



FOLK ART OF INDIA

India has inherited a pre-Aryan culture which is reflected in the folk art. Different religions, sects and beliefs have co-existed throughout Indian traditional life. Cults like **Tantra Shakti, Vaishnav, Buddhist** are very important in the life of folk artists. The rural society's needs for art and craft objects are supplied by the local artists and craftsmen which are mainly of three types viz **ritualistic, utilitarian** and **individualistic**.

There are many kinds of ritualistic folk art like **Patachitra, Pichuai, Alpana, Kolam** etc. Decorative wood carving, embroidery, basket work, earthen ware etc. are among the typical utilitarian folk art. These are made by rural artists without any formal training, and most of these designs are repeated by generation after generation. For example, there are hardly any change in the motif of terracotta toys. Those were also made in **Harappa** five thousand years before. Some folk artists attempt to experiment with new forms from time to time and create an individualistic type of folk art. These artists develop a new style within the old format. These innovations are to be found in the motif of **Madhubani** painting, **Kantha** design and **Kalighat Pata Chitra**.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- describe the background and region of Folk Art of India;
- identify the different regional folk forms of India;
- explain the medium, techniques and styles of these folk arts;
- state the designs and motifs used in folk art;
- write the names of different kinds of ritualistic folk arts.



Notes



KOLAM



Notes

4.1 KOLAM

Title	–	Floor painting with “Kalas”.
Style	–	Kolam
Artist	–	Unknown house wife
Medium	–	Rice paste and pigments
Period	–	1992
Site	–	A locality near Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Floor decoration is one of the most popular forms of art in any culture all over the world. This is also to be found in every part of India in different medium like **Alpana, Rangoli, Kolam, Sanjhi** etc. **Kolam** is the most important part in the cultural and religious festivals of South India. During **Pongal** and other festivals, this decorative art work is done on the floor in front of the house and on the space before the alter of the deity. **Kolam**, like other floor decorative arts of India, is a symbol of fortune. Designs and motifs are traditional in nature and these are both floral and geometrical forms. The floor should be wet or moist by sprinkling water on it. The dry coarse ground rice flour is held between the thumb and forefingers. The hands keep on moving while the rice powder is rubbed to release on the floor along the predetermined design. It is very important to continue the drawing as long as possible without any pause. This fluency of line is achieved by the artist only from experience. Young girls learn this from their mother and grandmother.

Besides the symbolic value of these motifs, it expresses a very interesting meaning of life also. Rice powder is readily available. It seems to feed ants to show one must take care of other forms of life too.

This Kolam is being painted by a house wife. It shows the freehand drawing skill of the artist. There are different symbolic forms like pitchers, lamps and coconut trees. All these are integral parts of Indian rural life. These designs are basically in geometrical format and with very bright colours like Red, Orange, Blue, Yellow and Pink.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

1. State some of the floor decoration arts of India.
2. What are the designs and motifs used in **Kolam painting**?
3. Write on the method of **Kolam painting**.
4. What are the objects shown in the enlisted **Kolam painting**?



Notes



PHULKARI



Notes

4.2 PHULKARI

Title	–	Chadar
Artist	–	Unknown.
Style	–	Phulkari
Medium	–	Embroidery on cloth with coloured thread.
Period	–	Contemporary.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Phulkari actually means “flowered work”. This term is used for a type of embroidery practised by folk women in Punjab. These are done on both small and large cloth pieces and these are used for different purposes like veils to cover heads, garment pieces, chadar and bedspreads or bed covers. The embroidery is worked in floss-silk upon the coarse cotton cloth in darning stitch over counted threads being worked from the back of the fabric.

Basic motifs of **Phulkari** designs is geometric. Squares and triangles are composed all over the space, which are covered with mainly warm colours. There are simple designs and large sized elaborate ones. Squares, dashes, triangles and straight lines and zig-zag lines from endless innovative variation. The predominant colour is the gold of the ripening wheat harvest in Punjab.

The women will first pick up the outline of each section with a needle before it is worked in a direction that contrasts with the section adjacent to it. The combination of contrasting vertical and horizontal stitches results in a beautiful pattern.

The enlisted work of **Phulkari** is designed with traditional geometrical shapes. Star forms are stitched with golden yellow and silvery white thread on red cloth. The basic motif is consisted of a large star surrounded with small stars to create a diamond shaped space on the design. The silken shine of the thread creates bright relief on the warmth of the red surface of the cloth.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2

1. What is the meaning of **Phulkari**?
2. What are the materials used in **Phulkari**?
3. What is the predominant colour in these works?
4. How the pattern of **Phulkari** is achieved?



Notes



KANTHA STITCHING



Notes

4.3 KANTHA STITCHING

Title	–	Kantha from Bengal.
Artist	–	Unknown
Style	–	Kantha Stitching
Medium	–	Embroidery on silk with coloured thread
Period	–	Contemporary.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Bengal has a delightful folk tradition of embroidery and quilting known as **Kantha**. The **Kanthas** are made of discarded *sarees* and *dhoties*. These are sewn together to make it thick. **Kanthas** are generally made by the women of all classes in Bengal, particularly the old women. They use their spare time to sew these **Kanthas** by coloured threads from the border of old *sarees* and are stitched along the border line and the surface is filled with various designs. Quilts, wedding mats, bags and wraps for mirror and jewellery were all quilted and embroidered.

Motifs and designs are taken from rural landscapes, ritualistic activities/purposes (mandala), objects from every day life, rural festivals, circus entertainers and even historical figures such as **Queen Victoria** to **Lenin**. The motifs on these **Kanthas** make it clear that the folk women were mostly illiterate but had keen power of observation for day-to-day happenings around them.

The enlisted **Kantha** is a *saree* which is stitched in a typical traditional style and technique. The motifs are stylized forms of animals and human figures. The base pink colour of the *saree* is done in chain stitch with various coloured threads like white, green, purple, red, brown, yellow, grey and black.

A king like figure is sitting on the horse with an umbrella in his hand. Some stylized forms of birds and bees are used as motifs. The influence of **Kalighat Pata Chitra** is very clear on these motifs.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.3

1. Name the sources of designs and motifs of **Kantha**.
2. Identify the functional objects on which **Kantha** motifs are stitched.
3. Describe **Kantha saree** in two lines.
4. Which folk art form has influenced the **Kantha motifs**?



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What is folk art? How does it help rural society?
2. Describe any one form of floor decoration of folk art style along with its method of preparation.
3. Write a note on **Kantha** stitching.
4. Write in brief about the **Phulkari** style.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Folk artists of India beautify the objects of use and the surroundings of their dwellings like floor, wall, courtyard, etc. There are many kinds of folk arts in India, like painting, sculpture, toy, costume, utensils, furniture, etc. Almost every village of India has its own style of folk arts. Among these, some are very popular and well known, for example, **Kalamkari**, **Kolam**, **Madhubani**, **Kalighat**, **Phulkari**, **Kantha** and many more. **Kolam** is floor decoration while **Phulkari** and **Kantha** are embroidery on cloth. **Madhubani**, **Kalighat**, **Kalamkari** are famous for paintings. The artists use the same motifs and designs generation after generation. The **Phulkari** artists use geometrical design. The **Kolam** painters prefer different objects from nature and Bangali women like to use human and animal figures as motif on **Kantha**.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 4.1**
1. Alpana, Rangoli, Kolam
 2. Geometrical, floral forms
 3. To moist the ground
Rice powder and other colours to be held and rubbed to release on ground.
 4. Pitchers, lamps and coconut trees.
- 4.2**
1. Flowered work
 2. Cloth, floss silk
 3. Golden
 4. Combination of vertical and horizontal stitches.



Notes

**Notes**

- 4.3**
1. Rural landscape, ritualistic activities/purposes (mandala), objects from every day life, rural festival, circus, historical figures.
 2. Quilts, wedding mats, bags, wraps for mirror, Jewellery, etc.
 3. Done in chain stitches with white, green purple, red, brown, yellow, grey and black figures of horse, kings, birds, bees, etc.
 4. Kalighat Patachitra

GLOSSARY

- Queen Victoria – British Queen who ruled India
- Lenin – Communist leader of Russia
- Patachitra – Paintings by Kalighat artists of Bengal
- Pichuai – Back drop scroll painting of Rajasthan.
- Alpana – Floor decoration of Bengal
- Sanjhi – Folk wall painting of Uttar Pradesh
- Terracotta – Burnt clay
- Symbolic – Something used for representing something else.
- Utilitarian – Useful objects used in every day life.
- Ritualistic – Objects used for religious purposes
- Individualistic – Personal style.