earlier times when the artist remained anonymous. *Sanjhi* stencils are sandwiched between sheets of glass or acrylic, or laminated before being used. Other products with the cut out design of *Sanjhi*, available in the market, include coasters, serving trays, table tops, wall hangings, lamps, magazine holders, diary covers etc.
Alpana:

The *alpanas* today are gradually losing the magical significance of the *vrata* which, to start with was a vital impulse. Though much of the magical significance attached to the traditional *vratas* has been eroded, some of the motifs have still been retained in age-old forms.

The secular *alpanas* unconnected with the religious rites have been initially developed at Shantiniketan. Inspired by Ajanta paintings, these *alpana* designs are developed devoid of any ritualistic significance. These *alpanas* are painted with decorative intent on various occasions like New Year day, birthday celebration, tree planting and ploughing festivals, and spring festivals etc. Apart from following the traditional designs of *alpanas*, the Kalabhavan of Shantiniketan makes new experiments in design – by synthesizing essential folk motifs with those of the modern decorative designs. Such combinations of apparently contradictory art forms have created a new vista in *alpana* tradition of Bengal. The art activity at Shantiniketan has created an impact on the urban culture of Bengal, because *alpana* paintings today are found widely accepted in Bengal not only for social programmes, but also on special community functions.
Nowadays, liquid paints like poster colours are used with proper painting brushes to simplify matters and have a long lasting effect. Cigar boxes, tea trays and fire screens with *alpana* designs on plywood pieces have become useful household decorations.

*Alpana* motifs are adopted in Kantha embroideries as well. Motifs like *kalash*, fish, rice, creepers, *mandal, kamal, shankha* etc. are used in *kantha* embroideries especially in those meant for religious purposes.

**Western and Southern parts of India:**

Current practice of *rangoli* in Jain community:
With respect to the discussion in chp.3, it is observed that the same ancient practice, with hardly any change, is followed by the Jains even today. Various symbolic drawings are made everyday by the ladies as part of the worship called Chaiti-vandan (Chaiti here means Chaitya). These drawings are called Gahunli. They are made with uncooked rice on a low wooden stool or ‘patla’ in front of the Jina image. Rice does not sprout and hence used for making the Gahunli. Offerings like mithai or sugar, paisa (coins) and fruits or dry-fruits are placed on these Gahunlis.

The Gahunli symbols consist mainly of the Swastika combined with other symbols or variations of Swastika like the Nandyavarta Swastika. The Nandyavarta Swastika is an elaborate and extended form of Swastika. The Gahunli is made with continuous chanting of prayers. The significant part is that at the end of the ritual the diagram is ritually dispersed and the rice grains are collected and placed in a box. The process of creating the Gahunli itself is important.

Most common symbol of the Jains is the Swastika with three dots on the top surmounted by a half moon with a dot. In this diagram, the four arms of the Swastika stands as a reminder during the cycles of birth and death we may be born into any of the four destinies: Deva (heavenly beings), Manushya (human beings), Tiryach (animal beings including birds, bugs, plants) and Naraki (hellish beings) and that human beings should aim for liberation and not the rebirth. The three dots above the Swastika represent the three jewels of Jainism: Samyak Darshan (Right Faith), Samyak Jnan (Right Knowledge), and Samyak Charitra (Right Conduct), which enable a man to attain Moksha. The half moon or the curved arc represents the abode of the Siddhas. It is known as the Siddhashila. It is the final resting place of the liberated
souls. The dot above represents a *Siddha*. In order to achieve this stage, a soul must destroy all attached *karmas*. Every living being should strive for this state of the Salvation or Liberation.

The sign of *Swastika* is held so sacred that a Jain woman has it embroidered even on the reticule in which she carries rice to holy places. In case of the occurrence of death of any Jain Guru, a left-handed *Swastika*, which is not considered very auspicious, is drawn.

The practice of drawing the *Ashta-mangal*, as mentioned in chp.3, is even today followed religiously by the Jains. The *rangoli* using these symbols is generally made using uncooked rice or colourful glitter powder on *patla* by the Jain ladies. Sometimes huge *rangoli* depicting the *Ashta-mangal* is drawn by professional artists at the time of some auspicious occasion.

Other popular *rangavali* in the form of *yantra*, drawn on auspicious occasions is the *Siddha-Chakra* made in the traditional five colour grains. Various offerings to the deity are placed on this *yantra*. The *Siddhachakra* is in the shape of eight-petal lotus, enclosed in a *kalasha* form which is attributed in anthropomorphic analogy with a pair of eyes.
Besides this few other yantras like the Parshvanath Bhagwan yantra in the form of six-pointed star- also enclosed in a kalasha form, the Padmavati Devi yantra, the Rushi-mandal representing the 24 Tirthankaras and so on...are made. It is important to use the colours and the beej-aksharas associated with the respective deity in these yantras. For eg. Red colour and the beej-akshar – Hrim is enjoined to be used in the Padmavati Devi yantra.

At the time of Bhaktamar poojan, a Rayan –vriksha is drawn which the foot-prints of Adeshwar Bhagwan are shown, thus representing the Tirthankara meditating under the Rayan-vriksha, as per the mythological tale attached to this event.

The drawing of these rangavalis are commissioned works done by Jain artists who are not only good at their art but also have knowledge about the correct depiction of the yantra with appropriate symbols and colours. This reminds us of the execution of rangavali by a person who is well versed in the art of oblations (balinvidyajna) as mentioned in the literary sources in Chp.3.

Other depictions commonly drawn in rangavali are the Panch-kalyanak or the five major events associated with a Tirthankara, viz: the Garbh (conception), Janma (birth), Tapa (austerities), Gyan (omniscience) and Moksha (liberation). These events are depicted even today at the time of the installation of the Tirthankara pratima. This ceremony is also known as Anjana-shalaka. Among the Panch-kalyanakas, the first event of the conception, depicting the 14 dreams of the mothers of the Tirthankaras is particularly popular. Kalpasutra paintings show representations of these dreams either in groups or singly.
It is common to see floral decorations done in Jain temples on important religious festivals.

**Current Status of Parsi Chalk:**

It is seen that even today the Parsis religiously make the *chalks* in front of their doors. It is only when death occurs in the family that they do not make it for some days which may range from 4 days to about a year as per the customs followed by that particular family. Every day, the entrance is swept and swabbed to be decorated with the *chalk*. In many Parsi homes, it is the first duty of the house-maid to stamp the threshold with the *chalk* marks, when she comes to work in the morning. However, the marks are put by the lady of the house herself if she can spare the time or is artistically inclined to do so.

Two methods of putting *chalks* are followed. In the first method the designs are stamped out of tin moulds or *dabbas* as they call it. Even the filling of colour is done by using small tin *dabbi* with holes which is used to stamp or sprinkle the colour on the white designs. The material used is a very fine powder of nylon chalk much soft, fine and smoother than the *rangoli* powder otherwise used in Maharashtra. This powder produces very fine and clear designs. The designs in the tin moulds are small and convenient for daily use. However, on special occasions they make an elaborate design by repeating
the small motif and creating patterns. Often in the shape of a fish, red powder is placed for the eye of the fish. Separate compartments are present within the tray for such details.

The second method of making chalk is by using paper or plastic stencils for the design. In this method the chalk powder is filled over the cut portions of the stencils with a sieve. Thus the powder falls only on the cut design portion. One has to be very careful while lifting the stencil; nevertheless the powder gets spread and spoils the design. The stencils are used for bigger designs on special occasions like the Navroze, Pateti, Navjote, weddings, Christmas, New Year, Birthdays, Wedding Anniversaries, on purchase of new car, new house etc. Even the gates of wedding or Navjote venues are decorated with large colourful designs. In fact bigger the occasion, bigger and more colourful is the chalk. Usually, machine cut readymade stencils are bought. However, some ladies who are more artistic and can spare some time cut their own stencils.

Rangoli competitions, especially for children and young adults are also held in the various Parsi colonies in Mumbai. The designs drawn in these are free-hand drawings as per the given themes.

Motifs:
For the *chalks* made on any ordinary day, usually an arrangement of floral designs is made but on special days or occasions, the *Sagan nu chalk* is made. *Sagan* is usually performed by the senior most lady of the house. Five or seven *chalk* marks are stamped on the floor. On top of it a low stool or *patlo* is placed. It is also decorated with *chalk* designs stamped in odd number, usually five or seven, which is considered to be auspicious. The person for whom the *Sagan* is being performed steps onto the stool with the right foot forward. Many times rose water from the *gulabaz* is sprinkled lightly over the *chalk* marks to prevent it from spreading and to spread a delicate fragrance in the room.

For the *Sagan nu chalk*, auspicious motifs like the fish, *Swastika*, coconut, horse-shoe sign and the *Ses* are used. Many times these are accompanied by letterings depicting the occasion for which the *chalk* is made. The letterings like Happy Birthday, *Shubh Labh*, Good fortune, Welcome, *Shaadi Mubarak*, Happy Anniversary, *Saal Mubarak* and so on either in Gujarati or English are stamped. On *Hamkara* days such as *Hormazd* or *Behram*, *chalk* designs are made with the words “*Dadar Hormazd ni madad hoji*” – May Hormazd the Creator help us or “*Behram Yazad ni madad hoji*” – May Behram Yazad help us. On the full moon day letterings like “*Chand Raat*” are stamped. In fact it appears that the Parsis only need a reason to celebrate. Like, on Christmas they put a *chalk* of Christmas tree and when a family member or a close friend or a relative is to travel abroad, they may put a *chalk* of an anchor with letterings like ‘Bon Voyage’.

*Chalks* are also made on festivals in honour of fire and water. On the day of ‘*Adar Ruz Adar Mah*’ or the birthday of fire, the wall behind the kitchen stove is decorated with various religious symbols like the fire altar (*afarganyu*) with tongs (*chippyo*) and ladle (*chamach*) at the sides. A geometric pattern...
consisting of a square with intersecting diagonals having four dots in each of the triangular sections formed is drawn. It is an ancient Iranian symbol representing the four directions and the boundaries of the house. These are symbols of the fire service i.e. boi ceremony. These symbols are made with a paste of turmeric and vermillion powder and wheat or rice flour paste. The chalk made round the stove or fire place, usually consists of the auspicious fish symbol. Either seven or nine impressions of the fish are made, seven representing the seven Amesha Spentas (divine beings) and nine representing the Ahura Mazda and Zarathustra as well.
The symbol of the square with diagonal lines is also made for the "Mandav Saro" ritual which is performed four days prior to the marriage ceremony. A pot with a mango plant, planted in it is kept in the house. The pot is placed above a chalk design. Then the square symbol is drawn on the wall with turmeric and vermillion paste. Elaborate ritual follows which is in a way a prayer for peaceful completion of the marriage ceremony.

On the birthday of waters or ‘Ava Ruh Ava Mah’, the house is decorated with torans and chalks. Devout Parsis gather along the water bodies like sea-shore or wells to offer their respects to the waters. Chalks are marked near these water bodies.

Another observation is that on some special occasions, the lady of the house may go to the fire temple and make a chalk there and seek blessings for the family.

Nowadays the Parsis hire a service of professional chalk maker to make chalks on occasions like a wedding. These professional artists offer wide variety of designs in stencil form to select from. These designs are usually big and meant for public viewing and are put at the main entrance of the residential building of the bride and the groom and also at the wedding halls. For weddings, motifs like wedding bells are popular. Other designs comprise of butterflies, flowers etc. Sometimes custom-made stencils are used having the design matching the one printed on the wedding invitation card along with the initials of the bride and the bride-groom.

**Colours:** Other than the white chalk powder, wide range of colours are used like the shades of red, orange, yellow, blue, green, violet etc. However, red is considered to be very auspicious and is indispensable in the Sagan nu chalk.
It can be concluded that the strong urge to hold onto and adapt to their adopted culture has resulted in the continuation of the practice of making *chalks* amongst the Parsis. But more importantly the strong belief in the efficacy of the ritual which is believed to be auspicious and harbinger of good luck is the reason behind its continuity. Whether stamped or stenciled, by the lady of the house or the maid, the *chalk* remains one of the important permanent features of the Parsi culture even today.

**Rangoli of the Hindus:**

As mentioned above, *rangoli* is practised as a daily ritual in this part of the country, particularly Southern states and Maharashtra. Though *rangoli* is mainly drawn manually even today, supplementary devices have been introduced from time to time in the market. The reasons for the introduction of these devices is saving of time and attaining machine-made accuracy in the execution of the designs. As the females started going out of the house for work, the need to continue the daily ritualistic practices in shorter time laid to the invention of such devices. With new materials and devices for making instant *rangolis* thronging the markets, changes in techniques as well, are naturally visible.

Material and devices:

In earlier days, the powder for *rangoli* was made from natural dyes. Today, synthetic *rangoli* powders are commonly used. Only for the temple rituals involving the drawings of the *nagamandala* and various gods and goddesses, as mentioned in chp.3, the natural colours are especially prepared and used. The relatively long-lasting mediums like poster and oil paints is also commonly used nowadays.

For making *rangoli* portraits and scenes, special colours called ‘lake’ colours are used. These are available in stone form in the market, which is grounded to make powder. These colours, available in number of colour shades are brighter and shiny as compared to normal *rangoli* colours. While working on a *rangoli* picture, many of these are blended to get the required tones.
Considering the development of the *rangoli* devices in the last two centuries, we see that wooden gadgets were developed to simplify the procedure of laying out *rangoli*. Later on metal stamps were introduced. Designs are traced with holes onto these stamps which enable the *rangoli* powder to fall out from the holes and create the design. A device named *rangole* was used to draw *rangoli*, mainly in South India and Maharashtra, in the 19th – 20th century. It is a cylindrical device about 3 to 4 inches in size, with a handle to roll it in the desired area. *Rangoli* powder is filled in the cylinder which is perforated with the desired design. As it rolls the powder coming out from the holes create a beautiful continuous pattern. These were mainly used to decorate the place of eating, to create a pleasing decoration around the plates. Many times small bells or *ghungroo* were attached to it at the sides to create a jingling sound while moving. These were made of brass in olden days. Exactly when such devices were introduced is difficult to say. The Parsis are known to use the tin *dabbas* for making *rangoli* way back in the early 19th century.

Later on small stamps made of steel were introduced. Today stamps made of plastic are commonly used. In addition to these devices, readymade colourful stickers of *rangoli* designs are also available in the market. These stickers aid in having a relatively permanent *rangoli* in the house or on the threshold of the house.
For making dotted *rangoli* manually, paper grids are available for making a basic skeleton of calculated dots. Paper punched with equi-distant holes is laid on the ground where *rangoli* is to be drawn. *Rangoli* powder is spread on this paper so as to make it fall on the ground through the holes thus forming a grid of dots on the ground. The paper is lifted carefully so as to avoid the dispersal of dots and excess powder on the paper is collected. These dots are then joined manually by the artist and a design is created. The main advantage of using paper grid is that uniform placement of dots is available in a short time.

In the past few years, a new device just like the screen used for screen printing has been introduced in the market. The design part on the screen, i.e. the positive space is exposed whereas the negative space is blocked. The *rangoli* powder when spread on this screen passes through the exposed space creating a beautiful design on the ground. The screen with the excess powder is lifted up. Traditional symbols combined with decorative motifs are available in the screen form. A set of 7 *rangoli* screens with the respective *yantra* motifs for all the days of the week is particularly popular.

Motifs and symbols:

The art of *rangoli* has evolved over the period of time. The magical significance of the associated symbols has lost their importance, up to some extent. But the innate aesthetic urge of the people have helped them to retain some of the forms and motifs with their decorative charm. Along with the traditional symbols, freehand sketches having birds, butterflies and animals, figures of deities, landscapes, seascapes, still-life, historical events and portraits of celebrities, historical and political personages were gradually introduced in this art. Compositions and three dimensional effects were also included later to achieve the effects similar to oil and water paintings. Today the art is expertly expressed in drawings that may be geometric, abstract, realist or figurative.
Exhibitions of *rangoli* by various artists are held regularly in big cities as well as small towns. With intense concentration and good control on fingers, the artists very deftly go about creating these *rangolis*. It takes around 60 to 70 hours to make one *rangoli* picture of about 6ft. X 4ft. size. The base material for making these *rangoli* includes hard board or ply sheet, which is laid down on the floor all the times while working on it. After the *rangoli* picture is complete, the board is very carefully lifted and
placed on special stands in slanting position to get a better view. The artists begin the making of rangoli at the exhibition venue, 5 - 6 days prior to the date of exhibition.

*Rangoli* competitions are held especially on the eve of Diwali with the objective of encouraging talent and promoting this art. Currently, huge *rangolis* are drawn in public places by various groups.

**Revival of rangoli art:**

In the last 20 years, the *Sanskar Bharati* group has played an active role in reviving the *rangoli* art in Maharashtra. This group which originated in Lucknow in the year 1954, is committed towards conservation of Indian tradition and culture. Art being an important aspect of any civilization and culture, the group committed itself to the revival and promotion of traditional arts, mainly the performing arts. Besides the promotion of these arts, the arts are also utilized as a medium for bringing people together and creating a sense of solidarity.

In the early nineties, the *Sanskar Bharati* group made its presence felt in Maharashtra, with Pune as its regional base. Considering the importance of *rangoli* art in the culture of Maharashtra, the group for the first time committed itself towards the revival of this traditional art and making it popular among the masses. They brought the traditional *rangoli* art out of the homes to the public domain. This naturally led to the change in purpose, technique, size and style of drawing *rangoli*.

As mentioned above, the main purpose of the group is to bring people together through the medium of art and create a sense of solidarity and mutual co-operation. Drawing of the *Sanskar Bharati rangoli* being a group activity, several artists work simultaneously on a single design and finish it in a stipulated time. A spirit of camaraderie and excellent management is visible in this team work. A noteworthy aspect of this trend is the equal participation of men and women from all walks of
life. Professionals like Doctors and Engineers are seen actively involved in this artistic endeavour. From being an individual art, it has evolved to being a mass gathering of hundreds and thousands of people.

The huge *rangolis* are created using a combination of few basic traditional symbols beginning with the *bindu* which further takes the form of lines- straight and serpentine, semicircle, circle, spiral and chain. Besides these, other symbols like the *Dhvaja, Kalash, Gopadma, Swastika, Omkar, Shreekar, Padma, Shankha, Chakra, Gada, Trishul, Dhanushya-baan* are used. Basic geometric forms are combined providing a possibility to add and evolve new forms and designs and express new ideas present in the environment and in the current life of the people. Thus the art form becomes dynamic and novel though having an antiquity of centuries.

In this new style, the colour is filled first and then the motifs are drawn over the coloured parts. All the five fingers are used for drawing these huge *rangolis*. Beginning from the centre, the design goes on expanding to several feet in measurement.

Various classes are conducted to teach this art to the interested members without any bar of gender, age or profession. The trained members form a group and draw huge *Rangolis* in public places, usually open grounds, at the time of important festivals like *Gudi Padwa, Diwali* etc. The presence of men on a large scale in these groups is worthy of notice. Some of the trained artists have turned in to professional *rangoli* artists who undertake commissioned work to create such *rangolis* at hotels and wedding venues, in public functions or ceremonies.

The *Sanskar Bharati* style of *rangoli* is very popular in Maharashtra and is slowly gaining momentum and spreading to other states of India as well.

In the Southern states, many schools are teaching and holding competitions for *rangoli* in an attempt to keep the tradition alive. In Kerala, it is seen that the Hindus who have accepted Christianity also continue the practice of making *rangoli* on festive occasions.
**Rangoli as Public art:**

Major change that has occurred in this evolutionary process is that the art which was earlier a private family affair has acquired the status of being a public art, meant to be created at public places and viewed by all.\(^{443}\)

The term public art properly refers to works of **art** in any **media** that has been planned and executed with the specific intention of being sited or staged in the **physical public domain**, usually outside, and intended to have only a temporary existence and are usually made of **ephemeral** materials.

With respect to the huge **rangolis** created today, it can be said that these go further in demonstrating an appeal to a friendlier notion of the public in the form of ‘community’ art. In the art world, community art signifies a particular art making practice, emphasizing community involvement and collaboration. Community art is most often an art for social change and involves some empowerment of the community members who come together to create artwork with artists.

This applies to the current practice of **rangoli** art, where members of a local community come together to express concerns or issues through an artistic process, which is **rangoli**. Artists accept the many contexts brought to public art by its diverse audience, along with their own standing as

\(^{443}\) Until few years back, it was common to see another ephemeral public art on the streets of Mumbai, that of semi-sadhus drawing divinities on the pavements, with coloured chalks on which people threw coins as part **pooja** and part art appreciation.
members of the communities they address. Current issues and social messages are brought forth through the medium of rangoli.

**Individuality as visible in the rangoli art:**

Whereas the art has become public at one hand, it has also brought about individual artists in the forefront on the other. Earlier the woman artist, generally the lady of the house, remained anonymous but today artists having their own identity and style are becoming popular.

*Rangoli* artists who have developed their own trademark style have emerged and their works are displayed in various exhibitions in India as well as abroad. Most importantly, the art which was earlier created with no desire for direct material gain has today become a source of income for many trained artists.

As far as the individual artists are concerned, an attempt is made by majority of them to treat *rangoli* as a fine art. Realistic portraits, creative paintings and landscapes, illusions etc. are made by using hundreds of colour shades, giving depth and creating three dimensional effects. The artists are also experimenting with the techniques and creating innovations like *rangoli* floating on water, under water *rangoli*, *rangoli* drawn on fire, *rangoli* made on glass ceiling and so on.
A more recent trend in the practice of rangoli is the making of 3-dimensional images, mainly of the deities, sometimes depicting important events of their lives. These are displayed with complete light and sound effect and are meant to be seen with Anaglyph glasses.

Rangoli artists like Gunavant Manjarekar, Kamlakar Gonjisar, Dilip Dadarkar, Pravin Vaidya, Smt. Bhavana Bheda, Jitendra Vaishnav from Maharashtra, Raju Dindorkar and his group from Baroda, Mrs. Shanta Narayan, Mr. Thambi from Tamilnadu, to name a few, have been able to carve a niche for themselves in this field.

**Improvisations in the rangoli art:**

Today rangoli is practised as a profession or a side business in cities. Many beauty parlours work as a mediator between the ladies group of rangoli artists and the client. The choice of designs offered range from the traditional to the contemporary and also portraits.

As rangoli artists (traditionally only women) have transformed, so have rangoli patterns and skills changed over the years. Few women artists have come up with innovations like portable rangolis which are made on plywood, mount board, thick transparent polymer sheet and sometimes on tiles. These are portable and can be kept in any room, main door or near the altar without having to create them from scratch at the venue.

Variations like floating rangoli, Kashida rangoli that resembles delicate thread embroidery, Meenakari rangolis done with Rajasthani Meenakari work, rangolis with fluorescent coloured glues, mirror, dried flowers, zari, kundan, organza, sequins, paper flowers, strings and beads are offered and are gaining

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444 The illusions created today remind one of this practice in mythological tales. It is believed that in the Mahabharata, among the methods employed in the palace decorations that made water appear to look like land and vice versa, was the painting of rangoli on the floors. The Indraprastha palace built by Maya for the Pandavas employed this technique. This style of rangoli described in the Mahabharata was elevated to heights of transcendental illusion which, as per the tale, caused embarrassment to Duryodhana and further aggravated his anger towards the Pandavas.
popularity. With these materials and techniques, many complicated designs and the forms of various deities are also prepared which gives entire drawing a three dimensional look.

Thus rangoli, with its traditional form has come through the ages with appropriate changes but its basic nature and intention remain unaltered.

**Rangoli patterns in contemporary architecture and other arts:**

In the past few years, the patterns of *mandalas* and *yantras* have inspired modern Indian architecture, art and dance. Architect Charles Correa designed the lay out of Vidhan Bhavan in Bhopal guided by *mandala* designs. Inspired by a *navagraha mandala* pattern, Correa designed the Jawahar Kala Kendra, a cultural centre in Jaipur and based on a *mandala* plan featuring the *Srichakra* in the centre, he designed the Surya Kund in Delhi.

Contemporary dancer Chandralekha acknowledges the influence of the *Saundaryalahiri* attributed to Shankaracharya on her dance piece ‘*Yantra*: Dance Diagrams’, a work in which geometrical figures are created by dancers.\(^{445}\)

Noted play writer Girish Karnad wrote a play titled *Nagamandala* in 1987-88. This play is inspired by the *nagamandala* ritual (discussed in Chp.3) and revolves around the union of a snake and its various connected concepts to the Indian culture like fertility, prosperity etc.

Various contemporary artists like S.H. Raza, Nirad Majumdar, Gulam Rasool Santosh and many more make paintings inspired by the shapes of the *yantras* like *Srichakra*.

One such artist is Ms. Bharati Mate of Pune, who creates rangoli designs using *rangoli* powders on canvas.

**Rangoli abroad:**

Centuries of migration and cultural interaction has resulted in the practice of *rangoli* art in other countries. Migrated Indians who have settled abroad have carried the art form with them. *Rangolis* are commonly drawn in Indian temples and also outside halls and other public places during festive get-togethers and ceremonies in all the major countries of the world with substantial Indian population. The presence of enclaves such as ‘Little India’ in major metropolitan cities all over the world has also facilitated preservation of religious practices. Businesses, stores and institutions in these areas cater to the Indian clienteles marketing artifacts such as images of gods and goddesses, altars, CDs of native musics, ritual artifacts etc. including *rangoli* powder and colours.

According to Sanjoy Mazumdar, for Hindus abroad, domestic practice of religion has become even more important. The Hindu immigrant home is a setting for congregational meetings to mark religious festivals like *Diwali, Makar Sankranti, Holi* among others. Organizing these events express collective sentiments and are important for group solidarity. It is on such occasions that the threshold of the front entrance is ritually sanctified with *rangoli* executed by women of the household.

If *rangoli* powder is not easily available, children’s ‘sidewalk chalk’ is used to make a *rangoli* for auspicious occasions.

The South Indian communities settled in various cities of U.S.A. organize *rangoli* competitions at the time of *Sankranti* and *Pongal*.

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Bangladesh to this day has continued the practice of making the Bengali *alpanas*. At present even Muslims draw *alpana* on different occasions such as marriage and other socio-cultural and religious ceremonies. Besides rice paste, the Muslims sometimes use turmeric paste for *alpana* at their weddings.\textsuperscript{447}

On 21\textsuperscript{st} February in Dhaka, the Shaheed Minar and all roads leading to it are decorated with *alpana* drawings. This day known locally as *Ekushey* February is a national festival, celebrated to remember the martyrs who fell to police bullets under the Pakistani regime as they championed the cause of the Bengali language. Lotus with geometric patterns dominates the designs drawn on this day. In modern Bangladesh *alpana* has attained a purely secular character. Immersed in ancient ritualistic practices, the *alpana* has become a form of decoration widely used on festive occasions and is today an integral part of Bangladeshi culture.\textsuperscript{448}

As in India, individual artists who are settled abroad and practise the art of *rangoli* in their respective countries have become famous. Some of them like Ms. Vijayalakshmi Mohan of Singapore, made it to the Guiness Book of World Records for single-handedly drawing a *rangoli* of size 52' X 53' in 7 hours without any break. Besides Indian traditional motifs, Ms. Vijayalakshmi also incorporates Chinese and Malay themes in her work, thus making the *rangolis* appealing to people from various ethnic backgrounds.

Another *rangoli* artist Ms. Sangeeta Bhutda, based in Houston, Texas, U.S.A., is renowned for the huge *rangoli* she creates in public places at the time of Hindu ceremonies in Houston.


Ashaditi, a *rangoli* artist from Toronto, Canada, uses reused and recycled materials of various types to compose the designs of eco-friendly *rangolis*.

**Malathi Iyengar**, originally from Bangalore, is a Los Angeles based choreographer, dancer, writer, and visual artist. Iyengar, with a strong visual arts background has specialized in creating *rangolis*. She has exhibited and created exquisite floor designs for various museums and institutions in India and United States.

Many of these artists are invited by the colleges of Arts and Design of various universities to create *rangolis* along with the students so as to encourage them to explore this art and consider further the notion of design and culture.

Few of these artists have been awarded by the Indian Government for their contribution towards promoting Indian art overseas.