

Design Resource

Aipan - Uttarakhand

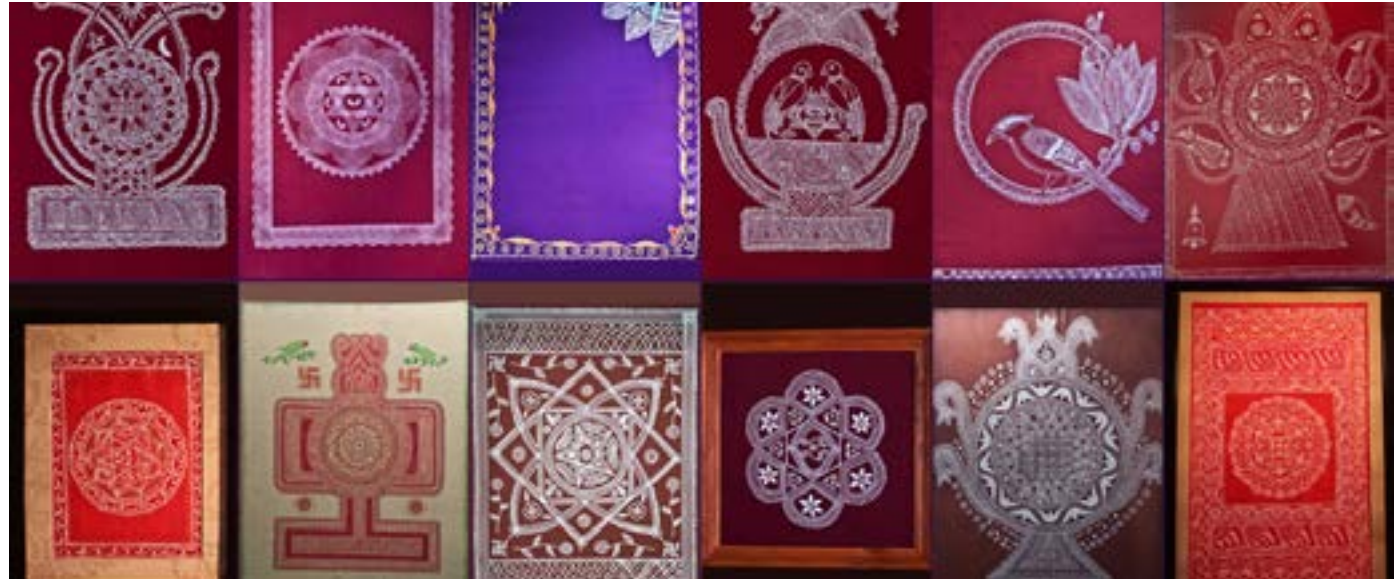
Ritual Floor Painting

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Aruna Kumari Y. Ankana Sen, Dinesh K. Dandapat and Shruti K. NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/aipan-uttarakhand>



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Introduction

Aipan is a traditional folk art specifically made by women of Uttarakhand. This art is done on the floor over a brick red background with a white paste made out of rice flour. The typical art is done on all special occasions and household ceremonies and rituals Viz. Ganesh Chaturthi, Makara Sankranti, Kark Sankranti, Initiation ceremonies, Weddings, Shivaratri and Laxmi puja. It is believed that these motifs evoke divine power which brings good fortune and wards off evil.

Though the art form is practiced in different parts of India and called by various names, Uttarakhand Aipan painting has its unique identity which is always done on empty walls and on the ground over a brick red background which is a symbol of fortune and fertility.

The art form is used to decorate floors and walls at the Puja room (place of worship) and the entrance of homes and practiced by many other communities of different regions. Aipan art has different names in different parts of India.

Names of the Art in different states:

- Aipan in Uttarakhand
- Alpona in Bengal and Assam
- Aripaana in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh
- Mandana Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh
- Rangoli in Gujarat and Maharashtra
- Kolam in South
- Muggu in Andhra Pradesh
- Alpana, Chita, Jhoti and Muruja in Odisha.

Aipan in Uttarakhand:

The place Uttarakhand, formerly Uttaranchal, is a state in the northern hemisphere of India. It is a part of the Himalayan range that starts from the Shivalik foothills and stretches to the greater Himalayas.

Uttarakhand has a rich diversity of languages including Hindi, Kumaoni, Garhwali, Jaunsari, and Bhotiya. It is a beautiful state with a treasure of Arts and Crafts heritage and second to no other state in the country. It has its own individuality in temple architecture, painting, jewellery making, wood carving, candle making, and also in the performing arts like dance and music. The famous crafts here are cultural windows and doors, woollen rugs and carpets, copper utensils, bamboo baskets, and folk art like Aipan taken from the Sanskrit word "Lepana" (means doing Plaster).

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Entrance of house with traditional Aipan work welcoming guests.



Winnows in red colour with white Aipan motifs, which are used on spiritual occasions.



Ritual painting in straight line patterns done on Mandap / Mandir (Stage used to place idols of gods).

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A woman in traditional attire doing the Aipan art during rituals.



A collection of Aipan diversified products are displayed in a shop.

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Woman engaged in creating skilled intricate patterns of Aipan.



Aipan patterns and motifs are typical to the region of Kumaon.

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Aipan painting is done particularly by a group of women during all festive ceremonies.

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Intricately carved cultural doors of Uttarakhand.



A woman in Traditional attire (Odhani in Block print with natural dyes).

References:

Handicrafts of India
Handmade in India
Craft Atlas of India - Jaya Jaitly
Crafts Traditions of the World

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Significance of Art

Aipan art is a daily practice in some houses, wherein simple designs can do for ordinary days and elaborate designs are prepared on ritual and festive occasions. Some sophisticated designs will take months, even when a group of women working on them. Rice paste, wheat flour, earth and vegetable dyes are used for colours. For the brush, normally hand itself serves the purpose. Tips, fists, and palms are brought into use. If necessary, a stick wound with a small cotton rag is used as a brush. The women manipulate their hands with extraordinary fastness and swiftness.

- The art is practiced near Tulsi (Basil) pot/ platform.
- Near the hollow on the floor which serves as a Mortar.
- At the entrance of the House/doorstep. To welcome the guest with grace and elegance.
- On the walls to decorate the house.
- Inside the Pooja room, these patterns are considered as symbols of good omen, which evoke divine power and bring good fortune to the family.



Aipan pattern in floral and star motifs.



Mortar is being decorated with Aipan art.

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Doorsteps are decorated in Aipan art form.



Art inspired by geometrical and line patterns.



Aipan art near main entrance of house.

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Swastik design created on Odhani.

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Aipan art in the form of a Kalash.



A Swastika in Aipan art.

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Designing Process

Aipan ritual art is made on the floor and walls by drip drawn method. Aipan paintings are usually drawn:

- on the floors, walls, the Chauki (on which a deity is placed),
- on pots containing the Tulsi plant,
- on Wincrowing basket (made out of bamboo used for cleaning rice etc.) and
- at the entrance of homes, in the courtyard,

Tools and Raw Materials:

List of tools and raw materials used:

- Cow Dung: Cow dung solution is used as the base coat before red clay coating.
 - Geru: Red clay solution applied on the floor as a base before painting the Aipan design.
 - Rice Paste: Solution of rice paste and water through which Aipan design is painted.
 - Brush: A painting brush is used to paint the Aipan motifs. Sometimes the handmade brushes are made with a simple bamboo stick and a piece of cotton wrapped on it.
- Design Process:
The process followed for making an Aipan is as below:
- As per the tradition, the floors and walls are first cleaned with cow dung liquid (cow dung mixed with water) to make the place dustproof. But in modern times all houses do not apply cow dung solution due to cemented walls and floorings it is done especially on the floors.
 - Later when it dries one circle is made with Geru (red clay solution) on which Aipan work is done when it is fully dried.
 - In the meantime, the rice is taken (which is soaked overnight) and ground into a fine paste (either with mortar or in a grinding machine) and checked for proper consistency. The rice paste should not be too slurry or too thick, it should be free-flowing.
 - Once the coat of Geru is dried, the artisan swiftly draws the design patterns in rice paste using her finger.

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The Tradition:

The Aipan is traditionally drawn for ceremonies of birth, marriage, and many other festivals throughout the year. The painting patterns differ for each ceremony, occasion and according to the deity.

The central design of the Aipan is considered as per the ritual and has a traditional motif while the outer design can be extended or reduced to fit the space (red color background). The dots or Bindu is an important element without which the Aipan is considered unfinished. Paintings drawn on the floor of the prayer room and on the deities' seat has Tantric motifs called as Peetha or Yantra.

The kitchen's wall is painted with animal motifs. At wedding times Aipans are made from Turmeric and Vermilion. The entrance to the home is decorated with good luck patterns and many times are just vertical white lines. These designs are nowadays painted on greeting cards, wall hangings and other products. Aipan is drawn by village women folk who make these beautiful designs. They pass on this tradition to their daughters and daughters-in-law, to preserve the culture.



Geru (red clay solution) is applied on the floor as a base for the painting.

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Red clay is applied till the required area of the painting is covered.



Paste is made by grinding the soaked rice.



Floral patterns are commonly used motifs.



The main designs of traditional Aipan include Geometrical designs, flowers, dots and plants.

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Cotton ball is dipped in the solution and used while painting to get the continuous flow of the solution.



Once the border paint is over then the center is painted.



Every Aipan design pattern and art form has a particular meaning attached to it and is drawn with a specific purpose in mind.



Aipan has been the expression of happiness and celebration.

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The traditional designs and patterns of this folk art are passed on to their daughters and daughters-in-law, to preserve the culture.



Different designs exist for different ceremonies and rituals, throughout the year.



Aipan designs are mainly drawn at places of worship, along with the main entry door, near mortar (stone Grinder) and in the front courtyard of the house.



Plant and Creeper motifs are drawn at the entrance of the house.

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Art Forms

Every design has its own significance. The designs are symbolic and common in meaning for different regions also. The design varies each day for each ritual and worship of a particular god. Patterns drawn in Aipan paintings are inspired by nature, trees, birds, animals, betel leaves, and flowers like Lotus etc. Geometrical patterns like lines, dots, squares, circles, and triangles. Other motifs like Swastik, Trident, Fish, conch shell, footprints, supposed to be of Goddess Laxmi, and anthropomorphic figures.

Saraswati Chowki (seat of goddess Saraswati), Chamunda Hast Chowki, Nav Durga Chowki, Shiv or Shivarchan Peeth, Surya Darshan Chowki, Janeyu Chowki, Asan Chowki, Acharya Chowki, Durga Thapa, Jyoti Patta and Lakshmi Yantra - are the traditional designs made with different connotations and symbols which depicts the deities.

- The design starts at the center with a flower and is surrounded by dotted borders, creepers and stylized flowers.
- Entrances of the house are intricately decorated with straight lines welcoming the guests.
- Puja rooms are beautifully decorated with designs of lotus flowers, betel leaves, and conch shells.
- Chowki (seat of goddess Lakshmi) is designed during the Diwali festival.
- The ceremonial Aipan design is like a Yantra (A noticeable geometric pattern) to symbolize the deity.



Design made in the prayer room to place the gods and goddesses idols.



An old Aipan wall painting depicting Lord Krishna and Radha.

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Chowki design is normally used for seating the idols of gods and goddesses.



Dhuliarghya ki chowki, made at the bridal home's front yard to welcome the groom.

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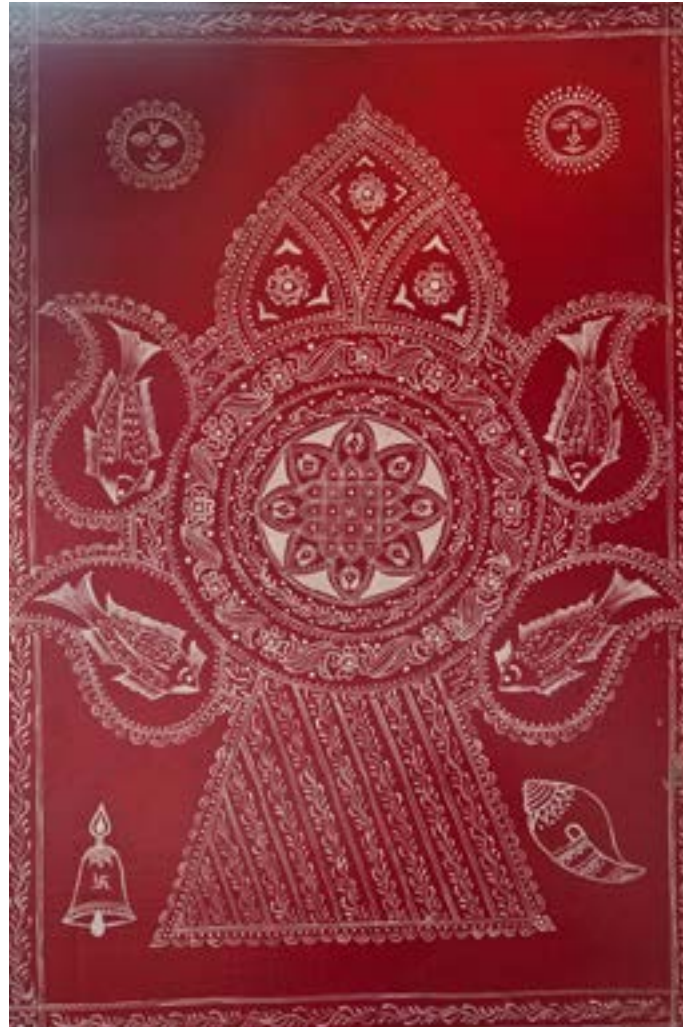
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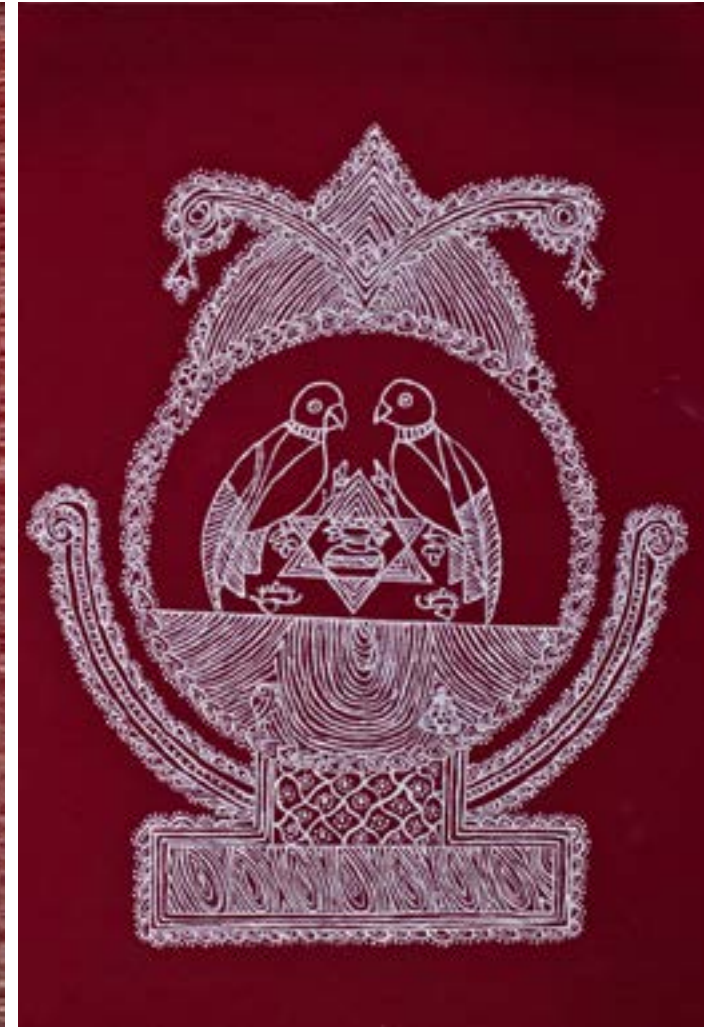
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Type of Chowki Aipan design in a combination of flower and fish motifs.



Aipan design in bird and line patterns.

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Aipan art on the wall.



Eloberated art is beautifully composed of different motif patterns.

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Contemporary Products

Aipan motifs are typically used in the Kumaon region. The traditional motifs are also used in designing new household products like souvenirs, Coasters, Shawls & Stoles, Wall hangings, Wall paintings, Bookmarks, Photo frames, Tablemats, Cards, Stickers, Jewelry boxes, Key chains, bookmarks and wall tiles etc.



The main patterns like linear art, geometrical pattern, flowers and imprints, drawn for ornamental purposes. They are locally known as Deli.

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An Aipan painting framed.



Wedding card designed with Aipan motif.



Greeting cards cover design with Aipan motif.

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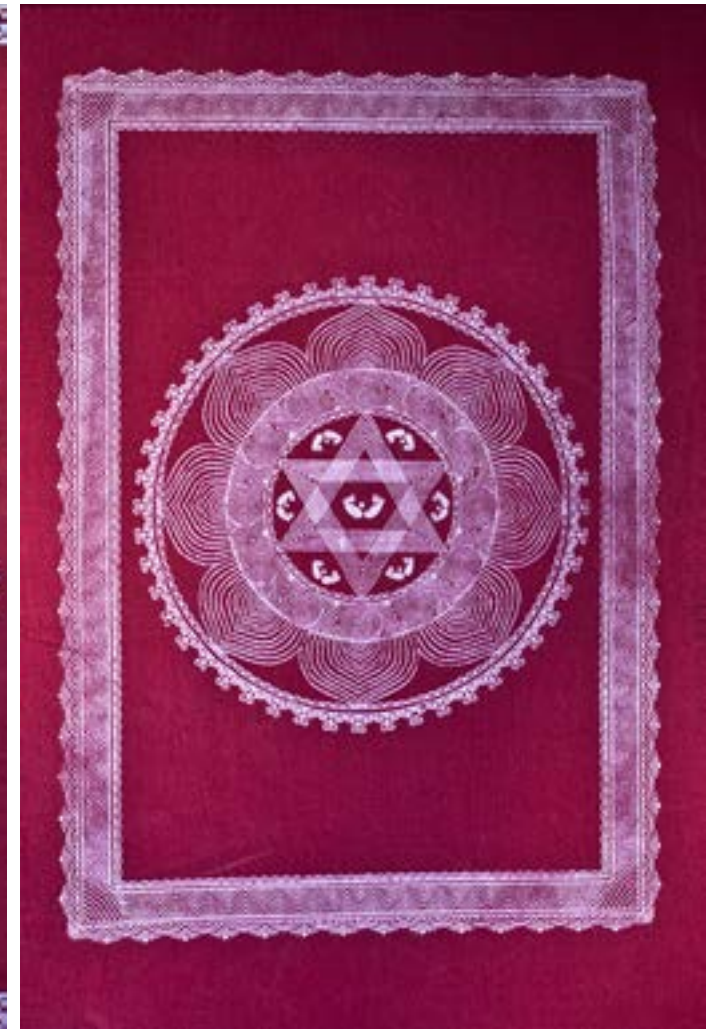
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A simple and elegant Aipan painting made on cloth.



Wall hanging of a painting made with Aipan motifs.

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A photo frame with curved line patterns.

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Glossary of Words

- **Jaunsari** - local spoken language (dialect).
- **Bhotiya** - A caste of people in Uttarakhand, and their spoken language (dialect).
- **Lepana** - A coat or plastering.
- **Puja Room** - It is a place of worship where idols are placed and worshipping is performed.
- **Mandap / Mandir** - A stage made of wood is used to place idols of gods.
- **Odhani** - It is a traditional shawl/stole worn to cover the head.
- **Geru** - Natural clay of red colour made into solution by mixing water.
- **Chauki** - Seat for deities.
- **Anthropomorphic figures** - Human-like figures.
- **Mortar** - A grinding hole made of stone.
- **Kalash** - Pot decorated with ritual motifs and flowers.
- **Kumaoni** - People of the Kumaon division in the North-Eastern part of Uttarakhand speak the Kumaoni language comprising Uttarakashi, Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Tehri, Pauri and Dehradun etc. districts Collectively called Kumaon.
- **Garhwali** - Local spoken Language (dialect) in the North-Western part of Uttarakhand, Comprising Bageshwar, Pithoragarh, Almora, Nainital, Champawat, and Udham Singh Nagar etc. districts collectively called Garhwal.

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