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## Relevance, Utility and Present Scenario of Precious Aipan Folk Art-form of Uttarakhand

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



**Author**

**Dr. Brijesh Swaroop Katiyar**  
Senior Assistant Professor  
School of Creative & Performing Art  
Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University  
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

### Abstract

*Indigenous traditional and folk art forms play an important role in creation of new design patterns. Today, the public's interest in Indian traditional folk arts is increasing; this is the reason that now the creators of traditional and folk art forms are presenting them in new commercial emanation after making timely changes in their original form. According to the increasing interest and demand of the consumers, the design patterns, colours, compositional styles and used painting methods of these art-forms should also keep on improving according to the need of the fashion industry. Aipan folk art-form of Uttarakhand is referenced in the sequence of bonfires coming in Indian art forms, then its creators are trying to develop new design formats. It also provides an opportunity to use adapted traditional motifs on textiles and preserve beautiful traditional folk art.*

*The aipan motifs were originally adapted for the central design patterns, border designs and boutonniere designs. The innovative presentation of multiple motifs and design motif patterns reflects its relevance keeping in mind their suitability for items like bags, pencil, purses and mobile holders, etc.*

### Key Words

*Motifs, Kumaon, Geru, Rice Paste, Patterns, Festivals.*

### Introduction

The indigenous various traditional and folk arts of India have always been the bearers of our cultural and vibrant folk traditions full of diversity. The style of traditional art of each particular region in India has its own unique fundamental characteristics that make it unique and different from other. The traditional and folk art forms of India are very ethnic and simple; yet colourful and vibrant with much to say about the country's rich heritage. Most of the women belonging to the land of rural India do symbolic presentation of their religious and cultural beliefs in the form of folk paintings on various Teej, festivals and special occasions. Such art forms are considered a powerful medium of expression. As a result of meaningful efforts being made by various organizations to keep Indian traditional and folk art-forms relevant on the national and global horizon, regional Indian folk art forms have come to light and have started providing means of livelihood to both male and female creators. Have given. The local original form of Uttarakhand folk art "Aipan" is also proving to be a better option for women empowerment. Aipan is employed in specific auspicious ceremonies, pronounced with specific names from different types of "chauki", each one having a unique form for the related occasion.

Uttarakhand province has an age-old tradition of painting; these design-formats and its motif patterns, when there is a festival, worship or ceremony. Women's unique creativity can be pointed out as an appropriate channel in this regard after providing necessary resources and training to women. This study is based on evaluation in the context of empowerment of women through Aipan traditional art form.

**Figure 1:** Panoramic Aipan Chowki



Innovative and creative play of colours and form-formation in any specific art has always fascinated human and has played a dominant role in adding beauty to the world. It expresses emotions and ideas. Sensitivity to colour has been revealed in paintings, poetry, music and costumes. In our traditional indigenous art-forms, many methods of using cloth as a painting surface and sometimes as a motif-creation material have been used in the creation of different types of artworks; Such as dyeing, printing, painting, and even embroidery or appliqué work. The soulful mesmerizing presentation of colours in various art and craft forms attracts everyone. Many researchers are engaged in using folk arts as a source of inspiration; and adaptation of diverse motifs of various folk arts to traditional art styles like Warli, Madhubani, Bhil, Gaur, Kalamkari, etc., in textile products for making a variety of garments like Kurtis, suits, series and Dupattas into attractive motifs. There have also been adaptations of traditional motifs to make them suitable for inclusion. Folk painting or folk art is a broad term for art creation executed by individual artist and anonymous ethnic groups have a notable role in the continuing development of these art forms. The traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity of folk art in India clearly has a huge potential in the international market. The rural folk paintings of India have distinctive colourful design motifs, which are designed as pictorial expression of religious and mystical motifs.

The Phad, Madna and Pichwai in Rajasthan, Pattachitra in Odisha, Alpana, Kolam in Kerala, Alpana in Bengal, Arichan in Bihar, Bhuggul in Andhra Pradesh, Satiya in Gujarat, Chowk Pooran in Uttar Pradesh etc. are various narrative folk art forms cantered on a variety of ritualistic themes; "Aipan" is also one of the same traditional art forms, which is inspired by the lush green trees and plants of the Kumauni division in Uttarakhand, the mountains covered with white snow cover, the blue sky, the melodious vibrations of the music of bells and the vibrations of the religious sentiments of the people. India's rich indigenous folk arts and crafts heritage is as unique and diverse as its customs and traditions. The diversity, creative diversity and use of eco-friendly creation materials in the Indian art tradition is unique in the entire world. India's crafting traditions include the local social beliefs of each particular region, this is its fundamental element that makes them different from each other. These various traditional art forms not only fulfil the day-to-day believes of religious and ritualistic needs of the common people in every society, but their decorative formation are also very attractive and eye-catching. The state of Uttarakhand came into existence only a few decades ago; it has its own original art heritage and its beauty is unique. The distinguishing feature of its compositional representation is the motifs

used in the aipan, an ancient art form known for its captivating and intricate design patterns which are basically a complex yet balanced combination of various geometrical configurations and stylized motifs determined for the particular occasion.

Uttarakhand, surrounded by the lofty peaks of the gargantuan Himalayas, snow-clad peaks, hidden glaciers, serpentine rivers, mist-shrouded valleys and exotic species of flora and fauna, makes this state a mesmerizing state. Inspired by this enthralling natural splendour, the people of Uttarakhand have created, nurtured and enriched various forms of traditional and folk arts over the ages. Folk arts are usually doors, windows, rugs, carpets, baskets, copper utensils or a unique touch of nature in the design of useful items in the combinations of Uttarakhand born Aipan folk art patterns are its fundamental identity. Various traditional art forms of Aipan are used by Kumauni women to decorate their homes especially to welcome auspicious occasions like Diwali or solemn events like marriage ceremonies.

The word “aipan” is actually translated from the Sanskrit word “*arpana*”; which literally means “*written*” meaning to write, although these are special types of patterns. These patterns are created with the help of creator’s fingers. On the occasion of all local festivals and rituals, the women of Kumauni first decorate their houses by creating aipan on the floor and entrance.

Aipan design formats used in festivals, pujas and various ceremonies related to birth, marriage, and Janeu (also known Yagyopaveet or liturgy) ceremony and also at the time of death. Various geometric and other shapes related to gods and goddesses and other objects of nature are carefully used for the decoration of the walls, entrance doors and paper painting surface. Aipan is such a folk art which has a special place in all Kumauni households. The aipan design format is appropriately painted with ‘Geru’ (red oxide) or red vermilion paste on the ground and rice paste on the top with the prescribed pattern for the special occasion. The deep red colour on it gives a beautiful contrast accentuating the pristine white designs. Rice paste is made by soaking any variety of rice for about 16 hours and then grinding it into a fine paste with an easily flowing consistency. The ring finger of the right hand is used to make elaborate patterns with the help of cotton balls or cloth. Aipan formats are painted on the floor of the room where the ritual is performed, in the courtyard, on the steps of the main gate, on the doorposts, around the mortar, on wooden posts, on pots containing basil plants, and in the temple.

Aipan folk art of Uttarakhand has been taught by women from back to back to their daughters and daughters-in-law. Some patterns are important from a religious point of view and are specially made to perform rituals at the time of ceremonies like marriage, threading ceremony, naming ceremony etc. Every aipan design has a special meaning and is created with a specific purpose in mind.

At present, three basic forms of Aipan art are prevalent in the Kumaun region such as Siddha, Daiva and Laulik; which are known by the names ‘Aipan’, ‘Patta’ and ‘Bar Bond’. Folk paintings created on the ground and walls are examples of “Siddha Roop”, “astrological motifs”, “almanac designs” and door-slabs “Daiva Roop” and so on. The colours used earlier were made from natural substances; but today, posters, acrylic and oil colours are being used to make these art forms more effective. It is an effective art form that is used extensively in the state of Uttarakhand.

## **Etymology**

“Aipan” is derived from the Sanskrit word “*lepan*” and means ‘plaster’. Aipan art is similar in different regions of India; but, it is also known by various names in different regions; such as:

- Aipan in Kumaon.
- Aipona in Bengal and Assam.
- Aripaana in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- Mandana in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

- Rangoli in Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- Kolam in some parts of South India.
- Muggu and Bhuggul in Andhra Pradesh.
- Alpana, Chita, Jhoti or Muruja in Odisha.

### **Practice of Aipan Folk Art**

This folk art is traditionally done on the floor on a red background with white paste made of rice flour. The specific art is performed on all special occasions and household ceremonies and rituals. Ganesh Chaturthi, Makar Sankranti, Kark Sankranti, initiation ceremony, marriage, Shivratri and Lakshmi Puja. These motifs are believed to evoke divine power that brings good fortune and wards off evil.

Aipan is a traditional folk art specifically made by women of Uttarakhand and it is a daily practice in some households in state of Uttarakhand; where simple designs are created for normal days, and elaborate and distinctive designs are created for ritual and festive occasions such as follows:

- This folk art is practiced near the Tulsi pot/platform.
- It is done at the entrance of the house to welcome the guest with decency and grandeur.
- Used on the walls to decorate the house.
- Also performed inside the worship room; because these patterns are considered to be a symbol of good omen, which awakens divine power and brings good luck to the family.

### **Aims and Objectives**

1. To investigate the past, origin and utility of the various motifs depicted in the traditional popular Aipan folk art; which developed in the Kumauni region of Uttarakhand in India.
2. To understand the composition manner of the motifs depicted in the combinations of aipan painted on the different occasions, and how they are linked to the daily practices of the community and the wider social context.
3. How to examine interpretations and representations in the context of aipan's auspicious and ritual significance in religious customs and festivals, use of eco-friendly materials in creation, and use over time.
4. To understand how the symbolic geometric motifs used in Aipan reflect cultural and religious aspirations.

### **Main Objectives**

1. To make a proper study about the use of motifs in Aipan art form.
2. To understand the utility of geometrical and graphical transformation of motifs.
3. Tracing the origins of traditional motifs.
4. To revive the various forms and regional traditions of the vanishing folk art.
5. To create an innovative system that revives the ancient Aipan folk art and imparts knowledge of beautiful forms.

### **Review of Literature**

There has been a severe lack of proper efforts to uncover the ancient Aipan folk art that originated in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, India.

'New Horizon For Aipan (Folk Art Of Uttarakhand) Motifs Through Applique', published in "Granthalayah", an International Journal of Research, Vol.3, N-0.9 (2015), by Negi M., Rani A., Singh A., reveals that, the way in which the Aipan folk art of Uttarakhand Every important stage of the human life cycle is covered; That much this art form has not gained importance and the younger generation knows less about

it as this art form has often disappeared; However, many meaningful efforts have been started to restore the importance of Aipan and by making proper use of this folk art motifs, many commercial products are being created and making a distinct identity in the global market.

Sah, V.N. 'Aipan: Cultural Motifs of Kumaon, Nainital', published in 2006, presented a detailed account of various facts of Aipan art; Which throws light on the importance of this folk art form.

Aipan folk art, unique in itself, is enriching its relevance on a wide horizon in traditional and commercial form, there is very little evidence or study material available about this beautiful and valuable folk art called Aipan. In the modern era, this folk art can also be seen on many commercial products such as tea coasters, photo frames or trays, in addition to religious rituals. People who are highly interested about the arts and crafts sector are more likely to know about the importance of art forms, as per 'Uttarakhand Handloom and Handicrafts Development Council (UHHDC)', 2013. Handicrafts study shows retrieved from <https://www.uttarakhandcrafts.com/handicrafts.php> on August 25, 2015.

Citing an article based on aipan folk art, published in Dev Bhoomi Darshan, August 12, 2021, online edition <https://devbhoomidarshan.in/aipan-kala/>. According to this article; In the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand state, the aipan designs painted on various rituals and festivals have been adopted as a regional folk art in different motifs in a grand and attractive manner, but with different versions.

## Methodology

The present study is entirely based on both the methods such as interviews and also secondary data of some traditional women entrepreneurs and business entrepreneurs. Secondary data includes both quantitative and qualitative data collected from various sources including books, reports, research papers, newspapers, magazines and websites, which have been used for the purpose of the study.

The objective of this work is to study the historical background of Aipan folk art, manufacturing process, painting method, types of motifs used for design, method of making self-made eco-friendly colours, modification in composition of figurative and geometric motifs. Mainly documenting the traditional creative method. Through this study a descriptive research paper has been prepared; in which to get complete and authentic facts and related information, discussions were held with the creators of painting through the method of observation. During the discussion, an attempt has been made to understand the depth of almost all the points related to this folk art from the Aipan artists in a factual manner. The questions were based on present status of artisans, historical background of Aipan art, painting process, colours, motifs, artefacts produced.

## Origin of Aipan

Uttarakhand, formerly Uttaranchal, is a state located in the northern hemisphere of India. It is a part of the Himalayan range which starts from the hills of the Shivalik foothills and extends till the greater Himalayas.

Uttarakhand has a rich diversity of languages such as Hindi, Kumauni, Garhwali, Jaunsari and Bhotiya.

It is a beautiful state with a treasure trove of arts and crafts heritage no less than any other state in the country. It also has its own distinct identity in temple architecture, painting, jewellery making, wood carving, Artistic candle making and performing arts such as dance and music. Famous crafts here are cultural windows and doors, woollen rugs and carpets, copper utensils, bamboo baskets and folk arts such as aipan.

## Significance of Aipan Art

Folk arts are associated with various important day-to-day activities of human life; For example, there is a pictorial presentation of religious and rituals beliefs. The diversity of folk art forms seen in India is never the identity of any other country. In terms of the diversity of Indian folk arts, within a particular state, you will find many types of folk arts, and they are usually created for special occasions such as festivals, weddings, or religious purposes. The Himalayan region in India is vast, with different cultures residing throughout its length and breadth.

In order of the above, the birthplace of Aipan folk art is the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand state and it is a special form of ritualistic folk art. It is usually made on a smooth surface; which is prepared with wet ochre clay "Geru". Cooked rice is ground into a white paste with water. In local parlance this paste is known as "Bisvar"; which is used to create design patterns on the surface. Women use their forefinger, ring finger and middle finger to create the pattern of the aipan.

### **Utility of Aipan and Its Historical Appearance**

Aipan is a ritualistic folk art originally from the Kumaon, a Himalayan region in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. Aipan art originated from Almora in Uttarakhand, which was founded during the reign of the Chand dynasty. It flourished during the reign of the Chand dynasty in the Kumaon region. The designs and motifs are motivated by the beliefs of the community and various aspects from nature.

In simple terms, Aipan could be described as floor painting. Aipans have their own peculiarities in the way they are created and their cultural, religious and spiritual significance. Aipan paintings are traditionally done on the empty walls and on the ground and are symbols of fortune and fertility. Visually, distinctiveness of aipan comes from its dual colour-scheme.

Depiction of several Hindu deities, representation of Goddess Lakshmi, motifs inspired from village life, Streams and rivers and the protective Mountain Gods justifies Aipan as the embodiment of a rich cultural heritage.

Aipan, ritual art, is made on floor and walls by dip drawn method. The Aipan is traditionally drawn for ceremonies of birth, marriage and many other festivals throughout the year. The painting patterns differ for each ceremony accordingly. The central design of the Aipan is considered as per ritual and has a traditional motif while the outer design can be extended or reduced to fit the space.

### **Different Types of Aipan Folk Art Form**

Different types of aipan patterns are made at the time of a person's birth, for various auspicious occasions, festivals, and rituals; and even when someone dies. This folk art form is also known to provide protection from evil. Traditionally they were painted on the floors and walls of homes, while today they are being used commercially on many daily use items or apparels etc.

Currently, aipans are made in a variety of sizes, shapes and structural forms, including the following:

1. Saraswati Chowki,
2. Chamunda Hasta Chowki,
3. Nav Durga Chowki,
4. Shiva or Shivarchan Peeth,
5. Janeu Chowk,
6. Asan Chowk,
7. Dhuli Arghya Chowki,
8. Acharya Chowki,
9. Durga Thapa,
10. Jyoti Patta, and
11. Lakshmi Yantra.

The women of Kumauni creates these above mentioned various forms of aipan on a proper basis by following the right procedure; as per the laid down rules of tradition, the creator women first use cow dung solution to clean and purify the floor or surface. When the surface is completely dry, then they engrave red oxide "Geru" (red clay diluted with water) on the surface in geometrical shapes like a circle, square, rectangle

etc. They make rice paste for the designs and motifs using this method, ensuring that it is neither too thick nor too soft and flows easily. Since the people of Aipan believe that cow excrement removes all kinds of impurities and obstacles, cow dung was a major component of their design. The natural and eco-friendly colours are obtained from rice paste, wheat flour, clay and vegetable dyes.

### **Impact of Modernity on Aipan Art Form**



**Figure 2:** Aipan Art Handmade Wooden Temple



**Figure 3:** Aipan Art Kettle/Ketli

Aipan folk art form has changed as a result of people's busy lifestyle, and there is a clear transition from traditional to modern adaptation due to lack of understanding in the practice of folk art and people's search for quick fixes to stay connected and maintain their roots and legacy. There are a variety of easy aipan making techniques and tools available in the market today. These products include acrylic colours, fabric colours, poster colours, stencils, banners and stickers, all of which feature distinctive red and white colours and patterns. Pillowcases, pen stands, wall hangings and flower pots are just a few of the items in the market that have aipan themes and designs on them.

### **Possibilities of Women Empowerment through Aipan Art**

Women becoming self-reliant and moving towards equal participation on the global platform is indeed a sign of women empowerment and this can be possible by providing them equal opportunities for progress in education, skills, technology, social recognition and other fields. To empower women, there is a great need to enhance their initial intellectual potential by harnessing their inner enthusiasm and emotional fortitude. In 1995, according to Batliwala's view, *'the process and outcome of the process by which women gain greater control over material and intellectual resources and challenge the ideology of patriarchy and gender-based discrimination against women in all organizations and Structures of Society.'* After providing women with the right tools and flexibility to choose their career, their skills and abilities should be developed in this regard.

In the context of the above, when we evaluate the social scenario of the state of Uttarakhand, it is known that most of the women work in the agriculture sector in this entire state; And because of the male dominated society, especially in rural areas, women often face inequality and patriarchal hegemony. Yet, this is despite the harsh reality that they labour in the agricultural sector, while male members of their families handle similar household and marketing management tasks. In this context, it is pertinent to say that various forms of art have the potential to inspire peace of mind and in this context, when we focus on the Aipan folk art of the Kumaon region, it can be concluded that The traditional Aipan folk art developed by the women initiators of this region is the treasure of cultural heritage of Uttarakhand and better possibilities of self-progress can also be explored in this art.

## Importance of Various Folk Arts as Means of Livelihood

The women power of this region needs to be provided opportunities to develop their skills and abilities in this regard after providing them with the right base, tools and flexibility to choose their career. Those women who are bound to work in agriculture, but who do not have enough cultivable land, they can adapt the art form of Aipan on individual basis and explore the possibilities of earning a new livelihood in it. Folk art practice is usually done by women; which is basically based on narrative portrayal of local customs and religious rituals. As a result of the idea, several regional folk arts of India have not only gained popularity in present times; but has also achieved success in getting professional recognition. In this category, the most famous Madhubani folk art of Bihar can be referred, which is also famous in the world market and is mostly created by women. In this sequence, all the Indian folk art forms like Pichwai, Warli, Maggu, Bhil, Rogan, Pipli and Gond etc. can be specially mentioned; whose creators have developed their folk arts as a means of earning their livelihood.

## Classification of Aipan

According to Chattopadhyay (1981) there are three styles of aipan namely; which are as given following table no – 1:

Table No - 1

Sl.	Type of Aipan	Description
1.	Siddha Aipan	It is the style of aipan which drawn on floor and chokies.
2.	Davia Aipan	It is the form of patta. It has astrological motifs, manual designs and dwar pattas.
3.	Loukika Aipan	It is the style of bar boond; these are drawn on walls.

After Chattopadhyay's classification, in 2006, V. N. Sah again classified aipan into different styles; the basis of which was that the medium chosen for making aipan, purpose, pattern and the method or occasion of their combination can be different and this should be the main basis of their classification.

## Classification of Aipan on the basis of painting-sites

This form of Uttarakhand folk Art of aipan are created at different designated places for their usefulness and on special occasions, which are mentioned according to the following table no -2:

Table No - 2

Sl.	Aipan Site	Description
1.	Aipan on the Floor	It is Create on the floor and is further classified into two sub-divisions; as follows: i. Aipan with creeper and filling design Patterns Create at the door. ii. Aipan going to the place of worship; such as, Shiv Peeth, Lakshmi Peeth & Aasan.
2.	Aipan on the Wall	It is executed on a wall and is also classified into two traditional forms; such as, follows: i. First for the kitchen; which are known as Nata and Lakshmi Narayan. ii. Second for the ritual ceremony; which is known as Pata, and this is created at the ritual ceremony site.
3.	Aipan on the Fabric	Some aipan designs are also made on fabric. For example the khodia chauki in pichhora and shiv peeth in the yellow cloth used in rituals.
4.	Wooden Chaukies	These are asanas/seats of worship of deities crafted through aipan and created on various occasion sites, like worship, ceremonial occasions or festivals.



## Classification on the Basis of Forms and Shapes Used in Aipan

Table No - 3

Sl.	Chauki	Utilization	Description of Design Formation
1.	Nav Durga Chauki	It is used for worshipping the Goddess.	A simple design is created by drawing three horizontal and vertical lines with the swastika at its centre. The nine points of this chauki symbolically represent the nine forms of Goddess Durga.
2.	Aasan Chauki	These various types of Chauki used for different pujas.	It is a seat decorated with aipan for the devotee and his wife for the worship rituals.
3.	Chamunda Hast Chauki	This Chauki is used for "Havans" or "Yoga".	The picture-combination of this chauki consists of two triangles drawn in the middle with two oblique lines; in the middle of which a 5-pointed star surrounded by a circle is depicted in the center of the chauki and its interval is a floral design or Lakshmi. This is complemented by the feet of The chakra is often decorated with 8 petals of a lotus.
4.	Saraswati Chauki	This is used for the puja of goddess of learning Saraswati on the auspicious beginning of this important task; when a child begins formal education.	The main feature of this chauki is a five-pointed star with a swastika flower or a diya in the center.
6.	Janeu Chauki	This chauki is specially made for the Yagyopaveet ceremony.	In this chauki, Seven stars are combined within a six-sided drawing; these seven stars represent the seven sages. The floral design is painted with dots all around it.
7.	Shiv or Shivarchan Peeth	This is used especially for worship of Shiva.	This is specially depicted in the month of Sawan or Magha. Shiva is the ruler of the Himalayas. This is an octagonal design motif; In which 12 points are connected by 12 lines.

## Classification of Aipan on the Basis of Use on Different Occasions

Firstly these types of aipan can categories in three category and their sub divisions; which are as follows:

1. **Birth:** Special types of chaukies are prepared for performing ceremonies related to child birth.
  - a. **The Surya Darshan Chauki:** It is connected with the naming ceremony of a new-born child. For eleven days the baby is kept indoors, on the eleventh day the child is brought outside for Surya Darshan. This Chauki is made on the floor where the priest sits reciting mantras.
  - b. **Syo Aipan:** Syo Aipan is a geometric pattern drawn toward evil spirit on eleventh day of child birth.



2. **Marriage:** Three types of chaukies are used to perform ceremonies of marriage.
  - a. **Acharya Chauki:** The groom is always accompanied among others by his own Pandit or Acharya. The Pandit is given more prominence than even the father of the groom. So a special Chauki is made for him. A Swastika is made on it with red colour. The lotus and other auspicious symbols such as a bell, a conch shell, and sometimes even 2 parrots are painted around the Swastika.
  - b. **Vivaah Chauki:** The seat is specially prepared for the occasion of marriage. The wooden seat is provided by the groom's side and the background colour is yellow. A hundred petalled lotus is drawn over the surface with two parrots on the top left side- symbolic of an advance information of the arrival of the beloved.
  - c. **Dhuli Arghya Chauki:** This Chauki is mainly made to welcome bridegroom. In the olden days bridegroom usually arrived during the evening or "Godhuli", at the time of sunset or Twilight. Since the groom represent "Narayan", so he is generally greeted with devotion. His dusty feet are carefully washed before the puja as he stands on a small stool or chauki.
  - d. **Jyoti Patta:** In the hills of Kumaon, among the Brahmin and Sah families there is a practice of drawing a 'Jyoti' at a wedding or a sacred thread ceremony. In earlier times, "Jyoontis" were murals painted on the walls of rooms where religious ceremonies took place. "Jyoonti" is the local word used for the Jeev Matrikas - Maha Laxmi, Maha Saraswati and Maha Kali.
3. **Festivals:** These are made on occasions of various rituals and festivals like as follows:
  - a. **Durga Thapa:** The Durga Thapa is painted on paper by the women of Kumaon for Durga Pujas. This Thapa or painting is highly complex. This Thapa depicts several local deities along with the many-armed Durga who rides the lion.
  - b. **Lakshmi Yantra:** In the hills of Kumaon as in other parts of India, the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, is worshipped during the festival of Diwali Kali Puja. The idol is placed on the spot where the Puja will take place.
  - c. **Janmashtami Patta:** This is specially prepared for the worship of lord Krishna on the occasion of his Birthday.



Above various forms are very important for socio-cultural as well as religious point of view. Traditionally aipans are temporary art forms and fade away with time. It is necessary to preserve this traditional art in many creative art forms to save it for the next generation.

### Tools and Raw Materials

Its details are as given in the blow table no. 4:

Table No - 4

Sl.	Material	Use	Image
1.	Cow Dung	Cow dung solution is used as the base coat before red clay coating.	
2.	Geru	Red clay solution applied on the floor as a base before painting the Aipan design.	

3.	Rice Paste	Solution of rice paste and water through which Aipan design is painted.	
4.	Brush	Traditionally, aipans are created through fingers; but now, 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.	

### Aipan Tradition and the Motifs Used in its Creation



**Figure 4:** Aipan Creation Method

The Aipan art is created by women, and the knowledge is passed down through generations from mothers to daughters. The creation of the aipan begins and ends with the dot. The dot, which is placed in the center, is believed to symbolize the center of the universe. From this center, all other lines and patterns emerge that indicate the changing nature of the world around it.





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 motifs and designs are inspired by the religious beliefs of the community and the natural resources around them. They generally include conch shells, vines, floral patterns, swastikas, footprints of goddesses, geometric designs and figures of gods and goddesses. The linear lines drawn in the aipan symbolize the ritual or festival for which the different combinations of aipan are painted.

The kitchen's wall is painted with animal motifs. At wedding times Aipans are made from Turmeric and Vermillion. 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.

## Aipan Creation Process

The creation process followed for making an aipan is as steps follows:

Step	Process	Image
I.	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.	
II.	Later when it dries one circle is made with Geru (red clay solution) on which Aipan work is done when it is fully dried.	
III.	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.	
IV.	Once the coat of Geru is dried, the artisan swiftly draws the design patterns in rice paste using her finger.	

## Resurgence of Aipan Art Form

In the month of December, 2019, Minakshi Khati started ‘Minakriti’, the Aipan Project, which aims to revive Aipan art. Thousands of commissioned work orders have been completed so far under the project. This project is active in Kumaon to provide income earning opportunity to the women of rural families. The project employs women from such households who produce aipan and deliver bulk orders to their customers.

The Government of India has established the Uttarakhand Handlooms to protect the domestic producers of various cultural and religious products such as Aipan Kala.

To protect the domestic producers of various cultural and religious products such as Aipan art, the Government of India established the Uttarakhand Handloom and Handicrafts Development Council (UHHDC) in 1860 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. It aims to generate continuous employment opportunities by promoting domestic art products.

The Government of Uttarakhand decided in 2015 that art depicting Aipan would be acquired for display in government offices and buildings. Some of the government buildings include Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN), Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) and Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL). The decision was taken by the state tourism department headed by Harish Rawat.

‘Cheli Aipan’ is a government initiative to promote Aipan art; with an aim to promote the local art form of Uttarakhand and encourage artists, Aipan Resort was established in Chopta, Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand. The aim of the resort is to showcase local art in one place and practice it in its raw form. Formed by a team of young entrepreneurs, the resort has been quite successful in promoting the art even before non-Uttarakhand people.

**GI Tag:** The Kumauni Folk Art Aipan has been awarded with GI certificate by Government of India in September, 2021.

## Conclusion

Aipan folk art is a pictorial presentation of posts used in various rituals related to cultural, religious and life of Uttarakhand. The traditional and all-encompassing folk art of Uttarakhand is the strong foundation of its culture and religious outlook; undoubtedly, since ancient times there has been an inextricable link between these art forms in the cultural, religious and various rituals of human life. In the present times, the importance and relevance of Aipan art forms has increased even more; because now this art is not limited only with religious or rituals activities, but the women of Uttarakhand have given it a new identity by connecting it with commercial activities. On the basis of which it would be fair to say that Aipan folk art can prove to be a suitable medium to make women empowered and self-reliant in that area.

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