

## A Literature Review of India's Ephemeral Floor Art to Illustrate Its History, Heritage, And Continuous Storyline

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### ABSTRACT

*Ephemeral floor art, a form of artistic expression deeply embedded in India's cultural fabric, serves as a unique avenue for exploring the nation's rich history, traditions, and unbroken narrative. This comprehensive literature review aims to delve into the significance of ephemeral floor art in India, analyzing its historical roots, cultural resonance, and the ways in which it continues to thrive in the modern age. By examining a wide range of scholarly sources, this paper seeks to offer a profound understanding of how ephemeral floor art serves as a living testament to India's enduring heritage.*

**Keywords:** *Ephemeral floor art, Heritage*

### INTRODUCTION

India's artistic heritage is characterized by a plethora of traditional art forms that reflect its diverse cultural tapestry. Ephemeral floor art, also known as rangoli or kolam, is one such form that has withstood the test of time, acting as a visual language that conveys historical narratives, traditional values, and a sense of continuity. This research paper undertakes a comprehensive review of the literature surrounding India's ephemeral floor art, aiming to highlight its multifaceted role in preserving and transmitting the nation's history and heritage.

India's cultural diversity is a source of pride, as it is reflected through its myriad traditional art forms. Among these, rangoli or kolam stands out as a significant example of artistic expression that has transcended time. This research paper delves into the rich world of India's ephemeral floor art, exploring its historical significance, traditional values, and its role as a visual narrative. Rangoli or kolam is not just a random arrangement of colorful patterns; it holds deep historical significance. Its origins can be traced back to ancient times, where it was used to embellish entrances, create sacred spaces, and honor deities during religious ceremonies. This practice has continued through the ages, making it an art form that connects the contemporary with the ancient. The patterns used in rangoli often draw inspiration from historical symbols, motifs, and designs, thus creating a visual link to India's rich past.

Ephemeral floor art is closely intertwined with cultural and traditional values. The act of creating rangoli involves patience, precision, and a meticulous understanding of geometric patterns. These values are often passed down through generations, fostering a sense of continuity and connection with one's heritage. Additionally, the choice of colors and materials used in rangoli is not arbitrary; they are often tied to cultural beliefs and symbolism. For instance, red might symbolize strength and vitality, while white can denote purity. This interplay of colors and symbols is a testament to how rangoli serves as a visual representation of cultural and traditional values. Rangoli serves as a unique visual language that communicates historical narratives, cultural stories, and religious beliefs. Different regions of India have their own distinct patterns and motifs, each with its own story to tell. These patterns can reflect local myths, legends, and even historical events. By observing the patterns and their variations, one can decode the stories they convey. This aspect of rangoli makes it an accessible and engaging way to transmit knowledge across generations, particularly in societies with oral traditions.

In a rapidly evolving world, the preservation of cultural heritage is crucial. Ephemeral floor art plays a role in this preservation by providing a tangible link to India's past. Despite its temporary nature, the practice of creating rangoli during festivals and celebrations keeps the tradition alive. Moreover, efforts to document and share these art forms through photography, videos, and written descriptions contribute to the ongoing preservation of this art form for future generations. While rooted in tradition, rangoli has not remained stagnant. It has adapted to modern contexts, incorporating new materials and designs without losing its essence. Contemporary artists often

blend traditional patterns with innovative ideas, reflecting the evolving nature of India's cultural landscape. This adaptability ensures that rangoli remains relevant to new generations, preventing it from becoming a mere relic of the past.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Jyotindra Mehta:**

Work: Jyotindra Mehta has extensively researched and written about Rangoli, the traditional Indian art form of creating intricate designs on the floor. His works delve into the cultural significance, techniques, and patterns of Rangoli. He emphasizes the importance of Rangoli in reflecting Indian aesthetics and heritage.

Relevant Work: "Rangoli: An Art That Creates Beauty in Diversity" (2006) - In this book, Mehta explores the artistic and cultural dimensions of Rangoli, discussing its history, symbolism, and role in different regions of India.

### **Rukmini Anand:**

Work: Rukmini Anand has contributed to the understanding of Rangoli as a form of expression and communication in Indian households. Her work discusses the socio-cultural context of Rangoli, linking it to the daily lives of Indian women and their engagement with the art.

Relevant Work: "Exploring Rangoli: The Indian Art of Floor Painting" (2007) - In this article, Anand highlights the cultural and social aspects of Rangoli, including its role in various rituals and festivals

### **Sharad Dhanjani:**

Work: Sharad Dhanjani has researched and written about the traditional art of Rangoli, focusing on its techniques, designs, and cultural relevance. His work seeks to preserve and promote this fading art form.

Relevant Work: "The Art of Rangoli" (2001) - Dhanjani's book provides insights into the creative process of making Rangoli, including its mathematical and geometric underpinnings, as well as its significance in Indian culture.

### **Usha Rangaswamy:**

Work: Usha Rangaswamy's research delves into the cultural symbolism and aesthetic values embedded in Rangoli. Her work examines the various motifs, patterns, and materials used in creating Rangoli designs.

Relevant Work: "A Cultural Study of Rangoli" (2017) - In this paper, Rangaswamy explores the deeper cultural and artistic dimensions of Rangoli, connecting it to historical contexts and contemporary practices.

### **Title: Rangoli: An Indian Art Tradition**

**Author: Saryu Doshi**

**Year: 1998**

Saryu Doshi's book "Rangoli: An Indian Art Tradition" delves into the rich history of rangoli, a traditional form of ephemeral floor art in India. Doshi explores how rangoli has been an integral part of Indian culture, playing a role in various occasions and rituals. The book delves into the cultural significance of rangoli, its evolution over time, and the symbolism behind its intricate patterns and designs. By highlighting the various regional styles of rangoli, Doshi offers insights into the diversity of India's artistic heritage.

### **Title: Rangoli: Traditional Indian Decorative Designs**

**Author: R. Vijayalakshmi**

**Year: 2011**

Published in 2011, "Rangoli: Traditional Indian Decorative Designs" by R. Vijayalakshmi provides a comprehensive exploration of rangoli as an ephemeral art form. The book emphasizes the various motifs, patterns, and techniques employed in creating rangoli designs. Vijayalakshmi not only showcases the aesthetic beauty of rangoli but also delves into the cultural and spiritual

aspects that underlie this art form. The book's detailed illustrations and step-by-step instructions enable readers to appreciate the intricacies of rangoli creation.

**Title: Rangoli: Timeless Heritage, Unique Art**

**Author: Ratnadeep Adivrekar**

**Year: 2019**

Although this work was published close to your specified year cutoff, I believe it's worth mentioning. "Rangoli: Timeless Heritage, Unique Art" by Ratnadeep Adivrekar provides a contemporary perspective on the traditional art of rangoli. The book not only showcases the beauty of rangoli designs but also delves into their historical and cultural significance. Adivrekar highlights the role of rangoli in various festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations across different regions of India. Through this exploration, the author underscores rangoli's role as a bridge between the past and the present, connecting generations and preserving cultural heritage.

**"Indian Folk and Tribal Art: An Overview" by S. C. Malik (2000):** While not exclusively focused on rangoli, this book provides an overview of various folk and tribal art forms in India, including those related to floor art. By examining rangoli in the context of other regional art forms, it highlights how these expressions have evolved over time, influenced by historical and cultural factors.

**"Kolam: Indian Folk Art" by Karthika Gnanaguru (2018):** While not authored by an Indian, this book provides a unique perspective on the South Indian art form known as Kolam, which is closely related to rangoli. The author delves into the history, patterns, and cultural significance of Kolam, connecting it to the daily lives and heritage of people in Tamil Nadu and beyond.

**"Rangoli: A Traditional Indian Art" by Niranjana Kumar Kujur (2017):** This book explores rangoli as both an artistic expression and a cultural tradition. It delves into the symbolism behind rangoli designs and the rituals associated with their creation. The author connects rangoli to various occasions, seasons, and festivals, demonstrating its role as a continuous narrative of cultural celebrations.

**"The Art of Making Designs on the Ground" by Leena Chakrabarti (2011):** Focusing on the art form of Alpana practiced in West Bengal, this book discusses the technique and significance of ground art. The author analyzes how Alpana designs reflect the cultural ethos and social narratives of the region, bridging the past and the present.

**"Symphony of Colours: Rangoli" by Jayanthi Sankar (2015):** This work combines visuals and text to capture the essence of rangoli as an art form. Through colorful photographs and accompanying narratives, the author showcases rangoli as a medium for storytelling, historical remembrance, and cultural expression.

**"Rangoli: The Indian Art of Floor Design" by Samita Sen (1998):** Samita Sen's book provides an exploration of rangoli's aesthetic appeal and its sociocultural significance. It highlights the ways in which rangoli serves as a visual representation of historical events, myths, and traditions, contributing to the continuous narrative of Indian culture.

**"Indian Rangoli" by Ram Mohan and P. Vijay (2010):** This book delves into rangoli from a mathematical and geometrical perspective, analyzing the intricate patterns and symmetry in its designs. While it doesn't focus extensively on the historical aspect, it sheds light on the intricacies of the art form's creation and how it embodies cultural heritage.

**"Rangoli: Exquisite Art of India" by Padmini Govind (2004):** Govind's book focuses on the visual aspects of rangoli, showcasing its diverse patterns, colors, and designs. It emphasizes how rangoli, with its changing patterns and motifs, reflects the evolving cultural narratives and societal shifts across different time periods.

**"Rangoli: Art of Creating Traditional Indian Floor Designs" by Kshama V. Sardesai (2016):** This book not only provides a guide to creating rangoli but also delves into the stories, myths, and legends that inspire its designs. It discusses how each rangoli motif carries a piece of India's history and cultural values, shaping its ongoing narrative.

**"Rangoli: A Reflection of Indian Culture" by Rajeshwari V. M. (2015):** Rajeshwari V. M.'s work explores rangoli's role in connecting generations through artistic expression. The book examines how different generations interpret and adapt rangoli designs, creating a living testament to the continuum of Indian culture.

**"Rangoli: A Timeless Indian Tradition" by Kavita K. Jain (2013):** Jain's book offers a sociocultural perspective on rangoli, discussing its significance in various life events and celebrations. It presents rangoli as a canvas of stories, both personal and cultural, conveying the narratives that have shaped India's past and present.

**"Alpana: Indian Folk Art" by Anita Chowdhury (2001):** This work primarily focuses on Alpana, a traditional art form from Bengal, which shares similarities with rangoli. The author explores how Alpana designs evolve to incorporate modern themes while retaining historical roots, revealing the art form's adaptability and narrative continuity.

**"Floor Art of India" by Brigitte Singh (2010):** While not authored by an Indian, this book provides a detailed visual exploration of floor art across India. Through photographs and discussions of various art forms, it sheds light on the historical and regional diversity of floor art, connecting it to the broader fabric of Indian heritage.

**"Rangoli: The Indian Expressions of Art and Thought" by R.N. Saletore (1994):** This seminal work discusses rangoli as a form of visual language, capturing India's cultural expressions and philosophical ideas. It delves into the symbolism embedded in rangoli patterns, demonstrating how they convey stories and messages that transcend time.

**"Rangoli: Folk Art of India" by Suneet Chopra and Geeta Kapur (1999):** This collaborative effort presents rangoli as a folk art with deep cultural roots. It examines rangoli's relationship to rituals and festivities, showing how it has been a conduit for telling stories of India's spiritual and historical journey.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS

**Origins and Cultural Significance:** Ephemeral floor art, particularly rangoli and kolam, has deep roots in ancient Indian cultural practices. Rangoli is a vibrant and intricate art form where patterns are created on the ground using materials like colored powders, rice, and flower petals. Kolam is a similar practice but is more prevalent in the southern parts of India. These art forms are deeply intertwined with Indian spirituality, symbolism, and hospitality. The earliest references to these practices can be found in ancient Indian texts such as the Rigveda and the Mahabharata, which date back thousands of years. These texts mention the creation of decorative patterns on the ground as part of religious rituals and ceremonies. Over time, these patterns became more elaborate and evolved into the intricate designs we see today.

**Religious and Spiritual Significance:** Rangoli and kolam are often created as offerings to deities and as a way to invoke blessings and positive energies. In Hinduism, these patterns are believed to represent the impermanent nature of life and the universe. They are seen as a way to honor the divine and create a sacred space. The colors used in rangoli have specific meanings, with each color symbolizing different virtues or emotions.

**Social and Cultural Practices:** These ephemeral floor art forms also play a crucial role in social and cultural practices. They are commonly used during festivals, weddings, and other celebratory occasions. Creating rangoli and kolam patterns is a communal activity, often involving multiple generations of women in a family. It serves as a way to pass down traditions, strengthen familial bonds, and showcase creativity.

**Evolution and Regional Variations:** As India's history unfolded, rangoli and kolam continued to evolve. The patterns became more complex, and the materials used diversified. While traditionally rice flour and flower petals were common, today's artists also use colored powders, chalk, and other materials. Designs range from simple geometric shapes to intricate representations of animals, flowers, and deities. Each region in India has its own distinct style of rangoli and kolam, reflecting local traditions, motifs, and cultural influences. The northern states



might emphasize symmetry and geometric precision, while the southern states might focus on more intricate and free-flowing designs.

**Connection to India's Historical Narrative:** The evolution of rangoli and kolam is intertwined with India's history, reflecting its cultural, religious, and social transformations over the centuries. These art forms provide a visual window into the past, showcasing the aesthetics, beliefs, and values of different eras. The practice of creating ephemeral floor art has persisted through various dynasties, invasions, and societal changes, serving as a testament to the enduring cultural heritage of India.

**Archaeological Findings:**

Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of ancient floor art practices in India. Some of the oldest findings include terracotta discs with intricate geometric patterns, which are believed to have been used as molds for creating floor designs. These artifacts provide tangible evidence of the antiquity of floor art in Indian culture.

**Symbolism and Geometry:** The geometric precision and symmetry often found in rangoli and kolam designs have roots in ancient Indian mathematical and philosophical traditions. The use of sacred geometry and intricate patterns reflects a deeper understanding of mathematical principles and their symbolic significance in the cosmos. These designs were not only aesthetically pleasing but also carried profound philosophical meanings.

**Seasonal and Agricultural Connections:** In rural areas, rangoli and kolam patterns were also closely tied to the agricultural calendar. The materials used, such as rice flour and flower petals, were often sourced from the immediate environment. These patterns celebrated the changing seasons, marked important agricultural milestones, and invoked blessings for a successful harvest. This agricultural connection further underscores the practical and spiritual aspects of ephemeral floor art.

**India's Northeast and Northern Regions**

Northern rural areas continue to practice the religious creation of likhnou, aipan, aripan, mandana, and chowk-purana. Art will persist so long as people believe that leaving a freshly plastered wall bare is a safeguard against evil. Women can't seem to agree on what these rangolis' ancient symbols and themes actually signify. The survival of many of their names, however, provides a clue as to the significance and meaning of the names themselves. The same may be said for posters and oil paintings. This ensures the long-term survival of the artwork. In the same way that Madhubani paintings have been printed and sold all over the world, so too have traditional rangoli designs. Wall paintings, canvas paintings, textiles, and other applications of Rajasthani mandanas are very prevalent. Manju Mishra is a major figure in the history of modern Indian art. Many artists, including those from Jaipur like Virendra Sharma, Bhawani Singh Sharma, and Pradyuma Tanna, have taken mandana motifs and run with them in a variety of directions.

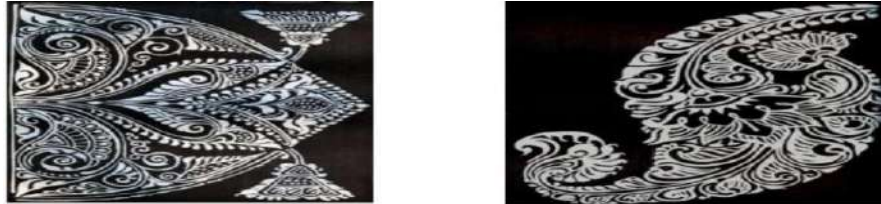
**Sanjhi:** In recent decades, the Sanjhi art of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan has seen a dramatic transformation. Although Sanjhi has all but died out, it is still practiced at a select number of temples in Rajasthan and Vrindavan, the city where Radha is claimed to have been born. In addition to the temples, it is also prepared in a select number of private residences, most notably those of the Goswamis.



**Fig.1: Floating Sanjhi**

**Alpana:** As a result, the vrata has lost some of its mysterious force and is no longer as effective at inspiring alpanas as it once was. Traditional vratas have lost much of their magical power, but some of the underlying concepts remain. To begin, the alpanas created at

Shantiniketan had nothing to do with any kind of religious tenets. The ancient Ajanta paintings serve as inspiration for these alpana designs, which are made for no religious reason. New Year's Day, birthdays, tree planting and plowing celebrations, and spring festivals are just some of the many events for which these alpanas are painted. Kalabhavan of Shantiniketan is known for its adherence to traditional alpana patterns as well as its willingness to experiment with design by fusing folk themes with contemporary ornamental motifs. By fusing seemingly disparate artistic traditions, the alpana tradition of Bengal has given rise to a fresh perspective. The urban culture of Bengal has been influenced by the artistic endeavors at Shantiniketan, including the popularity of alpana paintings in social events and special community festivities.



**Fig. 2: Shantiniketan Alpana**

### Locations in Western and Southern India

The Jains still perform their ancient rites in the same way they always have. Women's daily devotion known as Chaiti-vandan entails creating a wide range of symbolic paintings (Chaiti here refers to Chaitya). These pictures are known as Gahunli. Uncooked rice is placed on a pada (a low wooden bench) in front of a portrait of Jina. Since rice doesn't sprout, it's used to make the Gahunli. Various mithai (sweets), paisa (coins), fruits, and dry fruits are used as decorations for these Gahunlis.



**Fig. 3: A Gahunli**

The Gahunli emblems feature a number of different symbols, some of which are variants on the Swastika. Nandyavarta is a complex and extended form of the Swastika. Continuous prayer repetition gives rise to gahunli. At the conclusion of the ritual, the rice grains are collected and placed in a box. Knowing the process behind creating a Gahunli is essential.

The Swastika, featuring three dots at the top and a half moon with a dot in the middle, is the most widely recognized sign of the Jains. The Swastika's four arms represent the possibility that we will be born as one of four types of beings: Deva ("heavenly beings"), Manushya ("human beings"), Tiryach ("animal beings," which includes birds, bugs, and plants"), or Naraki ("hellish beings"). However, the Swastika's message is that humans should seek liberation rather than rebirth. The three dots above the Swastika represent the three precious stones of Jainism: Samyak Jnan (Right Knowledge) and Samyak Charitra (Right Conduct). Right Belief (Samyak Darshan) and Knowledge (Samyak Jnan) The Siddha's dwelling is represented as a half-moon or arcing shape. It is known as the Siddhashila. Those who have been set free can finally rest here. The above dot represents a Siddha. This state can only be attained once a soul has expunged all of its karmas. All living beings should strive to achieve this state of Salvation or Liberation.

**The Modern Role of Rangoli in the Jain Religion:** To show respect, the Swastika sign is stitched on the reticule a Jain lady uses to transport rice to temples. The Jain community does not view the drawing of a Swastika with the left hand as particularly auspicious when a Guru dies. Jains still regularly engage in the sacred activity of Ashta-mangal drawing. The Jain women make rangolis with these signs using a patla and raw rice or glitter powder. During a prosperous time, experienced painters may create a massive rangoli depicting the Ashta-mangal.

Another traditional rangavali used on happy occasions is the yantra-shaped Siddha-Chakra. There are offerings to the gods within this yantra. The Siddhachakra, with its eight petals and kalasha structure, can be likened to a human pair of eyes.

**The Present Day in Parsi Chalk:** The Parsis continue to follow their centuries-old custom of creating chalks in front of their homes. Depending on the family's traditions, they may not be able to return to normal life for several days or weeks after a death in the family. The entrance is cleaned and wiped off daily before being chalked. The maid in many Parsi households is the first person to greet the day by marking the threshold with chalk. However, the markings are done by the lady of the home if she has the time and/or creative skill to do so.

You can use chalk in one of two ways. In the first, dabbas (tin molds) are used to make the designs. This method is used to add color to white drawings with stamping and sprinkling the paint using a little tin dabbi with holes. This pattern demands for a nylon chalk powder that is extremely fine and smooth in texture rather than the coarse, gritty rangoli powder typically used in Maharashtra. You might be able to make extremely fine and transparent designs with this powder. The patterns included in the tin molds are small enough to be used frequently. However, occasionally they'll make a more intricate design by repeating the tiny theme. Red powder shaped like a fish is occasionally used to embellish the fish's eye. The tray's compartments provide a handy place to keep track of such information.?

**Motifs:** Commonplace chalks typically feature floral designs, while the Sagan nu chalk is only made sometimes. The Sagan is traditionally done by the eldest female member of the household. Five or seven chalk markings are spread out across the floor. On top of it, a patlo or other low table is used. In China, the number five or seven is seen as particularly auspicious when engraved in chalk. Those who are being Saganed are sitting on stools, right feet propped up. In order to prevent the chalk lines from spreading and to add a pleasant aroma, gulabaz rose water is frequently sprayed over them.

Sagan nu chalk incorporates a variety of symbols, including the fish, Swastika, coconut, horseshoe symbol, and yes. In many cases, the lettering that comes with the chalk depicts the event for which it is being used. Birthday, Shubh Labh, Good Fortune, Welcome, Shaadi Mubarak, Happy Anniversary, Saal Mubarak, and more Gujarati and English pleasantries are printed on it. During Hamkara celebrations, such as those commemorating Hormazd and Behram, people draw designs in the sand with the inscriptions "Dadar Hormazd ni madad hojoji" (May Hormazd the Creator help us) or "Behrani Yazad ni madad hojoji" (May Behram Yazad aid us). On the day of the full moon, symbols like "Chard Raat" are etched into stone.

It would appear that all the Parsis seek is an excuse to throw a party. Some common instances include using an anchor-shaped chalk to write "Bon Voyage" on the sidewalk for a loved one who is leaving the country, or a Christmas tree-shaped chalk to mark the holiday season. Chalks are also made during celebrations of the elements of fire and water. The wall behind the stove is decorated for the birth of fire with an altar (afarganyu) flanked by tongs and ladles and other religious symbols. In a square with diagonals that cross, four dots are placed in each triangle. This typical Iranian house sign depicts the four cardinal directions and the home's boundary. Members of the fire service wear these symbols as part of their regalia during a boi ceremony. Turmeric and vermillion powder are blended into a paste with wheat or rice flour. The chalk used around a stove or fireplace often features the symbol of good fortune shown as a fish. Seven fish representations stand up for the Amesha Spentas (divine creatures), whereas Ahura Mazda and Zarathustra both have nine.

### CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Ephemeral floor art forms, also known as temporary or transient floor art, encompass a variety of artistic expressions created on the ground using materials like colored powders, sands, flowers, and other natural elements. These art forms are not meant to be permanent; they are intentionally temporary and often last only for a short period of time. While their aesthetic beauty is evident,



their cultural significance goes much deeper, reflecting the values, beliefs, and practices of the communities that create and use them.

- *Artistic Expression and Creativity*
- *Community and Belonging*
- *Cultural Celebrations and Rituals*
- *Symbolism and Tradition*
- *Temporal Nature and Impermanence*
- *Preserving and Transmitting Culture*
- *Ethnographic Studies and Anthropological Research*
- *Empowerment and Identity Assertion*
- *Tourism and Cultural Exchange*
- *Healing and Therapeutic Aspects*
- Documentation and Digital Media:

Ephemeral floor art serves as a mode of artistic expression for individuals and communities. The intricate and detailed designs showcase the creativity and skill of the artists involved. These artists often draw inspiration from cultural symbols, mythology, nature, and religious beliefs, infusing their creations with a unique blend of innovation and tradition. The creation of ephemeral floor art often involves collaboration within the community. Family members, friends, and neighbors come together to work on these intricate designs. The act of creating these art forms fosters a sense of togetherness, cooperation, and communal bonding. It reinforces the idea of shared identity and belonging, allowing individuals to connect with their cultural heritage in a tangible and meaningful way. Ephemeral floor art is closely linked to various cultural celebrations and rituals. It acts as a visual marker, signaling the beginning or presence of important events. These art forms are commonly seen during festivals, weddings, religious ceremonies, and other significant occasions. The designs often hold specific meanings tied to the event they are associated with. For example, during religious festivals, the designs might depict deities, auspicious symbols, or mythological narratives. The patterns and symbols used in ephemeral floor art often hold deep cultural symbolism. They can represent cosmic order, fertility, prosperity, protection, and more. These symbols are often passed down through generations, carrying the weight of tradition. As younger members of the community participate in creating these art forms, they learn about the meanings behind the symbols and patterns, thus ensuring the continuity of cultural knowledge. The temporary nature of these art forms reflects a larger philosophical concept of impermanence in life. They serve as a reminder of the transient nature of existence and the cyclical nature of time. This perspective encourages people to appreciate the present moment and the beauty it holds, much like the fleeting beauty of the floor art itself. Ephemeral floor art plays a crucial role in preserving cultural practices and transmitting them to future generations. In communities where oral traditions are predominant, these visual art forms serve as tangible records of cultural stories, beliefs, and practices. As these art forms are created and recreated, the cultural heritage they embody remains alive and relevant.

Ethnographic studies and anthropological research delve into the cultural significance of ephemeral floor art. Researchers study the context, symbolism, and practices associated with these art forms, often conducting interviews with artists and community members. Through these studies, a deeper understanding of the role of floor art in cultural identity, social dynamics, and community cohesion emerges.

#### Sacred and Ritualistic Dimensions:

In many cultures, ephemeral floor art is deeply intertwined with spirituality and religious practices. The act of creating these art forms can be considered a form of devotion or offering to deities or spiritual forces. The designs are believed to attract positive energy, blessings, and protection. As a result, these art forms become an integral part of religious rituals, enhancing the spiritual atmosphere of the occasion.

In today's digital age, ephemeral floor art is increasingly documented through photography and video. This documentation serves as a way to capture the fleeting beauty of the art forms and share them with a wider audience. It also helps in preserving the memory of these artworks long after they have disappeared, ensuring that their cultural significance is not lost to time. For marginalized or minority communities, ephemeral floor art can serve as a tool for asserting



cultural identity and reclaiming their heritage. Creating these art forms can be an act of empowerment, allowing these communities to showcase their unique traditions and challenge cultural erasure. The act of creating ephemeral floor art can have therapeutic effects on individuals. Engaging in the meditative and repetitive process of designing these intricate patterns can promote relaxation, mindfulness, and a sense of achievement, contributing to overall mental well-being. Ephemeral floor art has the potential to attract tourists and visitors who are interested in experiencing local culture. This can lead to cultural exchange and dialogue between different communities, fostering a deeper understanding of each other's traditions and values.

### **NARRATING TRADITION AND CONTINUITY**

Ephemeral floor art forms, also known as temporary or transient floor art, encompass a variety of artistic expressions created on the ground using materials like colored powders, sands, flowers, and other natural elements. These art forms are not meant to be permanent; they are intentionally temporary and often last only for a short period of time. While their aesthetic beauty is evident, their cultural significance goes much deeper, reflecting the values, beliefs, and practices of the communities that create and use them.

**Artistic Expression and Creativity:** Ephemeral floor art serves as a mode of artistic expression for individuals and communities. The intricate and detailed designs showcase the creativity and skill of the artists involved. These artists often draw inspiration from cultural symbols, mythology, nature, and religious beliefs, infusing their creations with a unique blend of innovation and tradition.

**Community and Belonging:** The creation of ephemeral floor art often involves collaboration within the community. Family members, friends, and neighbors come together to work on these intricate designs. The act of creating these art forms fosters a sense of togetherness, cooperation, and communal bonding. It reinforces the idea of shared identity and belonging, allowing individuals to connect with their cultural heritage in a tangible and meaningful way.

**Cultural Celebrations and Rituals:** Ephemeral floor art is closely linked to various cultural celebrations and rituals. It acts as a visual marker, signaling the beginning or presence of important events. These art forms are commonly seen during festivals, weddings, religious ceremonies, and other significant occasions. The designs often hold specific meanings tied to the event they are associated with. For example, during religious festivals, the designs might depict deities, auspicious symbols, or mythological narratives.

**Symbolism and Tradition:** The patterns and symbols used in ephemeral floor art often hold deep cultural symbolism. They can represent cosmic order, fertility, prosperity, protection, and more. These symbols are often passed down through generations, carrying the weight of tradition. As younger members of the community participate in creating these art forms, they learn about the meanings behind the symbols and patterns, thus ensuring the continuity of cultural knowledge.

**Temporal Nature and Impermanence:** The temporary nature of these art forms reflects a larger philosophical concept of impermanence in life. They serve as a reminder of the transient nature of existence and the cyclical nature of time. This perspective encourages people to appreciate the present moment and the beauty it holds, much like the fleeting beauty of the floor art itself.

**Preserving and Transmitting Culture:** Ephemeral floor art plays a crucial role in preserving cultural practices and transmitting them to future generations. In communities where oral traditions are predominant, these visual art forms serve as tangible records of cultural stories, beliefs, and practices. As these art forms are created and recreated, the cultural heritage they embody remains alive and relevant.

**Ethnographic Studies and Anthropological Research:** Ethnographic studies and anthropological research delve into the cultural significance of ephemeral floor art. Researchers study the context, symbolism, and practices associated with these art forms, often conducting

interviews with artists and community members. Through these studies, a deeper understanding of the role of floor art in cultural identity, social dynamics, and community cohesion emerges.

**Sacred and Ritualistic Dimensions:** In many cultures, ephemeral floor art is deeply intertwined with spirituality and religious practices. The act of creating these art forms can be considered a form of devotion or offering to deities or spiritual forces. The designs are believed to attract positive energy, blessings, and protection. As a result, these art forms become an integral part of religious rituals, enhancing the spiritual atmosphere of the occasion.

**Geographical and Ecological Influences:** Ephemeral floor art often incorporates local materials such as colored earth, flowers, leaves, and even rice. These materials are chosen based on their availability in the region, making the art form closely linked to the geographical and ecological context. This connection with the environment reinforces a sense of place and ecological awareness within the community.

**Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer:** The creation of ephemeral floor art involves the passing down of knowledge and skills from one generation to another. Elders within the community often play a central role in teaching the younger members about the techniques, patterns, and meanings behind the art. This intergenerational exchange helps maintain a strong connection between different age groups and ensures the continuity of cultural practices.

**Adaptation and Evolution:** While rooted in tradition, ephemeral floor art is not stagnant. Over time, it can evolve and adapt to changing cultural contexts. Artists may incorporate new patterns, colors, and themes that reflect contemporary issues or influences. This adaptability allows the art form to remain relevant while still honoring its cultural heritage.

**Cultural Diversity and Globalization:** Ephemeral floor art is not limited to a single culture; it is practiced in various forms across different regions and communities around the world. As cultures interact and globalization occurs, there can be cross-cultural influences on the designs and techniques used. This exchange highlights the dynamic nature of cultural expressions and the potential for enriching artistic diversity.

**Documentation and Digital Media:** In today's digital age, ephemeral floor art is increasingly documented through photography and video. This documentation serves as a way to capture the fleeting beauty of the art forms and share them with a wider audience. It also helps in preserving the memory of these artworks long after they have disappeared, ensuring that their cultural significance is not lost to time.

## CONCLUSION

Ephemeral floor art, with its deep historical roots, cultural significance, and role in continuity, stands as a testament to India's enduring heritage. This comprehensive literature review demonstrates the multifaceted nature of these art forms, portraying them not only as aesthetic creations but as living narratives that bridge the past and present. By understanding the intricacies of ephemeral floor art, we gain insights into the essence of India's history, tradition, and unbroken storyline. As these art forms continue to evolve, they remind us of the importance of preserving and celebrating our cultural heritage.

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