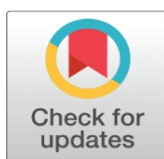


ELUCIDATING THE DECORATIVE PATTERNS IN RELEVANCE TO THE FOLK ART OF UTTARAKHAND

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ABSTRACT

The folk art of Uttarakhand has a natural grace and the important element in the patterns is the simplified complexity which is consistent with the subjective spirit of the art. This paper explains the significance of the decorative patterns in context that the underpinning of the work of arts is primarily based on shapes. The paper demystifies the aesthetic approach of the 'Aipan Art' explaining the spiritual inclination and enhancing its connotation. It is a ritualistic form of art, where the surface drawings and patterns are geometric in nature which are not only drawn from an artistic point of view but hold significance because of their spiritual base and spirit of devotion. These shapes have significant meanings and are strong, powerful conformations representing the mystical elements of the universe. The structural idea is integrated to achieve aesthetic effects by the artists which expresses the spatial relationship. All the patterns can be seen as an embodiment of energy vibrations which can bring about energetic shifts holding frequencies of deeper spiritual messages influencing our various subconscious interconnections with our physical reality.

Keywords: Aipan, Energetic Shifts, Ritualistic, Spatial Relationships, Vibrations

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a country of spirituality and traditions exemplifying a society that is multicultural and multi-ideological. The art and crafts speak loudly of its fascinating heritage. The basic origin of any artwork is the innovative use of shapes to create aesthetic masterpieces. This paper is an insight to discover the interpretations of these geometric shapes when put together to create aesthetically pleasing patterns. It revolves around the significance and understanding the interrelationship between geometric patterns in the folk art of Uttarakhand. The study of geometric proportions has its roots in the study of nature and matter. [Skinner \(2009\)](#) The folk art 'Aipan' is surrounded by the inquisitive assembly of shapes such as squares, triangles and rectangles. These geometric designs are used for decoration and worshipping, having powerful visual representations. The artworks casts the glimpse of beliefs, sentiments and rituals of the people of Uttarakhand. This paper is an investigation of the decorative patterns used in the folk art whose structural idea are

based on geometric forms. Geometric figures have spiritual and esoteric significance they represent the intangible, mystical elements of life and is considered to align the consciousness to the infinite and the eternal.

Aipan has been presented as a highly stylized art form that invites spiritual immersion into its aesthetic geometric shapes, pattern and graphical symbols. Patterns are rhythmic but not necessarily exact. It is the aesthetic symbolic meaning of Aipans and the rhythm of their geometry that generate their beauty not artistic perfection. [Frommherz \(2008\)](#)

Geometrical shape can be seen as an embodiment of energy and harmony in the universe. Geometry has a strong history which throughout the centuries has been evolved, involved, integrated and eventually is indispensable in the creation of art and architecture. These shapes represent the mystical and intangible elements of the universe. Uttarakhand is deep rooted and culturally rich region and is well known for its rich heritage, traditions, rituals and decorative art forms. The decorative art forms include geometric patterns, floral designs, and intricate borders mainly used shapes are triangles, circles, squares, rectangles and spirals having their own significant and spiritual meanings. Aipan patterns carry deep symbolic meaning, representing cosmic harmony, protection from evil spirits, and the presence of deities. The art is often seen as a bridge between the material and spiritual realms. [Waseem \(2025\)](#)

2. METHODOLOGY

The study includes qualitative methods along with a textual analysis of secondary data. It incorporates a discourse analysis along with a descriptive study of geometric arrangements in relevance to the folk art of Uttarakhand. It is a detailed study of decorative patterns and design to be cognizant of its meaning and significance. An analysis of geometric structures used to create the sacred folk art called 'Aipan' was done to understand the inherent power of the symbols and forms.

3. FOLK ART

Aipan a religious-folklorist art form of the North Indian Himalayas which can be classified in two forms—ritualistic and decorative. These surface drawings and patterns are created to celebrate Sanskars, such as birth, naming of a child, beginning of studies, wedding and many more. The ritualistic folk art is drawn on the floor of the prayer room and on the deities' seat that has Tantric motifs called as Peetha, or Yantra and Chaukis. The ceremonial Aipan designs (a noticeable geometric pattern) to symbolize the deity considered as symbols of good omen, which evoke divine power. Yantra is a pure geometric arrangement in Indian art which is a tool to direct energies for the spiritual progression. It originates from a Sanskrit word 'Yam' meaning support and 'tra' meaning instrument. These geometric designs are used for worshipping and for meditation having a similar purpose to mantras but are visual powerful representations. Aipan patterns are highly symbolic and are often geometrical in nature, consisting of lines, dots, triangles, squares, and circles which are surrounded by various motifs. These motifs can be categorized under the decorative form and include, Goddess Lakshmi's footprints (Padchinha), Lotus flowers representing purity, Peepal leaves symbolizing life and regeneration, The Sun and Moon representing cosmic balance and the animals, birds, and vines, often used to invoke nature's blessings. These decorative patterns are a mark of auspiciousness and purity, with each design holding specific meanings related to the ritual or event.

4. PROCESS

Traditionally, the women are involved in the creation of Aipan art. A solution of cow dung and water is spread on the surface to clean it. After the surface has dried a red ochre background as the base using 'Geru' is prepared which is a red clay slurry formed by dissolving Geru (Red Ochre) soil in water. The surface usually is a wall, floor which after cleaning is coated with a layer of Geru. Once the red base dries up, white designs are made on top of it from a paste of rice flour called the 'Biswar.' The white rice paste is prepared by soaking the rice in water and then manually broken down with the grinding stone which is used to create the motifs and patterns. The ring finger of the right hand is used to draw the elaborate patterns. These patterns are geometric in nature and stand distinct in view of the fact that these are not only drawn from an artistic point of view but are significant because of their spiritual base and spirit of devotion.

5. DECORATIVE PATTERNS

Aipan is deeply rooted in the religious practices and is believed to invoke divine blessings and protect homes from negative energies. The shapes represent the mystical and intangible elements of the universe. It has geometric shapes which create various decorative patterns and designs to adorn the door ways and the floors. Aipan always begins and ends with a dot which symbolises the core of the universe. The rest of the patterns revolve around it indicating the world around it changing different shapes. Shape is an art element that provides with the basic structure in art and geometry is a primary division of mathematics that deals with dimensions, angles, positions and is significant in Aipan, also shape is a property of space, which also happens to be another art element which plays an indispensable role in the folk art. The patterns are flowing and rhythmic, however not necessarily exact. 'Vasudhara' referring to the long vertical lines which vary in strokes and rhythms however their geometry creates not only beauty but spiritual energies. 'Matrikas' also known as 'Patta' are made on the walls for the goddesses. 'Chaukis' are low wooden-stools having various traditional patterns crafted for various occasions.

- Saraswati Chauki is a five-pointed star created by two triangles with a swastika flower in the middle which is further embellished with motifs. This chauki is highly valued and is used in a puja which ensures an auspicious beginning.
- 'Nav Durga Chauki' is a sacred square-shaped diagram created by enclosing the nine dots that represent Nav Durgas. It serves as a divine seat or place for conducting rituals and prayers. The Chauki often includes auspicious symbols like Swastika, Lotus, Kalash (holy pot), and footprints of the Goddess, believed to invite her into the home or temple.
- Chamunda Hast Chauki refers to a sacred diagrammatic representation incorporating geometric shapes such as triangles and circle symbolizing the cosmic order, energy, and the connection between the human and divine realms. It has two triangles that are separated by diagonal lines that cross them both, as well as a five-pointed star enclosed in a circle which is itself adorned with eight lotus petals.
- Janeyu Chowki is a sacred platform or setup used during the Janeyu (Upanayana) ceremony, specifically designed for the sacred thread ceremony also known as the Yajnopavita Sanskar. It involves the wearing of the Janeyu, a sacred thread symbolizing the boy's entry into the stage of formal education and spiritual life. The main section consists of seven stars within a six-sided drawing which symbolizes the Sapt Rishis or the seven stars.
- Shivarchan Peeth refers to the sacred platform or diagram created for the worship of Lord Shiva, it serves as the divine seat for invoking the presence of the deity. It is formed by placing 28 or 108 Parthiv linga on a copper thali and then aipan are drawn on the ground where 8 cornered designs with 12 dots are joined by 12 lines.
- Dhuli Arghya Chauki is essential during the time of wedding. The groom is revered as 'Narayan' and is greeted with immense devotion and he is seated on a this Chauki. It depicts a painted tree-like figure and three branches that resemble a pitcher holding Lord Shiva's Trishul, or Trident. Lord Brahma, the creator, is at the bottom, and Lord Vishnu is in the middle. Two parrots are depicted on two of the sides of this painting, and the lotus and Swastik are painted at the bottom dignifying good fortune.
- Acharya Chuaki, is painted for the Pandit or the 'Acharya' who is accompanied by the groom and is given great prominence. The chauki has a swastik made with red colour surrounded with lotus and other auspicious symbols such as the bell, a conch shell and sometimes even two parrots.

Jyunti Patta is a local word for Jeev Matrikas, this type of Aipan signifies an invitation to the gods and goddesses to attend the marriage and bless the newly weds. In earlier times Jyunti were murals painted on the walls of the rooms where the sacred or religious ceremony took place. Worshipping the Matrikas is an ancient tradition in Kumaun and one of the panel of Matrika is still visible in Bageshwar. The Pattern of Jyunti Pata follows a pattern where the first line depicts the Himalayas which signifies that the first invitation is send to them. A panel has two lotus lotuses on either side and a tree which is a representation of the mystical 'Kalpavrisksha'. The roots of the are considered to have Brahma, The Creator and Vishnu, The Preserver reside in it, Shiva, The Destroyer in its trunk and his consort, Parvati and the topmost part of the tree. Right below the tree two parrots can be seen painted for good fortune. The centre of the panel is Ganesh and Siddhi and the main panel has three Matrikas attended by Ganesh. The 'Anyari Devi' and 'Ujyari Devi' the presiding

deities over Light and Darkness are right on the top denoted with two circular faces. Ranking the central panel is an elaborate pattern of dots and lines called the 'Bar Boond' which represents the invocation and invitation to the gods to attend the wedding.

Lakshmi Yantra, is drawn on the floor which is considered as the seat of the goddess. The idol is placed on top of the yantra, where the centre point is marked by a dot or a flower symbolizing the universe. It is enclosed in two triangles forming a six-pointed star. Lord Shiva is symbolized by the upper triangle and Goddess Shakti by the lower. It is considered to be one of the most powerful geometric form which represents spiritual hierarchy. In alchemy, the triangles are associated with the three realms of our existence, our mind, body and soul representing the foundations of life and the core of human existence. Six or eight lotuses stand in for the moon, stars and wealth surround the triangles. The centre has circular decorations, and the earth is represented by the lines that surround the circles on its four sides known as Bhupur which symbolizes the doors. Goddess Laxmi's footprints are painted all around symbolizing prosperity.

6. DECORATIVE PATTERNS AND GEOMETRIC SHAPES

The decorative art forms includes of geometric shapes, mainly used shapes are triangles, circles, squares, rectangles and spirals having their own significant and spiritual meanings. Geometric shapes have significant meanings and are strong, powerful conformations representing the mystical elements of the universe. The yantras are the manifestations of God's themselves, which are a significant part of the folk art. They are revered as a layout in which each vertex, line, corner, holds a deity and its like a labyrinth where people start meditating through the paths navigating towards the centre of the yantra. The structural idea, the geometrical plan is integrated to achieve aesthetic effects by the artists which expresses the spatial relationship. Geometric figures have spiritual and esoteric significance they represent the intangible. The triangle stands as the most powerful shape that can be seen as a deeper spiritual message or energetic tool which speaks of divine proportion and creativity, the spiritual meaning of the triangle in art can vary depending on the culture or tradition. However, it often represents balance, transformation, and the interconnectedness of all things. Triangles are powerful, it is that the triangle has three points, the three angles and spiritually number three is regarded as most significant number. Number three exhibits the awakening of wisdom and reveals the mystery of the magical elements to optimize the energies in our soul. The square symbol represents structure, balance and is also associated with the number four, and relates to the four elements of the physical world: earth, air, water, and fire. The square is a highly symbolic shape that hold the frequency of a deeper spiritual message that influences many aspects of our subconscious interactions with our physical reality. The circle is such a prominent symbol in nature, culture, and life, so much so that its symbolism is inexhaustible. The universe itself is circular, and life is powered from its core.

Aipan art always begins and ends with a dot which symbolises the core of the universe!

7. CONCLUSION

Art is a highly imaginative intellectual domain and Geometry is an underlying fabric of nature, it is a visual representation of mathematical patterns found everywhere, geometric proportions can be seen imbedded in man, nature and the universe. It constitutes of a graphic description or the blueprint of the universe and an analysis of these significant geometric shapes helps understand the causes and the reality of the nature and the cosmic significance of geometric forms. Geometry is a sacred art form because of its fundamental interrelation with creation, it explores the patterns that unify and reveal the structure of the creation. Art and Geometry have a synergic and dynamic connection as any work of art has geometric forms as its foundation and the amalgamation of the two, to form sacred patterns gives an insight to the precise way the energy of creation organizes itself. These geometric forms acts as a bridge between the science and spirituality, the patterns are a blend of simplicity and profound connotation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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