

Aipan (Folk Art of Uttarakhand): An Indigenous Source of Inspiration for Textile Designing

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Abstract

Aipan is a folk art of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand which is related to Hindu myths and rituals. It has distinctive features and reflects the culture of Kumaun region inspired from the local customs and traditions. Different types of aipan patterns are drawn by over the floor as well as on the wall, papers or cloth, which all have distinct religious and social significance.

The drawing of these patterns is mostly done by the women in each household of Kumaun region and the knowledge of making aipan is passed through from mother to daughter. At present time, the scenario has been changed completely; this beautiful art form is losing its significance due to various reasons. The documentation of this craft is limited which is leading to its extinction in future. Therefore, it becomes important to preserve this art form in a tangible form for future generation to carry on. By adapting the beautiful motifs of Aipan through textile designing and surface enrichment technique not only safe guarding the art form but also a rich source of inspiration for textile designing. Also, it can provide an opportunity to the women of Uttarakhand as a mean of income generation.

Introduction

Uttarakhand, one of the hilly states of India is known for its natural scenic beauty rendered by Himalayas, Tarai and Bhabar regions and it has attracted everyone from all over the world. Apart from natural beauty, Uttarakhand is a centre of Hindu religion, culture and heritage and hence recognized as Devbhoomi (land of gods). The people of this state are therefore blessed with a cultural heritage which has been prominently inclined and inspired by nature and social beliefs.

Aipan is a folk art of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand which is related to Hindu myths and rituals. It is the art for floor decoration which has sustained till date because of its religious, social and cultural significance. The aipan designs are inspired from the geometric patterns, natural figures of real objects, ethnic designs belonging to God and goddesses, etc. Aipan is truly handmade painting utilizing paste of rice powder locally called as biswar over a surface painted with red oxide called geru. Aipan patterns are drawn over the floor as well as on the wall, papers or cloth.

Women from Kumaun region of Uttarakhand state who carried over the artistic legacy of hill state. At present time, the scenario has been changed completely; this beautiful art form is losing its significance owing to migration of hill population to cities as well as shortage of time in families due to changing life style. The documentation of this craft is limited which is leading to its destruction in

future. Therefore, it becomes important to preserve this legacy art form in a tangible form for future generation to carry on. One such range of tangible products on textiles and can be achieved through adaptation of aipan on textile base through different techniques weaving, printing, etc.

Thus, the present chapter highlights how Aipan folk art can be preserved for the future generation by adaptation of this art form in textile designing at the same time it can be a powerful tool of income generation for the women of Uttarakhand.

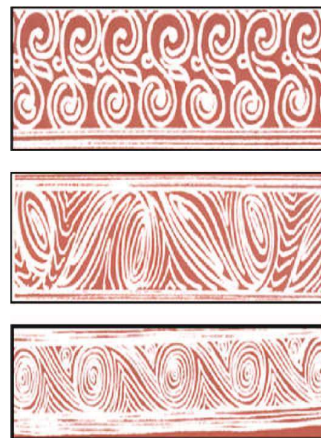
Aipan: Folk Art of Kumuan

Among all the cultural heritage of Uttarakhand state, aipan has a great social, cultural and religious aspect. It is drawn in an artistic way at places of worship, entry point of and in front courtyard. The great religious importance of it is depicted by the fact that it is drawn during particularly religious ceremonies or auspicious occasions such as marriage, thread ceremony, naming ceremony. Aipan is folk art specially prepared by women of Uttarakhand. This art is a floor art which is made up of brick red background of geru and with white paste made out of rice flour. This art is drawn in ceremonies and rituals because it is believed that aipan is a symbol of fortune and prosperity.

Different Types of Aipan Drawn on Different Occasions

The aipan floor art comprises of different types of design. The designs are used according to purpose (occasion) and media (place where it is drawn). Every design has its specific significance irrespective of purpose and surface where it is drawn. Aipan may be drawn at different places include such Floor painting, wall paintings, wooden chowkies and on cloth. Two types of floor paintings; one which are drawn at the entrance of the home (creepers and padchinha) and second one is drawn at the place of the worship (chowki and asan). Wall paintings are drawn either kitchen walls or on the places where ritual ceremonies are performed. Kitchen walls have designs of Nata and Laxmi-Narayan which symbolize the prosperity and wealth. Wooden chowkies are the worshiping seats usually drawn by the priests or 2 worshippers on the occasions of worship, ceremonies or on festivals over a wooden seat (chowki). Saraswati chowki, Mahalaxmi chowki, Janue chowki peeth, Shivapeeth chowkies etc. are some examples of chowkies. Figurative drawing locally known as patta or likhthap are drawn over the cloth or paper by using floristic colours. The figures (narrative tales) and barboond (geometrical figures made by dots) are the two different styles of aipan which are drawn on the cloth.

Also, the various occasion such as festivals and different ceremonies different types of aipan and drawn on the floors. Lakshmi yantra aipan is made at the place of worship of Goddess Laxmi is carried out mainly on Diwali day. Janmasthan patta aipan is drawn on the occasion of birthday of lord Krishna. Durga thapp aipan is drawn during worships of goddesses. This thapp depicts many armed Durga who rides lion surrounded by the auspicious symbols like conch shell, lamp, rice, grain, tulsi and swastika Pooja vedika, door steps of house, place of worship, Tulsi (a structure made around the Tulsi Plant) etc. are decorated with vasudhara.



Different types of creeper used in Aipan

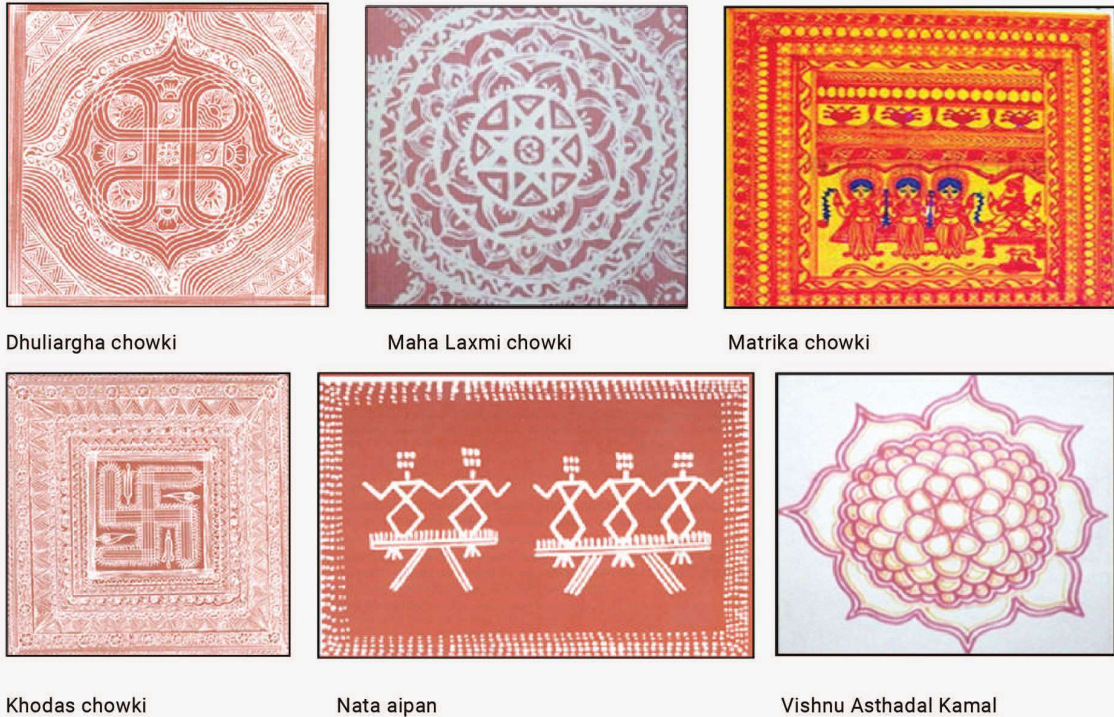


Plate1: Different Types of Aipan
(Sah,2006)

Aipan Art Form: A Source of Inspiration for Textile Designing

Textiles have always considered primary media for safe guarding the evidences of ancient civilizations. It a tangible form of material, which are used every day by the man. Hence, development of textile products by adapting the designs of traditional art form will preserve the art form next generation. Creation of innovative motifs and designs play a significant role in the field of textile designing. Such a step aims toward catering the growing demand of new innovative products that has an essence of tradition. Adaptation of traditional

arts is creating new opportunities for handloom sector as well as designers in the area of fashion and textile industry. Computer aided designing (CAD) is an emerging field of technology which saves the time and increases the efficiency of an individual to create the design with a visual representation using colours and design combinations. With the help of computer, designs can be adapted and developed for the application through different media like hard concrete surface to pliable textile base. Various computer softwares like adobe, Corel Draw, illustrator, etc. are being used for the design development.

Since, in the earlier time aipan designs were drawn fresh every day with geru and bishwar in the household. It was difficult to maintain the patterns for longer period of time because these were not durable and erased after some time. A new range

of textile-based product can be developed using beautiful designs of Aipan as a source of inspiration. The intermingling of Aipan design with variety of structural and surface enrichment techniques like weaving, dyeing, printing, needle craft, etc. would expand design base for textile designing. This design base for textiles also empowers local artisans as well. Hence the adaptation of floor art for textile designing can give recognition to this valuable art form.

The efforts had been made continuously to explore possibility textile design using aipan designs its conservation for future generation. In various research work the Aipan designs had been adapted to apply on to textile through weaving (Bhandari et al, 2019; Arya et al, 2017), tie and dye (Negi et al, 2017), printing (Kumari, 2013), applique (Negi et al, 2015), etc. Therefore, some of the suggested textile products which can be developed such as clothing articles (kurta, duppatta, saree, jackets, waist coat, pichora, stole, scarf, etc.), utility articles (Hand bags, coaster, file folder, bottle cover, book mark, etc.) and home textiles (Sofa covers, bolster, cushion cover, table cloth, dining, table set, and table runner, etc.) using the aipan design. The various textiles designing and surface enrichment techniques

such as dyeing, block printing, screen printing, digital printing, hand embroidery, machine embroidery, appliqué work, hand painting, etc. can be adopted for the designing and development of the textiles based aipan products.

Original source of Aipan



Laxmipaulata



Ghiroli 1

Selected design



Laxmipaulata



Ghiroli 1

Adapted design

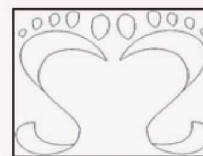
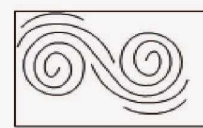


Plate 2: Adaptation of Aipan design using CAD (Bhandari, 2017)

Aipan Based textile Products: A Tool for Women Entrepreneurship

Women in Uttarakhand have enough potential and expertise and they work very hard for their families. Most of the hilly women in the state are confined to household work and are considered as the home maker. Aipan the folk art of the state drawn by the women for decorating a variety of places in the households. They have the deep sense of knowledge and have the expertise of this art form. Further, the legacy of creating this art form is transferred from mother to daughter. Therefore, they can utilize their knowledge and can create a medium of income generation for their self by developing such aipan based products. Therefore, they can utilize their knowledge and can create a medium of income generation for their self by developing such aipan based products.

Since the youth of the state in migrating hills to cities as a result the cultural legacy is lacking behind. One such range of tangible products on textiles and developed adaptation of aipan on textile base through different techniques can be a way of income generation for the women. This will help them to establish their own identity in society since the identity of the women cannot be confined to the image of the women represented in the folklore. This will help will allow them to take autonomous decision making and inspire entrepreneurship.

Though women artisans have the deep knowledge of their work but they face challenges such as inaccessibility of funds, low penetration of technology, absence of market intelligence, and poor institutional framework. Hence,

Government is providing support to the women indulging in the income generation activities and helping them to empower them by economically. Government is also promoting the locally made product at national level under the idea of 'vocal for local'.

The aipan based products can be easily available on e-retail sites at reasonable price for the consumers who has the inclination towards this folk art. Government has also introduced several schemes under which women can take skill-oriented trainings, loans for setting up the small enterprise, providing platform for selling their products, etc. & aims to provide them with their due social dignity & ensure ways of earnings.

Conclusions

Aipan is the folk art of Uttarakhand having its own social and religious significance. It becomes necessary to preserve this beautiful cultural heritage for next generation as it is losing its essence day by day. Textile designing is a way to safeguard this art form in a tangible media i.e. textile-based products. The beautiful designs can be adopted through CAD and can be applied using various surface enrichment techniques. This effort is also providing a platform for enterprise development among the women of the state.

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