

Rangoli: A Colorful and Creative Expression of Indian Folk Art

By Sarah Gough

The making of colorful patterns on the floor using a mix of materials such as sand, flower petals, rice flour, lentils and beans, is what forms a Rangoli -- one of the most beautiful Indian folk arts.

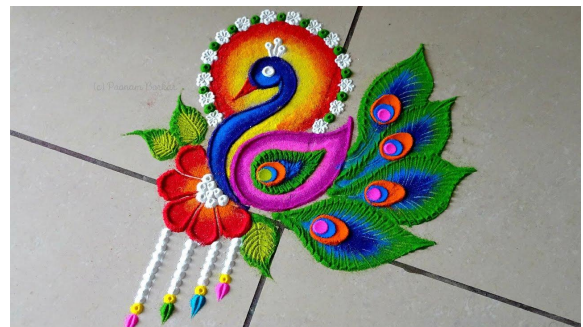


Traditionally, Rangoli is an art of decoration drawn on the floor or the entrances of homes. It is thought to bring good luck, prosperity in the house and in the family, and to welcome guests.

Some mothers in India do this activity every morning, or on a special festive occasion like Diwali, Onam, and Pongal. It is a folk art that is passed from one generation to another as mothers teach the art of Rangoli to their kids.

Each state of India has its own way of making Rangoli and they are called by different names. In South India, Rangoli is known as Kolam. In Rajasthan, the Mandana are drawn on walls. In Kolkata, Alpana is drawn in the courtyard. In Maharashtra, Rangoli is drawn on the floor.

Rangoli designs can be simple geometric shapes, floral shapes or they can also be very elaborate designs. Some common symbols used in Rangoli are peacocks, lotus flowers, mangoes, and fish. The most important element of Rangoli is being colorful!



Rangoli can be made on the floor, sidewalk, or entrances of homes. The materials used can easily be found in your pantry, yard, or a

regular grocery store. Typical materials include rice flour (either plain or dyed), as well as lentils and beans to feed birds and ants. Rangoli is supposed to be meaningful to others, from honored guests to the smallest creatures, as well as being beautiful.

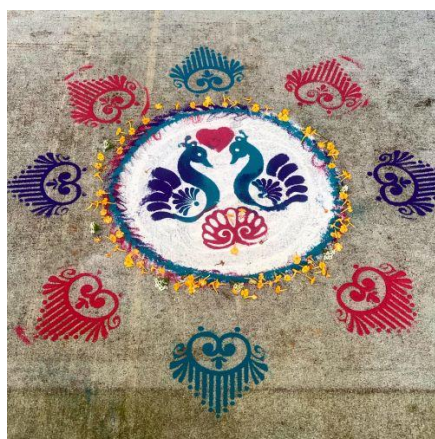
Here are a few things you can use for your Rangoli:

- Colorful Flower petals
- Rangoli Powder/Chalk Powder
- Colored Raw Rice
- Raw Beans/Raw Lentils
- Raw Colorful Pasta
- Rice Powder
- Salt or Epsom Salt
- Rangoli tools (optional)

Use items available at home like plates, bowls, bottle caps, or bangle bracelets to create perfect circle designs. Use a paint brush tip or Q-tips to fill in the finer details.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Fill an empty salt/pepper shaker with Rangoli colors for an easy shaker to fill in the design.



To make colorful rice, pasta, or salt: measure 1 cup of rice, pasta, or salt into a container that comes with a lid (or a sealable bag). Add food coloring and 1 teaspoon of vinegar. Put the lid on the container or seal the top of the bag, and shake everything up until the color is evenly distributed. Spread the material in an even layer on a paper plate or towel until dry. For faster drying, spread materials on a sheet tray and put in the oven at a low temperature, stirring occasionally until dry.

Choose the design you want to make -- either geometrical, a floral design, or get creative and follow wherever your inspiration leads you!

Decide where to draw your Rangoli. You can draw on the floor or outside of your house.

Give dimension to your outline with white textured material like rice flour, Rice flour/Rangoli Powder is usually applied freehand by letting it run from the gap formed by pinching the thumb and forefinger.

Choose the materials you will use to fill in the design. Use natural materials easily found in your house or garden. You can use flower petals, leaves, colored rice, chalk or Rangoli powder, beans etc.

Have fun creating, but tidy up your mess!