



*The Henna Page*TM
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HENNA

Rangoli

Catherine Carwright-Jones



Rangoli: Elder Women Creating Sacred Geography

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Rangoli: Indian Folk Art

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Rangoli: Elder Women Creating Sacred Geography

Catherine Cartwright Jones 2002

“Angana-cowkajo kantha tumahara”: the *rangoli* drawn in the courtyard is the sign of your luck, o lady!

Identity develops within “place”, and through interaction with “place” (Proshansky 1983: 59). To be human is to live in a world filled with significant places (Relph, 1976: 1), and people intentionally transform places by ritual actions to reaffirm the significance of place and the identity in the context of that place. Place identity, then, is an ongoing process in which emotions and conduct are influenced by the environment, and a person acts upon that environment to achieve a homeostasis within place (Korpela, 1989).

Ritual actions that perform and change space into sacred space can change people’s physical, emotional and metaphysical experiences within that environment, and their behavior within and around that space. The creation of sacred space within an environment changes not only people’s experience of and within that space, but the persons who perform the ritual action to create that space construct for themselves a special identity as creators and maintainer of that space, which includes the position of mediator between those who use the sacred space and the divine presence within the space.

People form their spiritual identities through their interactions with sacred spaces. Hinduism is a non-congregational religion, based on individual worship rather than collective prayer, so though visits to the sacred space of the local temple may be frequent, the primary sacred space for worship is in the home. Temple visitations are not mandatory, nor is there a specific day of worship, so every day prayers and rituals are enacted in the sacred space in the home (Mazumdar and Mazaumdar, 1999: 161). At the neighborhood level in traditional India as elsewhere, there are spaces where religious activity takes place, other areas where social interchange and daily chores take place, and spaces designated for unclean actions. Traditional Indian Hindu domestic space is divided into finite and separated spaces for installation of household deities, food preparation, social gathering, latrine, bathing, and sleeping, as well as the thresholds between these spaces, the household courtyard, and the threshold to the road

outside. Some Hindu women still create *rangoli*, ritual designs drawn in rice flour on the floors of their domestic space, to define, purify, and adorn spaces where ritual activities are performed.

A traditional Hindu Indian woman's life is lived within her home and neighborhood, so her performance of religious activity will take place within these domestic spaces rather than distant sacred spaces which may be unavailable to her because of expense or inaccessibility. The sacred ritual space in the home is the *puja* area. Images of deities are kept in this space, where they are kept clean, fed, prayed to, meditated upon, and honored. The *puja* area is not exclusively a female space, because it serves the religious and ritual needs for the entire family, but the senior female of the home manages this space, establishing it each morning through ritual performance. She is in charge of daily maintenance, cleaning and care of the deities (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999: 161).

Some Hindu women still create ritual floor patterns in many areas of India, with distinctly different patterns in the different states, though popular women's magazines and internet sites have blurred local traditions. They are called *mandna* in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, *rangoli* in Maharashtra and Gujarat, *sathya* in Saurashtra, *raipan* or *aypan* in Bihar, *aipan* in the Kumaon, *alpana* in Bengal, *jhunti* in Orissa, *chowk* in Himachal Pradesh, *cauka rangana* or *cauk purna* or *sonarakhna* in Uttar Pradesh, *muggu* in Andhra Pradesh, *rangavalli* in Karnataka, and *kolam* in south India and Tamil Nadu (Kamrishi, 1985, 247). Some areas such as Bengal use figurative patterns, including foliage, human figures, animals and symbols. Rajasthani floor patterns are usually geometric, using infinitely expandable patterns to fill large spaces. The *kolam* patterns from Tamil Nadu must be drawn as unbroken lines, with no gaps to be left anywhere for evil spirits to enter (Kamrishi, 1985: 252).

The earliest Indian treatise on painting, the "*Chitrakalashana*" mentions the legend of *rangoli*. In this legend, the son of a King's high priest died, and Lord Brahma, asked the king to paint the image of the boy so that he might revitalize him. The Chola rulers of India are recorded to have made extensive use of floor paintings. *Rangoli* are particularly well suited to *kacca* houses, village homes made of traditional materials such as mud brick that had to be resurfaced regularly; for every holiday or special family event, the walls and floors were renewed, and decorated with *rangoli*. As cement has increasingly replaced mud as a building material, *rangoli* are less seen as a requirement for beauty and fitness. As people move to city apartment blocks, *rangoli* become increasingly scarce, as apartment managers refuse to return cleaning deposits when floors and walls marked with artwork. Premade stick-down vinyl *rangoli* are available for city-dwellers who

want festive adornment for holidays, but who no longer have the means or space to create traditional *rangoli*.

Most of the Indian village women who create *rangoli* are post-menopausal, because according to traditional practice Hindu woman who is having a menstrual period, who is pregnant or who has just given birth, cannot create a sacred space. Hinduism traditionally regards menstruating, pregnant or postpartum women as considered ritually unclean, or “polluted”. Post-menopausal women are free from the restrictions placed on younger women, and are therefore assume the duty of sacred affairs and perform the ritual needs of their families (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999: 161-2).

Many post-menopausal women across India create *rangoli* daily to sanctify these spaces. Through the daily action of establishing and maintaining ritual domestic geography, a woman declares her role as household ritual specialist, maintaining and demonstrating her personal relationship with the household deities, and establishing her relationship with the society outside the house. Men traditionally do not do create *rangoli*. Girls practice drawing *rangoli*, and may become proficient at it by the time they are married, but because the duty of maintaining the ritual spaces cannot be regularly performed by women during their menstrual years, the senior women assume the position of being intermediary between the deities and the members of the household, and they can assert some authority through this privileged position. Through *rangoli*, elder women instruct and socialize the younger women of the household into place-oriented sacred traditions, ensuring continuity of culture within space (Sarma, 1963: 220).

A family's elder woman may rise before the rest of the family each morning and create the sacred space in the *puja* area. She wears her *garod* sari, a ritually pure sari appropriate for ritual action. She may sing a devotional song as she cleans the *puja* room and washes the floor and ritual vessels. She cleanses the household altar, offers fruit and flowers, and anoints the deities with sandalwood paste and *kumkum*, an auspicious red body paint. She creates the *rangoli* on the floor to establish the sacred space. In the evening, she brings the deities their evening meal, lights the lamp and incense, and blows the conch shell, and the *rangoli* is swept away (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999: 161).

Some forms of *rangoli* are created with rice flour, rice paste, or the water left from boiling rice. This medium is one available to rural women with little means or access to other materials for artistic expression. Rice flour or paste creates a white pattern on the dark reddish packed clay floor. Other colors may be created with additional materials from the kitchen, such as turmeric or spice powders. The bits of rice are swept away at the end of each day and are consumed by

ants and small creatures that carry the intent of the *rangoli* to the deities. Rats are nourished through *rangoli* to honor *Ganesha*, the Hindu deity who removes obstacles and brings good fortune. Colored rice flour is purchased in the markets to create festive *rangoli* for holidays and weddings. Ordinary white flour will do for daily *rangoli*.

Women create rice flour lines by letting pinches of rice flour flow through their fingertips. Rice flour patterns disappear through the day as people walk back and forth through the areas, and are swept clean at the end of the day, to be renewed the next morning. Women create rice paste patterns by dipping their fingers into thin rice paste and letting it flow through their fingertips, or they may dip a bit of rag or a small stick dipped into the paste as a tool for applying the paste (Saksena, 1979: 47). A woman usually creates these patterns bending over from the hips and allowing the rice flour or paste to flow from her fingertips just skimming along the ground, quickly discharging the material. Some women prefer to work from a squatting or seated position. The standing position allows greater range of motion and quicker action for large *rangoli*, but requires a strong back and flexibility. The squatting or seated position is more relaxed, and allows easier elaboration of detail in small areas, but repeatedly squatting and standing through the creation of a large piece tires the legs.

Rangoli can be created with or filled with flowers rather than rice flour. Petals of various flowers, such as oleanders, cosmos, zinnia, chrysanthemums, and green leaves are arranged into lines and filled shapes. Oil lamps are lit in rangoli on warm festival evenings, creating the atmosphere of a well-planned divine garden (Kamat, 2001).

Village women traditionally worked from patterns memorized from watching their mothers and grandmothers. Girls on their way home from school would look at neighbors' patterns and attempt to reproduce them when they got home. Most traditional floor patterns are geometric and symbolic. The *bindu*, the point, symbolizes the point from which everything emanates, and into which everything merges. The *trikona*, a triangle, represents the male and female principles operating in the universe. The *catuskona*, a square, represents stability. The *pancakona*, the pentagon, is the symbol of the five elements, earth, air, fire, water and ether. The *satkona*, the six-pointed star or hexagram, is the male and female triangle symbols interposed, and is often used to worship the goddess Lakshmi. The *astakona*, octagon, is the symbol of protection, assigned to the god Vishnu. The *swastik*, or swastika, is the symbol of four cardinal points, or the cycle of the sun, symbol of Brahma, symbol of Buddha, and good luck, and is frequently depicted in floor decorations. The *caukra*, or circle, symbolizes life and growth (Saksena, 1979: 53- 4).

Paglya, footprints, are a motif frequently drawn in *rangoli*. They indicate the presence of a deity, most commonly Lakshmi (Kamrisch, 1985: 251). *Rangoli* are specifically drawn to create a location within temporal space to accommodate the presence of a deity, and the footprints indicate a “landing spot”. Some *rangoli* have a series of footprints, indicating the path a deity should take to come into the sacred space (Kamrisch 1985: fig 8).

Traditional representational *rangoli* motifs were plant life such as flowers, leaves, coconut, lotus, mango, and *ashwath* (peepal leaf). Animals represented were cows, elephants, horses, parrots and swans (Kamat, 2001). The deities Ganesh, the Shiva Lingam, and the feet of Lakshmi appeared in *rangoli*. Girls copied patterns from their mothers and grandmothers, and challenged each other for speed and precision in creating complex patterns.

These days, girls copy from *rangoli* pattern books available from Indian publishing companies such as Navneet, or from weekly magazines and websites that feature “new” *rangoli* patterns featuring non-traditional patterns, even including depictions of Santa Claus (<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/festive/4100.htm>).

Special *rangoli* are created for holidays in the Hindu religious calendar, more elaborate than the daily *rangoli*.

Diwali is the most lavish Hindu festival, occurring in October or November at the close of the rainy season, observed to propitiate the *Lakshmi*, goddess of pleasure, plenty, luck and prosperity. Women create *rangoli* patterns that invoke *Lakshmi* to manifest in their domestic space, securing her blessing and abundance in the dry months that may bring thirst and famine. During *Diwali*, women create *rangoli* in every corner of the dwelling space, with multiple auspicious designs, an escalation of patterning to parallel the escalation of festivities, as well as mirroring the level of concern over the difficulties in the dry months to come. Hexagons and six pointed stars, and six petaled lotuses are particularly used for *Diwali* to honor *Lakshmi*.

Makara Sankranti is a winter solstice holiday. *Kunda* patterns, circular patterns symbolizing the sun disc, are created for winter solstice. *Holi*, the festival of colors, is the second largest annual Hindu religious festival, celebrated in March. Colored *rangoli* powders are sold in the market to create multicolored patterns. A theme of the festival is the triumph of good over evil, and some holiday *rangoli* patterns feature depictions of weapons and symbols of valor.

Gangour is a festival to honor *Shiva*, the male deity whom women worship in the expectation of receiving children, luck, luxury, and riches. Marriages are often scheduled near *Gangour*, and those *rangoli* patterns are similar to a complex geometric parquet floor, expandable to befit larger celebrations such as a wedding (Saksena 1979: 110 – 120). Newlyweds surrounded by *rangoli* receive guests during the wedding celebrations (Karmat, 2001). The elaboration and complexity of the pattern assert the status of the bride and groom's families.

Elaborate *rangoli* are also created to celebrate family events such as births, naming ceremonies, birthdays, sacred thread ceremonies, and marriages. A *rangoli* pattern surrounds the sacred spot where *puja* (prayer) is performed or a child is seated for his or her birthday or naming ceremony. Larger *rangoli* are created for the Sacred Thread ceremony, in which a seven-year-old Brahmin boy is initiated into the Gayathri, the holiest of rites. Weddings also require extensive and elaborate *rangoli*.

Rangoli are drawn to celebrate eighth month of a woman's first pregnancy. This celebration is called the *Athavansa*. The pregnant woman is anointed, bathed and hennaed in patterns as complex as her bridal designs, then dressed in beautiful clothing and ornaments. A *rangoli* called "*Athvansa – ko- cowk*" is created on the ground; relatives and friends visit and bring her sweets and fruits that are placed in her lap (Saksena, 1979: 120).

When the child is born, special *rangoli* are created for the third and sixth day ceremonies, then a more complex one for the *Suraj*, the tenth day ceremony, when the child is presented to the sun and named. *Suraj- ko- cowk* designs with circular patterns similar to *kunda* patterns, symbolizing the sun, are created for the child's naming day (Saksena, 1979: 121).

Sacred Thread and marriage ceremonies require the creation of the largest and most complex *rangoli*, full of auspicious symbols, covering the whole courtyard and walls as well. These large *rangoli* request most fervently the assistance of the deities during a rite of passage, and display the status of the family who undertook their creation (Saksena, 1979: 122).

An older woman would not arise before the other members of the family to stoop and create patterns that would have to be renewed again the next day if there were not significant benefit to be gained from this exertion. Creating beauty and orderliness for self-soothing, the pleasurable, playful quality of drawing, the healthy physical activity of bending and stretching, and constructing something that has a beautifying impact on the environment are certainly good reasons for making *rangoli*, but may not be sufficient motivation for a woman to draw *rangoli* at dawn every morning. *Rangoli* can be viewed as crucial to an elder woman's bondedness to place and

relationships in her household that enhance her identity, self-esteem and sense of capability, promoting mental and emotional and physical well being.

Daily contact with place anchors sense of identity, resulting in feelings of security and enhanced personal relationships (Hay, 1986, 1988, 1990). An ageing woman performing *rangoli* each day maintains her relationships with her family and deities through this action, adjusting the *rangoli* to celebrate the passage of births, birthdays, weddings, and the holidays through the year. The daily stretching and bending required in *rangoli*, and maintaining the repertoire of patterns, raises a woman's sense of capability, the belief in her ability to carry out chosen activities in her environment. If a person's identity process is derived from developed in place identity through distinctiveness of place, continuity of place, self esteem in place, and self-efficacy in place, ((Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), creating *rangoli* each morning certainly serves an ageing woman's healthy sense of identity.

Rangoli serve social needs as well as metaphysical needs for a traditional Hindu family. A house whose front door has fresh *rangoli* each morning and is swept clean each evening is a home where religious duties are being properly enacted, evidencing internal orderliness, piety and self-respect. A home without attention to religious ritual would be seen as a home where religion is disregarded, or where disorder was interfering with appropriate actions, or a home occupied by members of another religion or ethnic group. Absence of a doorstep *rangoli*, would therefore communicate that the family indoors was not participating in the local group beliefs and social regulations. *Rangoli* at the threshold assert that the family within is respectable, reliable, place-rooted Hindu member of the community, suitable for relationships with Hindu neighbors.

If deities should be in the area, *rangoli* indicate that the family welcomes them, and offers food, respect, and prayers in return for their protection and benevolence.

Through *rangoli*, elder women create a designated space of refuge and reflection in the household (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999: 168). This provides the family an area for emotional regulation, self-soothing and focusing. Psychological and physical states change when people enter a sacred space or "restorative environment". People self-regulate by entering a restorative environment that reduces stress and aids in the assimilation of new experiences and maintenance of one's conceptual systems (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Stress reduction and restoration enhance one's mental, physical and emotional health. Irritability, attention fatigue, inability to plan, reduced sensitivity to interpersonal cues, and increased errors in performance are destructive to domestic relationships, and are all managed by regular visits to a restorative space (Kaplan 1995).

The *rangoli* provides an object for “fascination” or effortless attention in the sacred space, in an atmosphere without distractions, which results in relaxation and directed attention (Korpela and Hartig 1996: 223). The eye follows the orderly pattern of the *rangoli*. It is filled with culturally recognizable symbols for comfort, protection, and wish fulfillment, and is a visual encounter with an aesthetically pleasing, moderately complex pattern with a focal point. These characteristics are associated with a stress reduction framework (Ulrich 1983, Ulrich et al 1991). Gazing on the *rangoli* in the sacred space can provide restorative process within the domestic quarters.

Housing construction and social structures in India are changing and these are affecting the performance of *rangoli*. People are moving to urban apartment blocks where there is no area that can be set apart for *pooja*. Floor surfaces, such as carpeting and linoleum are poorly suited for *rangoli*. As families emigrate to other countries, such as the United States, materials for *rangoli* are only available in predominantly Hindu neighborhoods such as Jackson Heights, New York. In shops in Jackson Heights, packets of *rangoli* powder are available for purchase in the weeks before Holi and other major holidays. If *rangoli* powder is not available, children’s “sidewalk chalk” may be used mark a cement doorstep with a small *rangoli* for a wedding. Though *rangoli* can be drawn on cement and asphalt, they cannot be drawn on an American grass lawn, so a full courtyard *rangoli* required for a sacred thread ceremony or wedding is impossible in American backyards.

Performance of sacred space is usually the prerogative of men formally trained as specialists in their respective theology, and done in a sacred structure such as a temple, synagogue or church. However, sacred space can be performed by informally trained women in their homes, and be as important to their families as a priest is to a congregation. Senior Hindu women create sacred space in their domestic geography, performing and renewing it each day for their family’s devotions. These older women assert and renew their position as religious intermediaries within the household hierarchy, as well as their devotion to their deities through this ritual action within household sacred space.

A woman’s self-identity and her collective identity emerge through the process of social learning in significant spaces, and through learning from other women in those spaces (Mead, 1934). Women teach other women to create *rangoli*, and through these patterns transmit place-related religious and cultural knowledge (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999: 167). *Rangoli* define significant spaces for women’s interactions in their domestic area. They adorn the threshold, where women pass from the household to the street. They adorn the courtyard for periods of ritual festival social interaction. They define the *puja* areas,

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Through the activity of ritual maintenance of the family sacred spaces, these elder women avert their risk of becoming marginalized as they age. An ageing Indian woman has few economic and social resources, other than that support she can receive from her family. She performs a necessary action benefiting her family when she is caretaker of the family's domestic sacred space, maintaining the relationship of the family to the divine. Her *rangoli* have the characteristics of emotional regulators, which manage the family's behavior and stress levels. Her patterns define a space for reflection and devotional activity that can restore emotional calm through the experience of beauty and order.

The woman who creates the *rangoli* and maintains the sacred spaces remains involved and sensitive to the stresses and needs of her family, increasing the complexity of *rangoli* for more stressful occasions, celebrating family events with special designs. Her *rangoli* assert daily her identity within her family and neighborhood at large, establishing that she is the caretaker of orderliness and appropriate relationships between her family and the divine.

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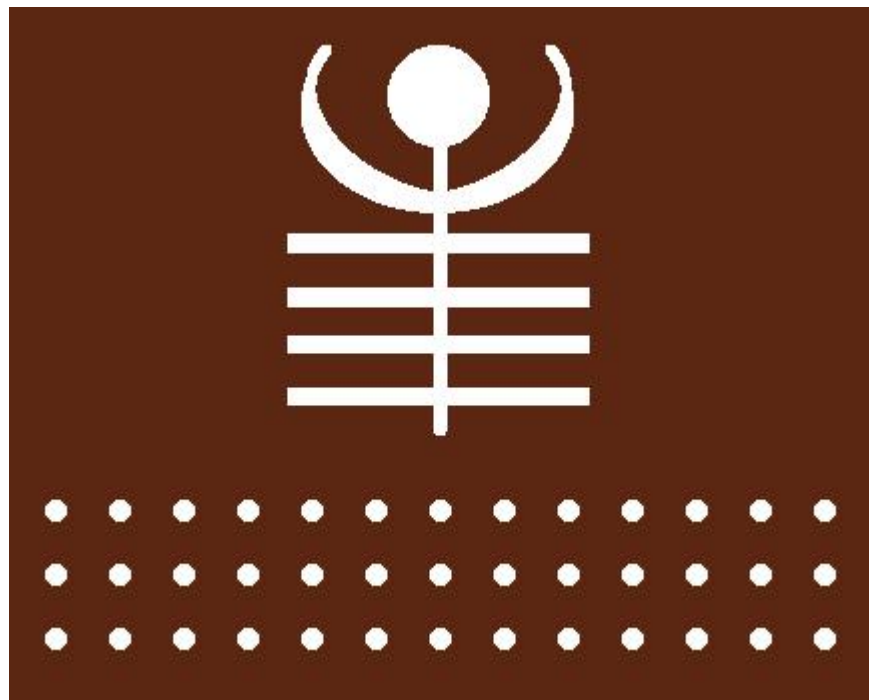
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Rangoli Competition

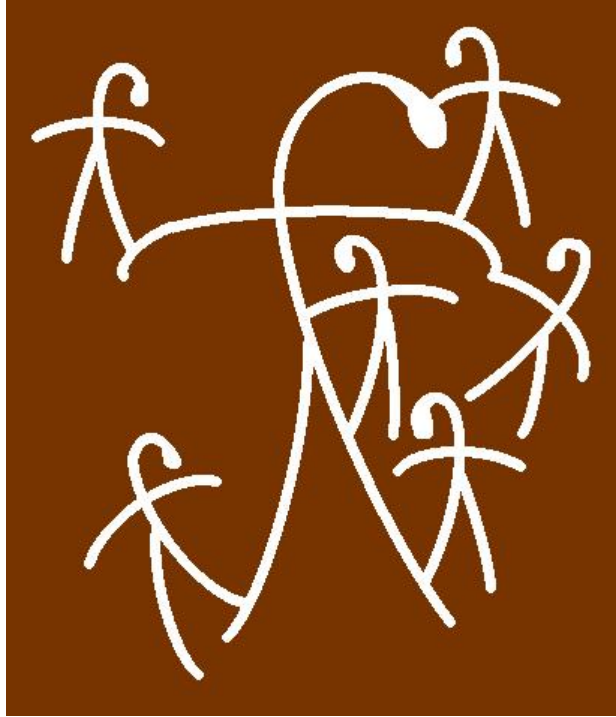
Many rangoli are simple. A woman makes a small symbol to invoke a deity, and places a flower, candle or food offering there.



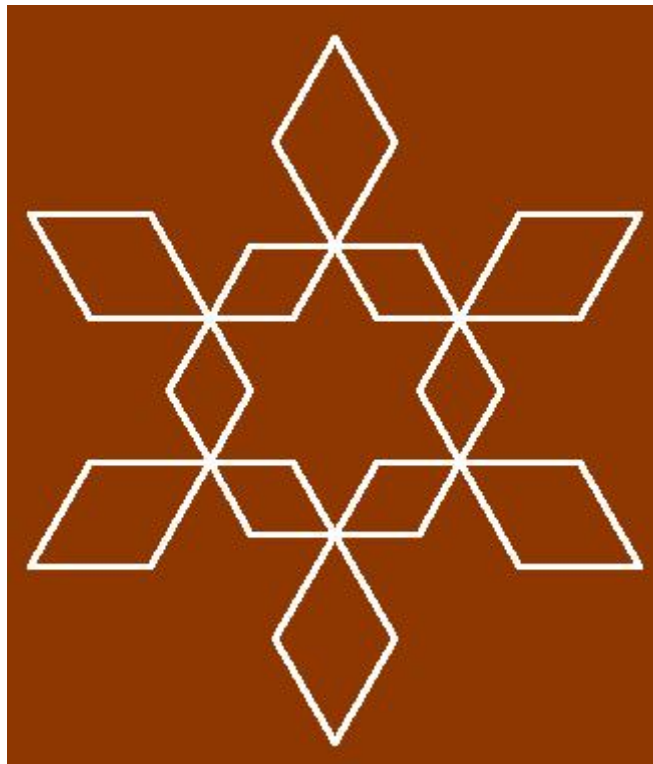
This pattern from Bengal honors the Goddess Kali



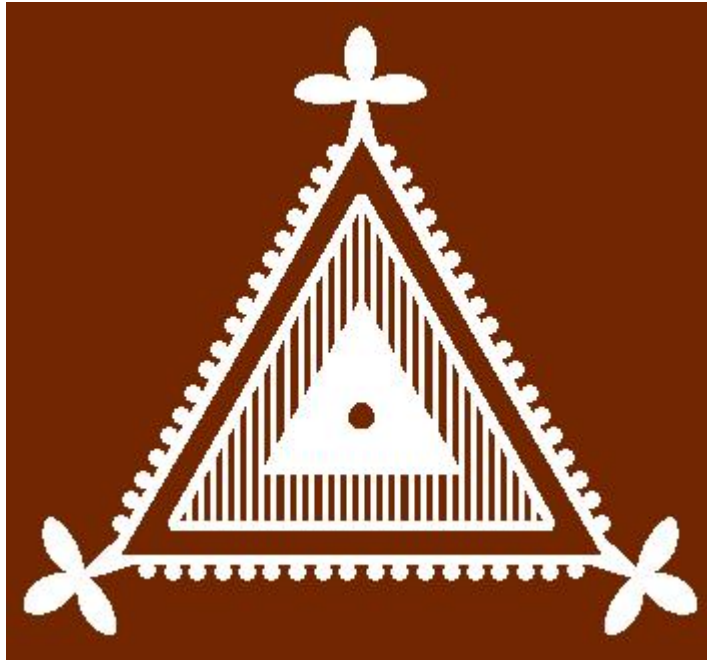
This pattern from Rajasthan invokes the goddess of fertility and abundance.



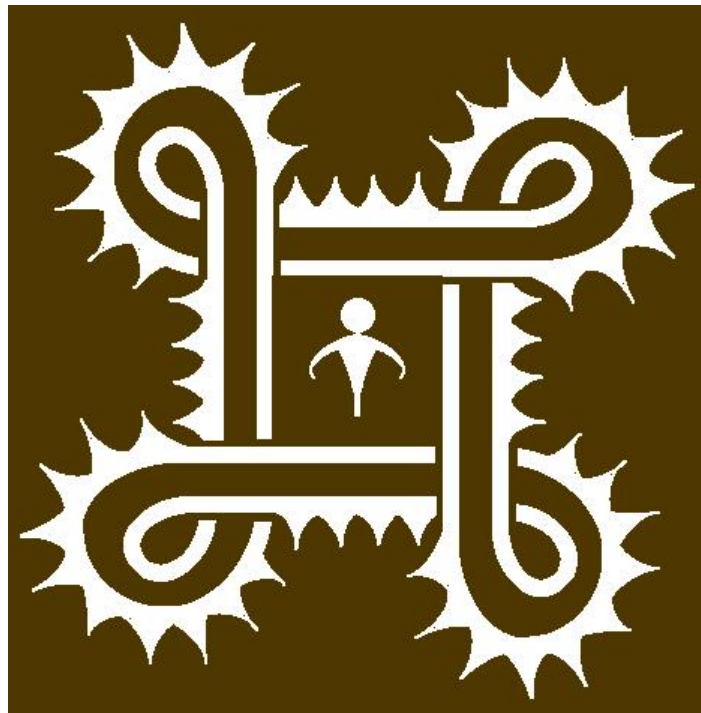
Goddess Shashti, who protects children and childbirth, dwells in this pattern.



This is a simple pattern for luck.



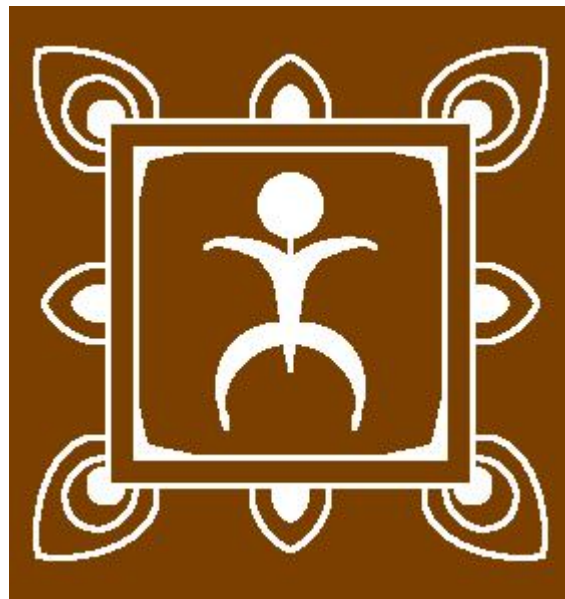
This Rajasthani pattern depicts female creative energy.



This simple pattern from Rajasthan is intended to bring pregnancy



This pattern from Rajasthan symbolizes the Yoni (the vulva), the source of life, growth, and fertility.



Rajasthani women draw this pattern to invoke Baladevi, the goddess of children, so they will become pregnant.

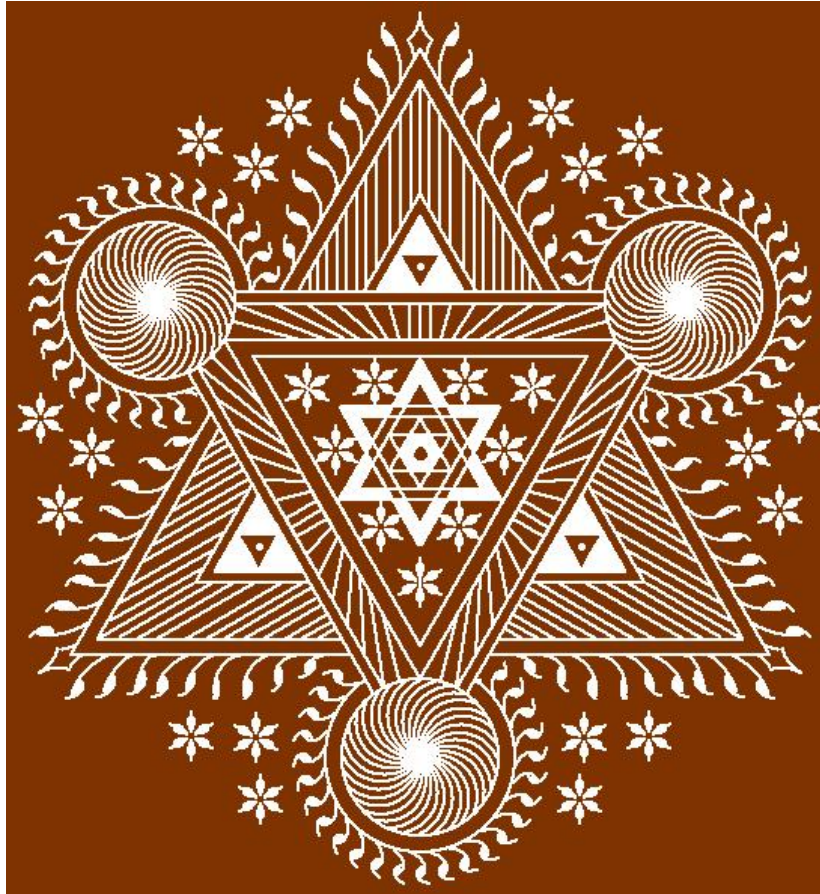
Sathya, Swastika patterns, bring health and well-being, and have been favorite auspicious patterns in India for thousands of years. Sathya patterns also represent the Heart of the Buddha.





Women make Kunda patterns to celebrate the birth of a child.

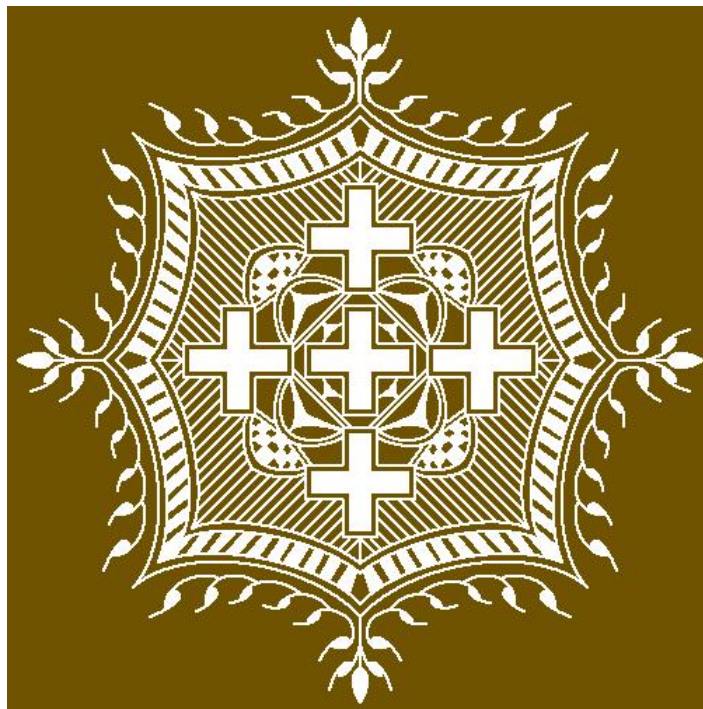




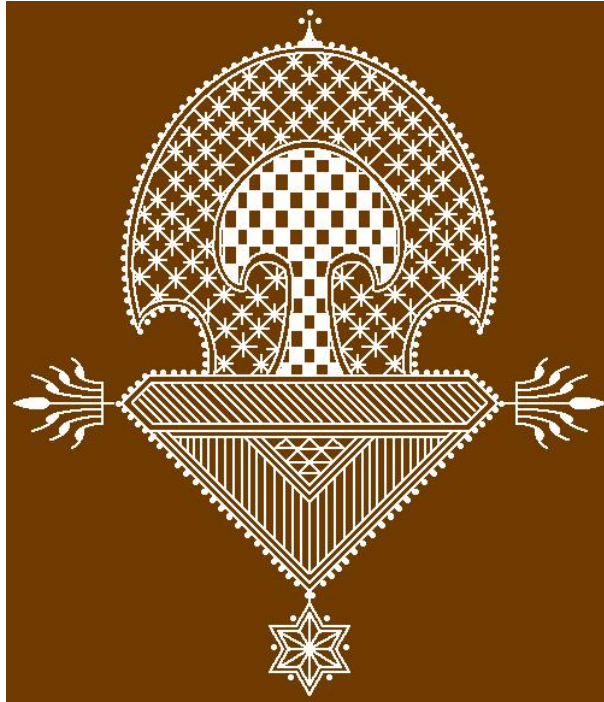
Different patterns celebrate different seasons and festivals.



Lahariya patterns symbolize the rippling water of the monsoon season.



Bhavari, the village well, celebrates *Diwali*.



Bijani, the fan, symbolize cooling breezes, and are popular in the summer.

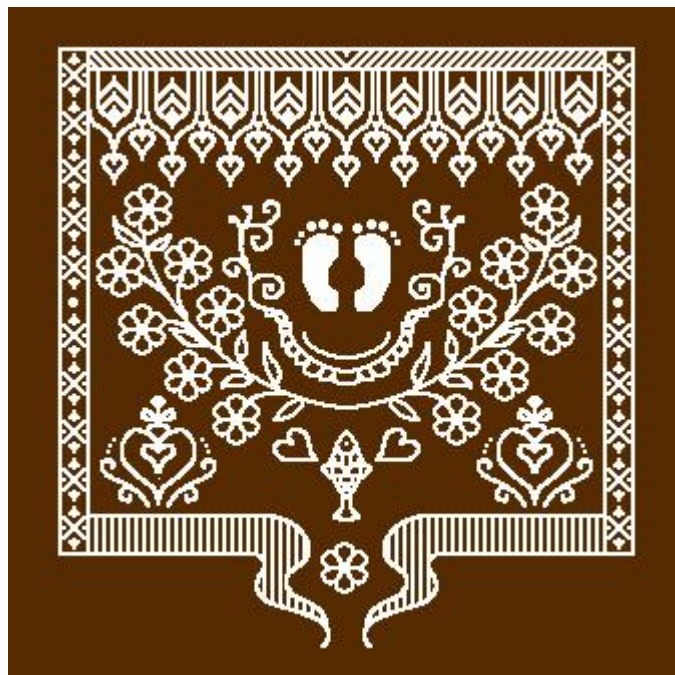
Women draw the Goddess Lakshmi's feet in Rangoli to invoke her presence in a sacred place.



Madhya Pradesh



Bengal

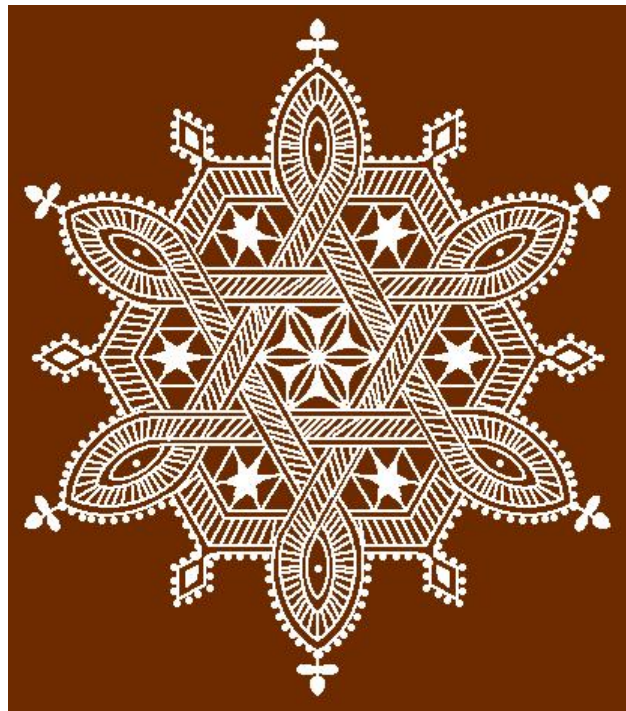


Bengal



Punjab Hills

Women make rangoli to celebrate Holi, the festival of colors.

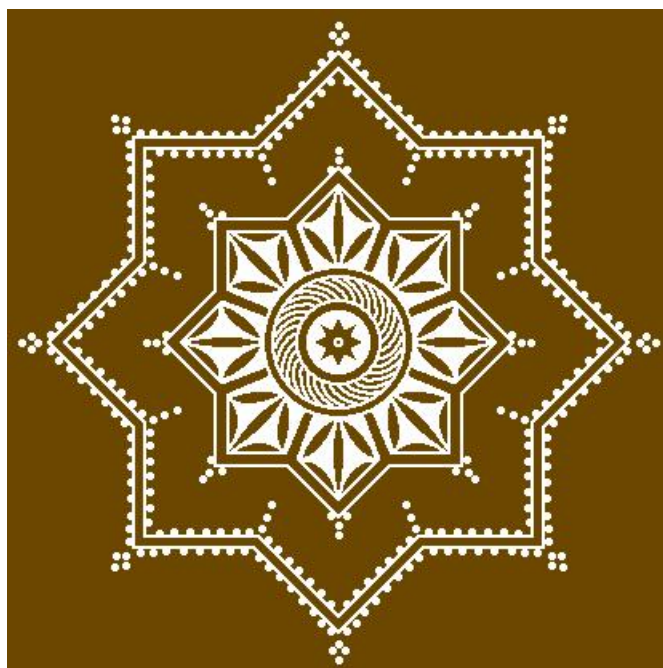


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Khera, Bundi

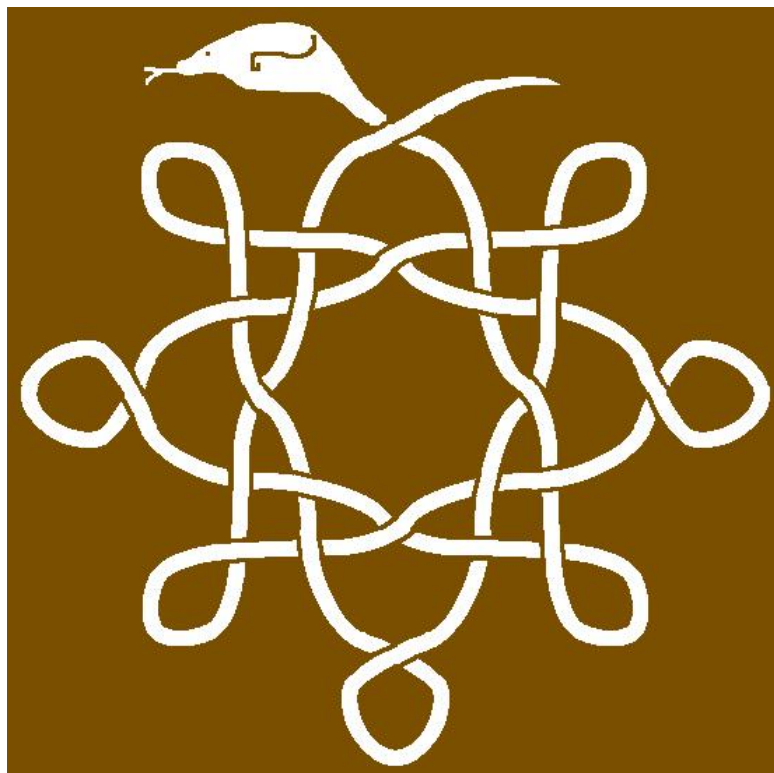
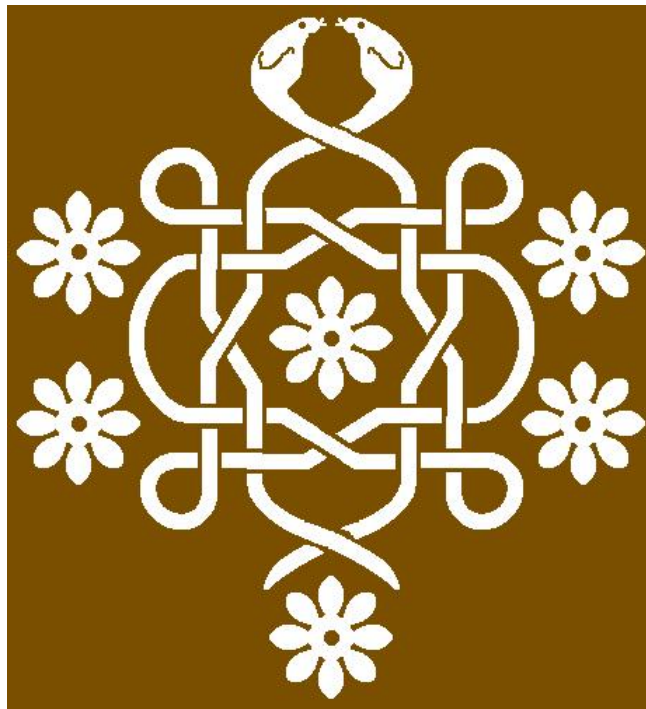


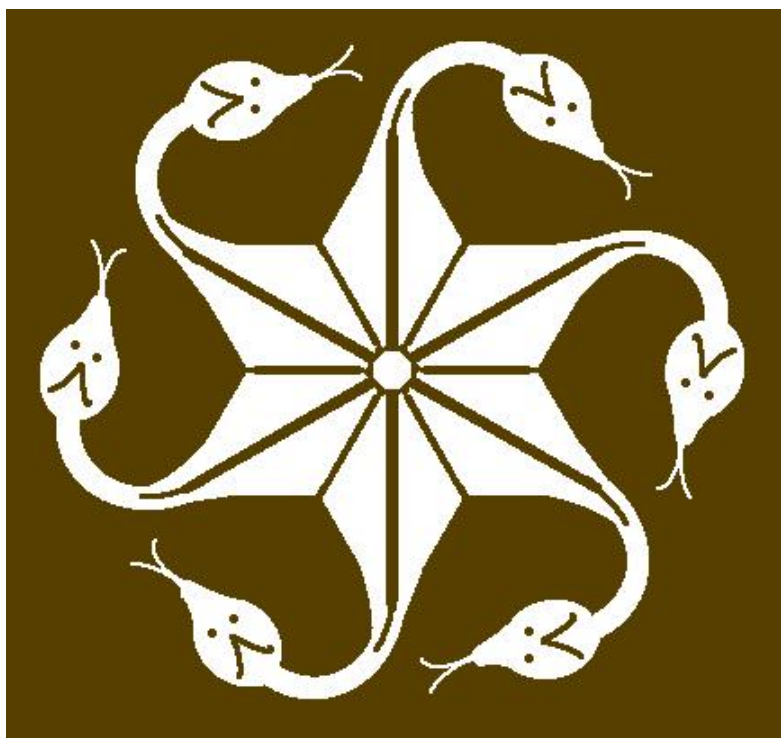
Holi-ka-dapti, Bundi



Holi-ka-Canga, Bundi

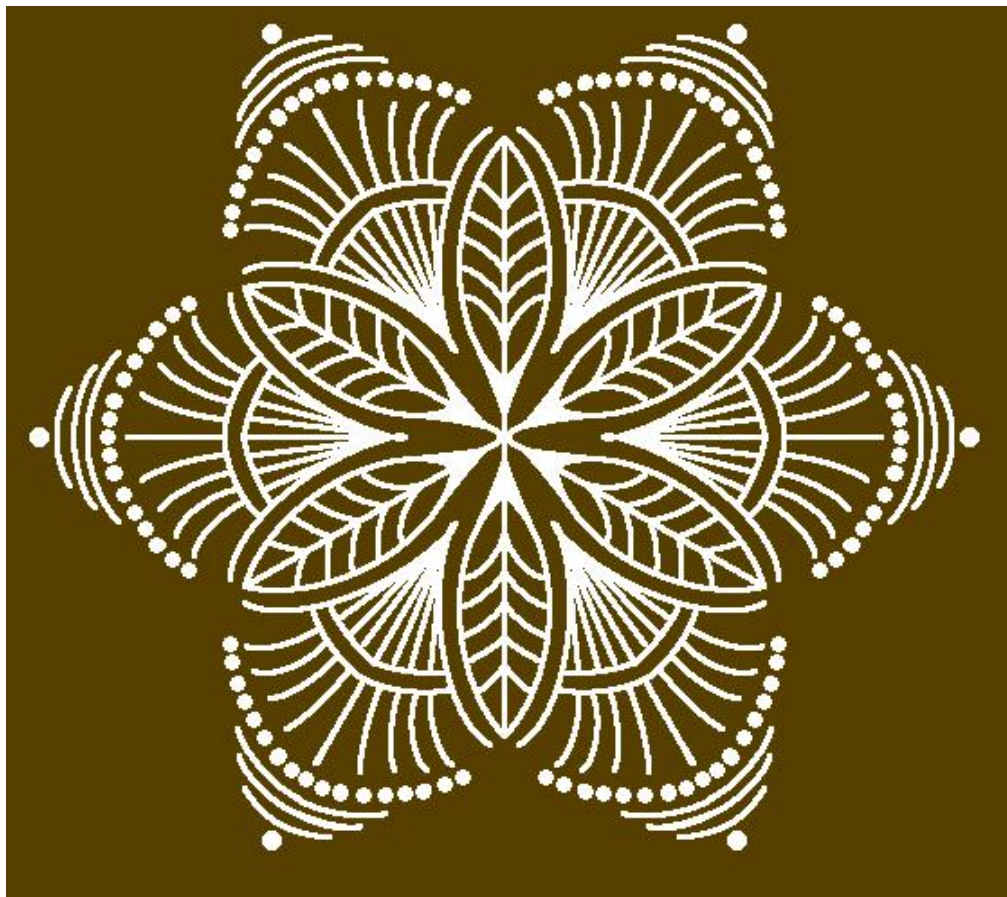
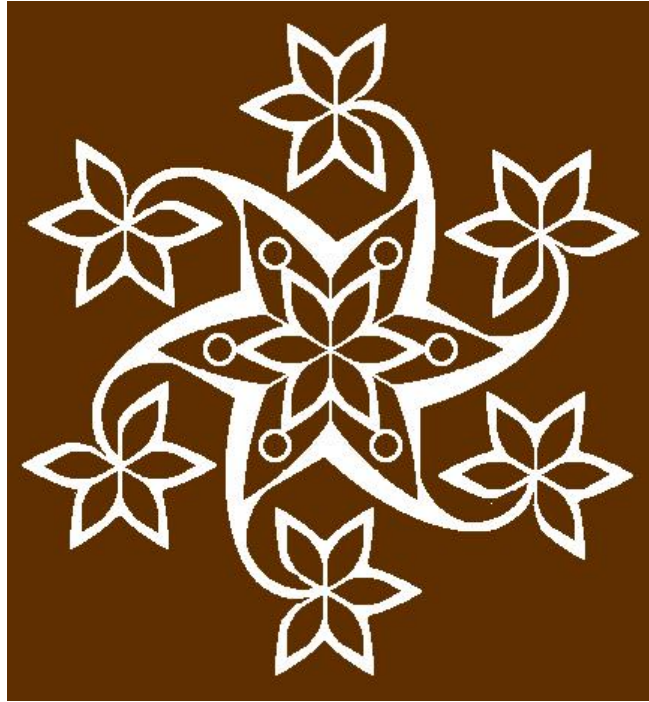
Women invoke the cobra's blessings of prosperity and fertility when they draw cobra in their rangoli.



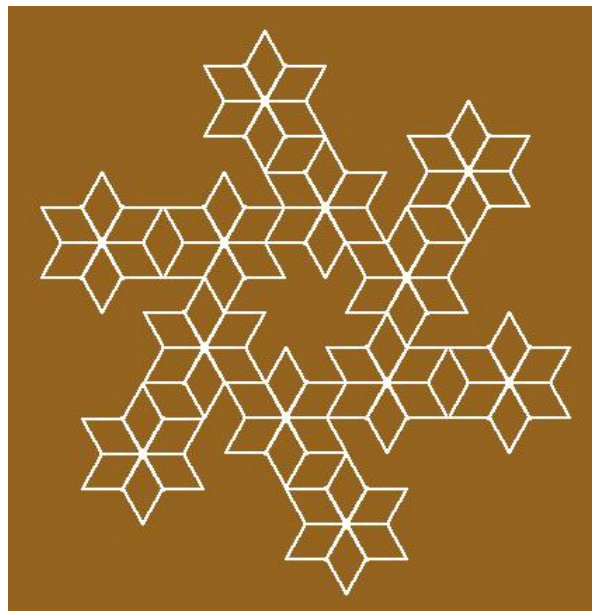
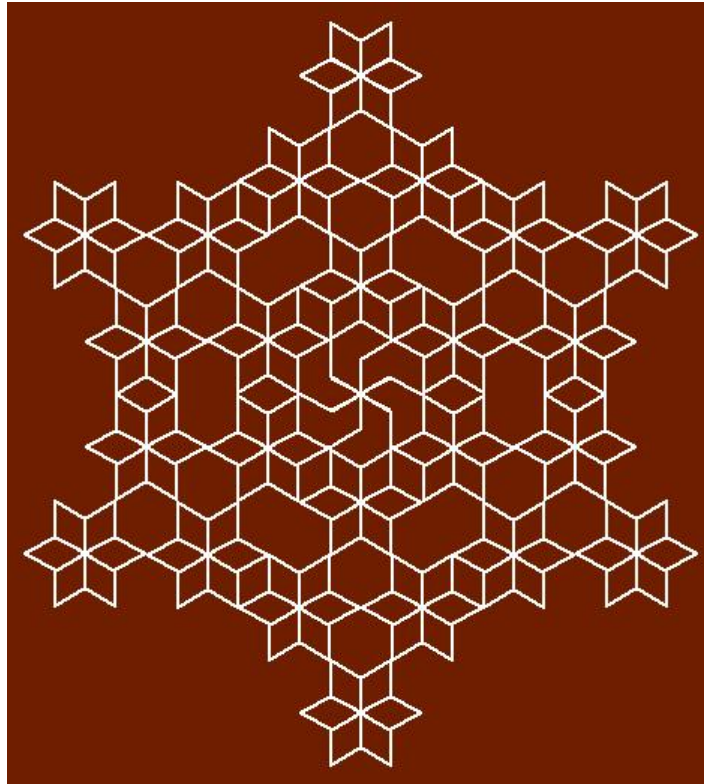


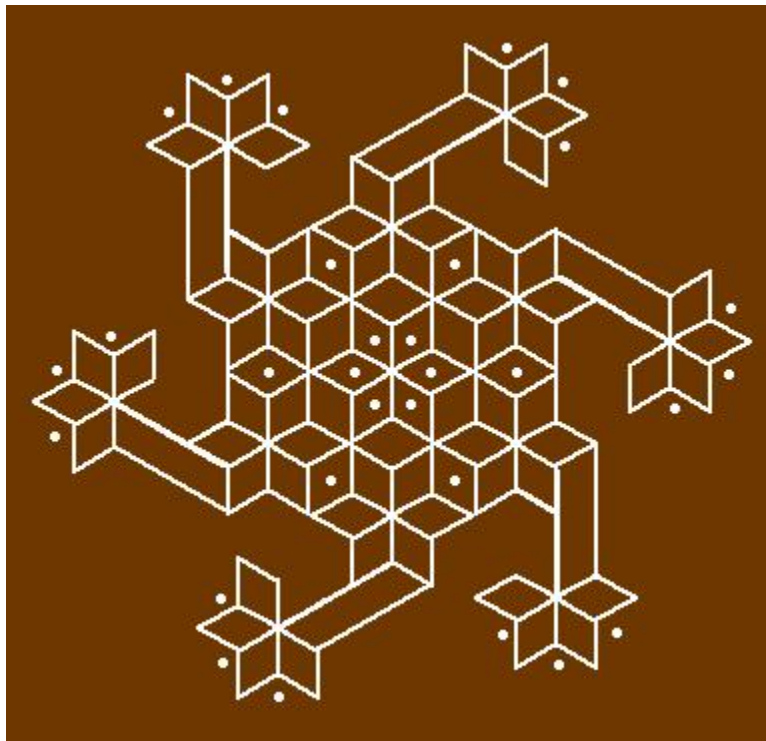
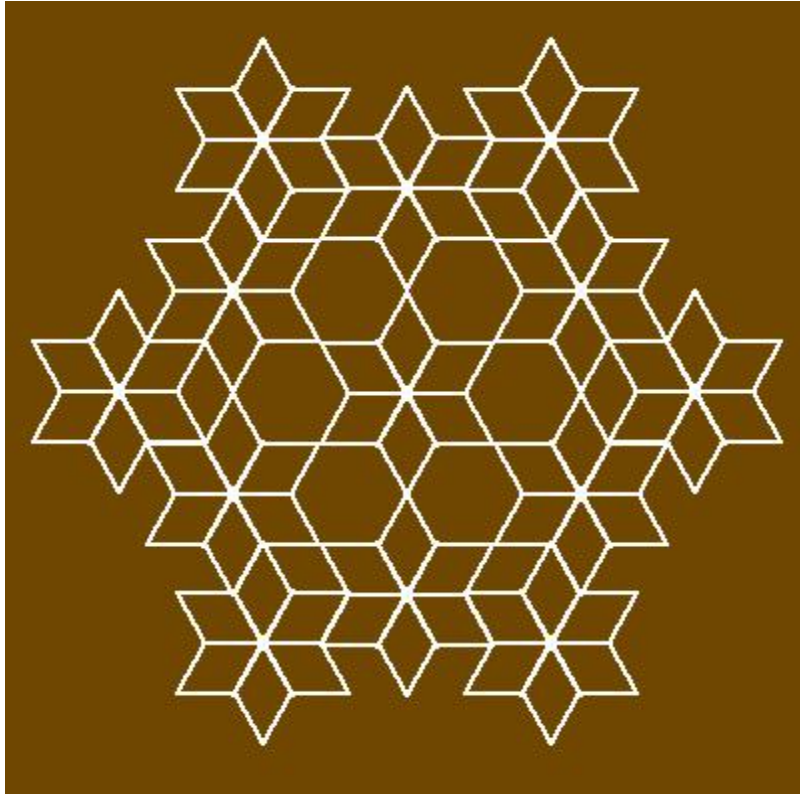
Six petaled flower patterns, Adhakatya Phul, are drawn for the festival of lights, Diwali.



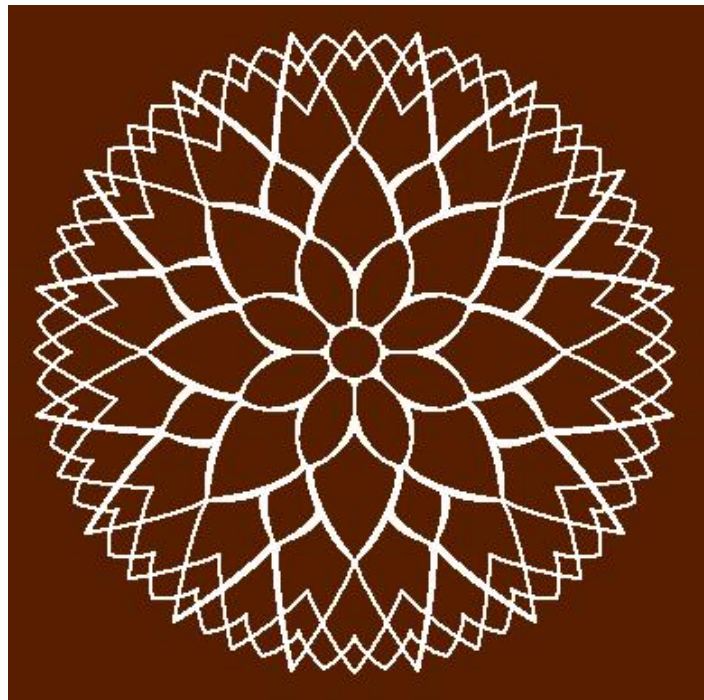
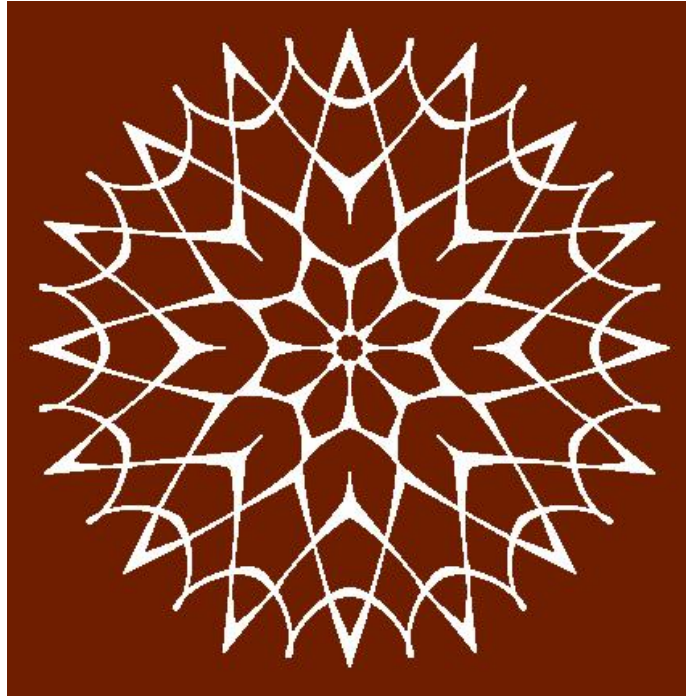


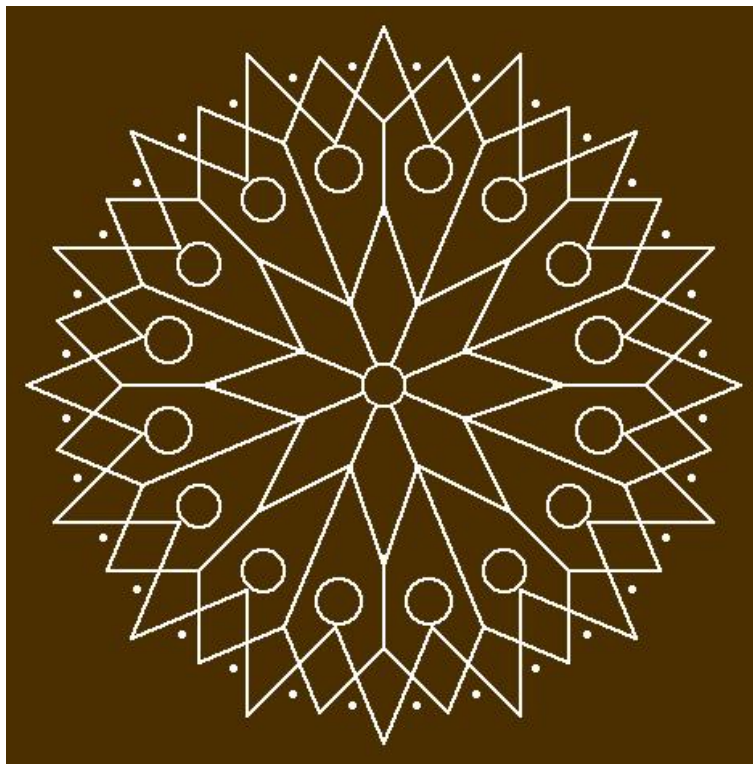
Women in Tamil Nadu make Pulli Kolam patterns based on 6-pointed stars.



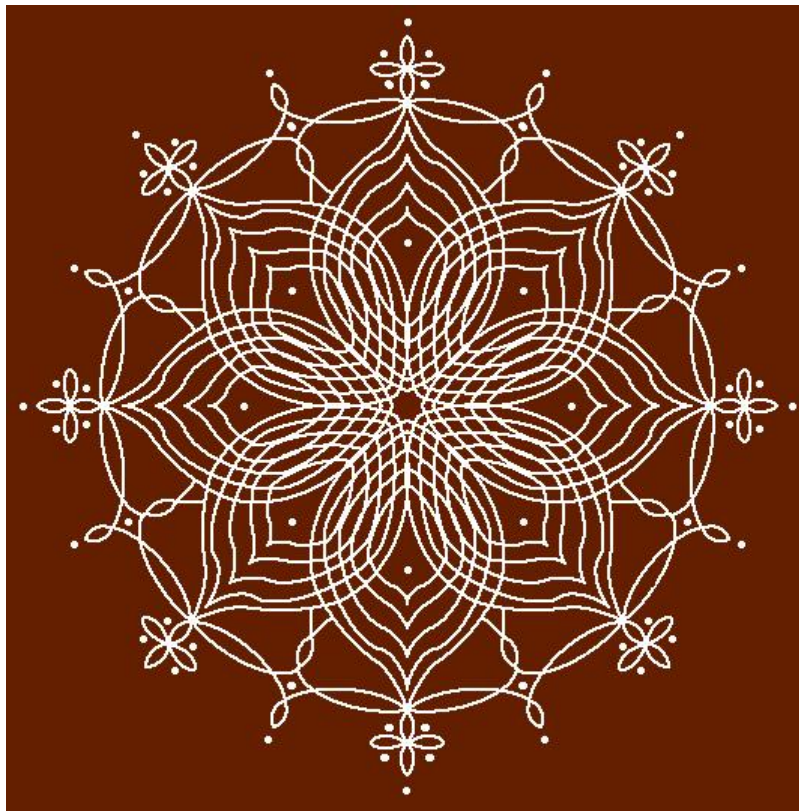
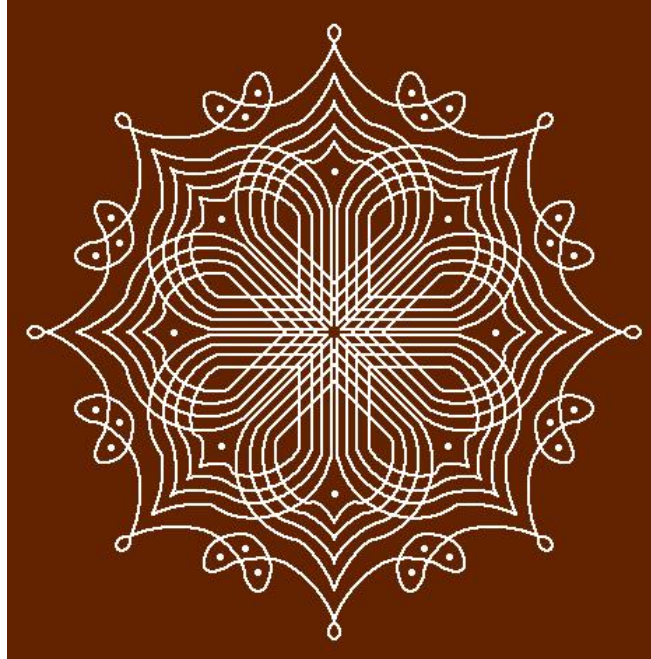


Amiyal are lotus patterns from Kerala, which symbolize purity and divinity. Hindu deities are often depicted standing or sitting on a lotus.

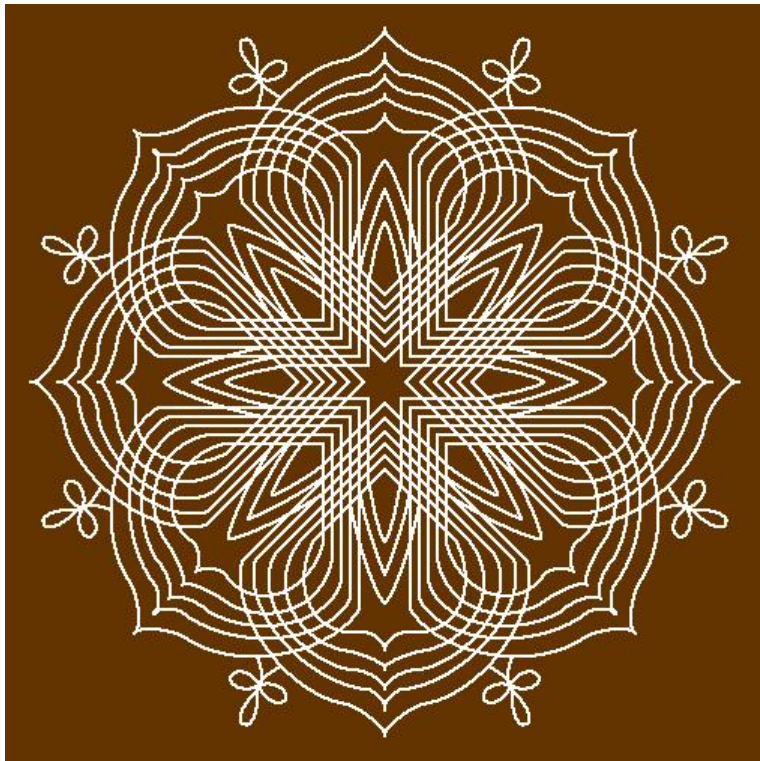
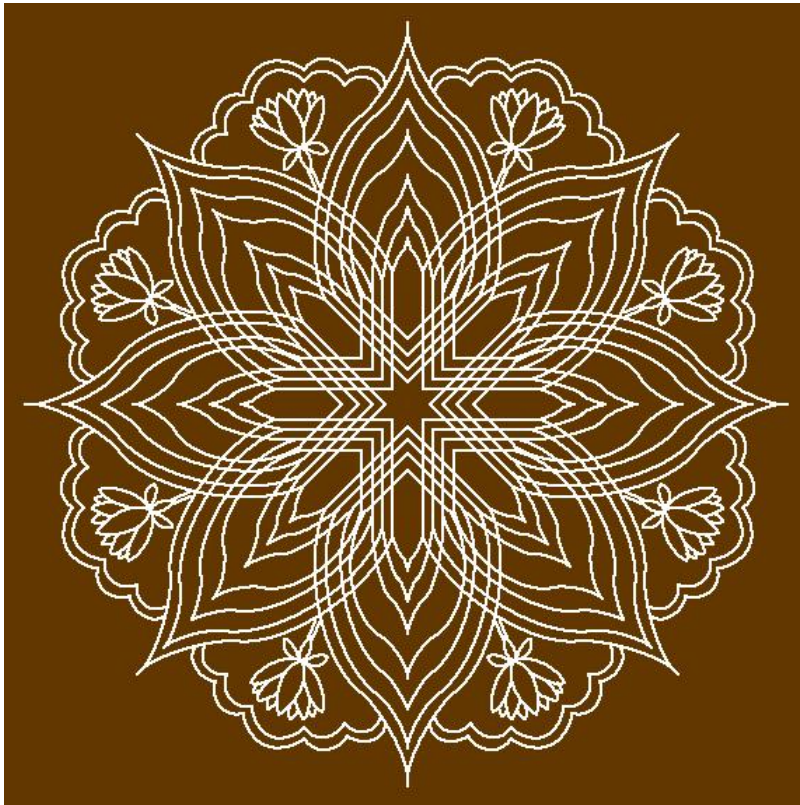




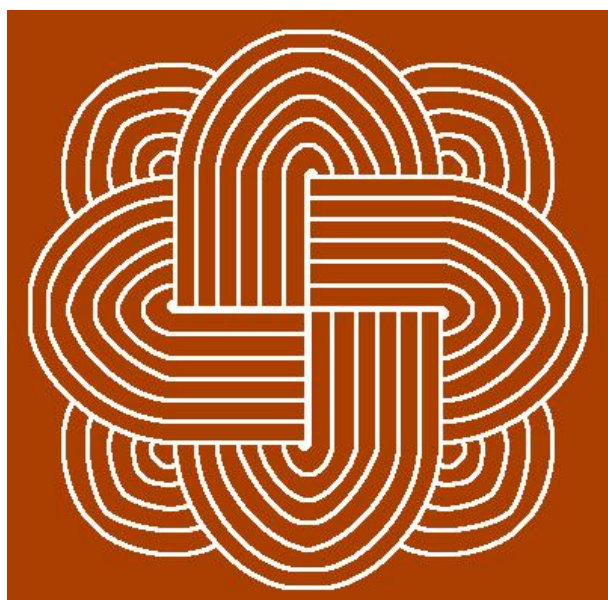
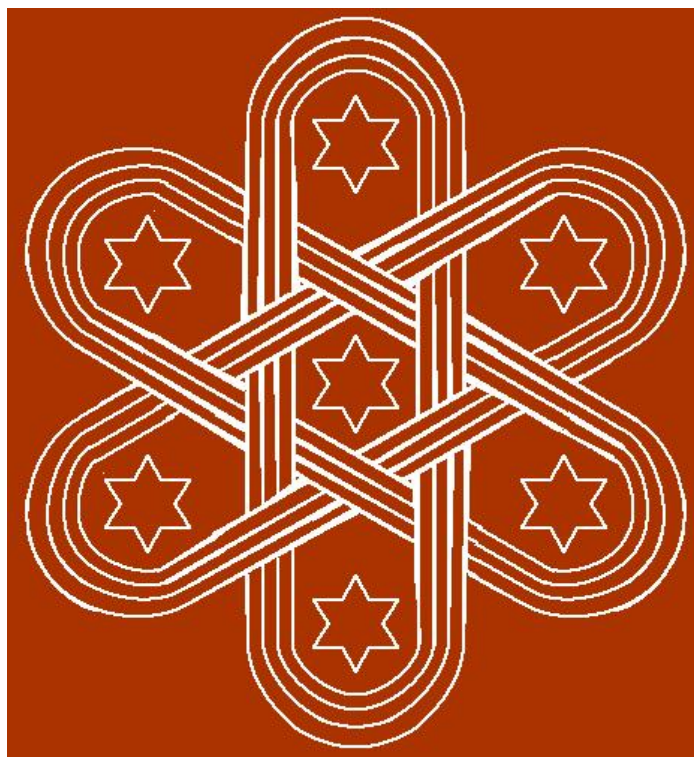
Kerala women draw these patterns on their doorsteps for holidays and special occasions to bring luck to their families.

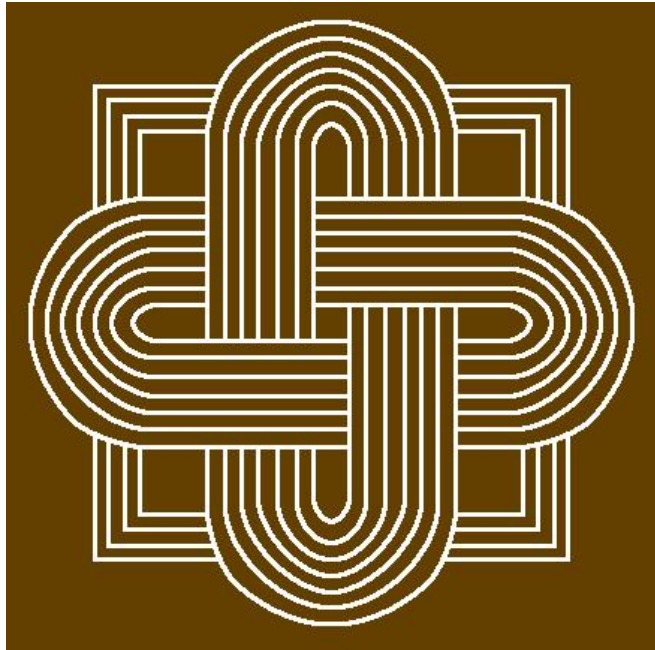


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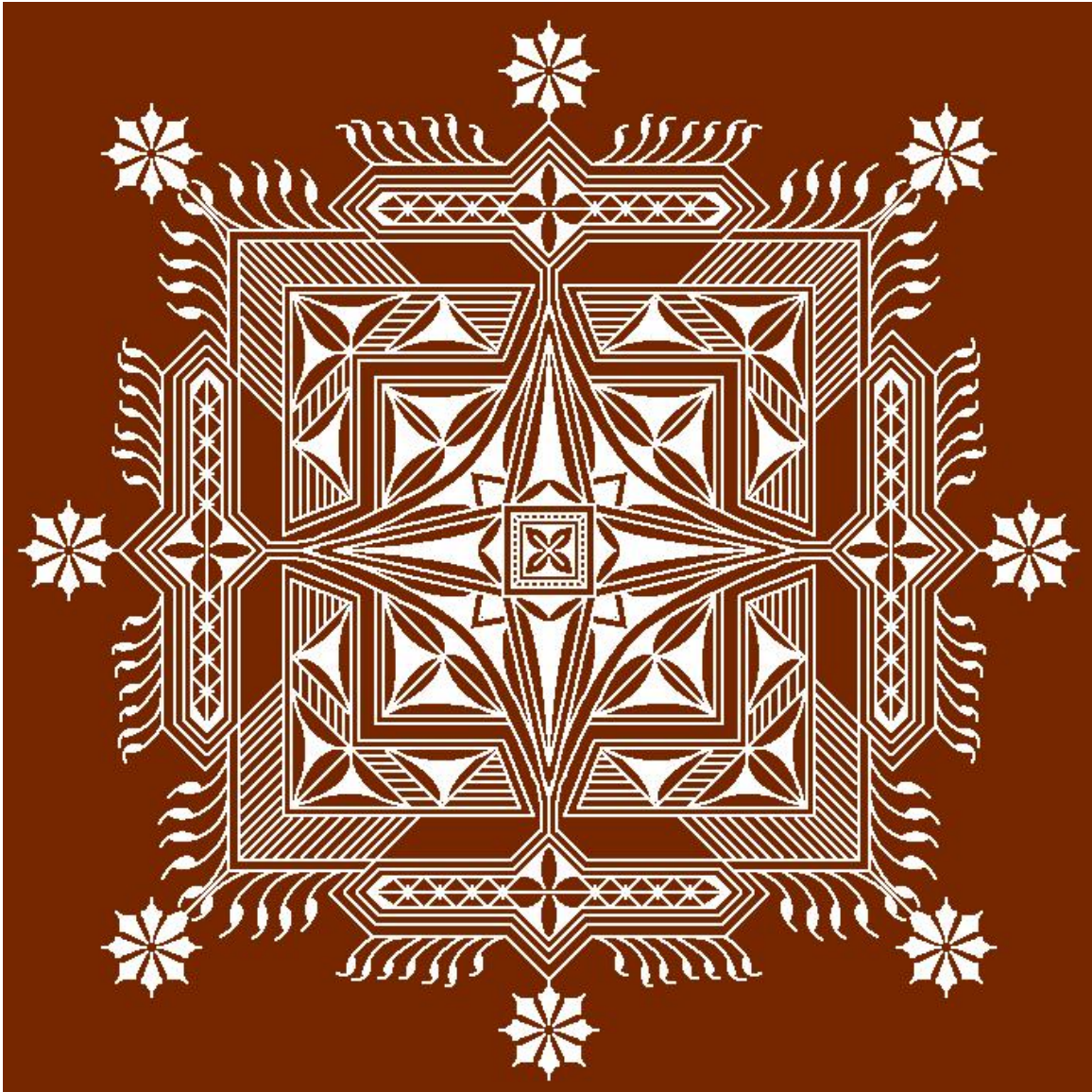


Knotwork rangoli patterns:

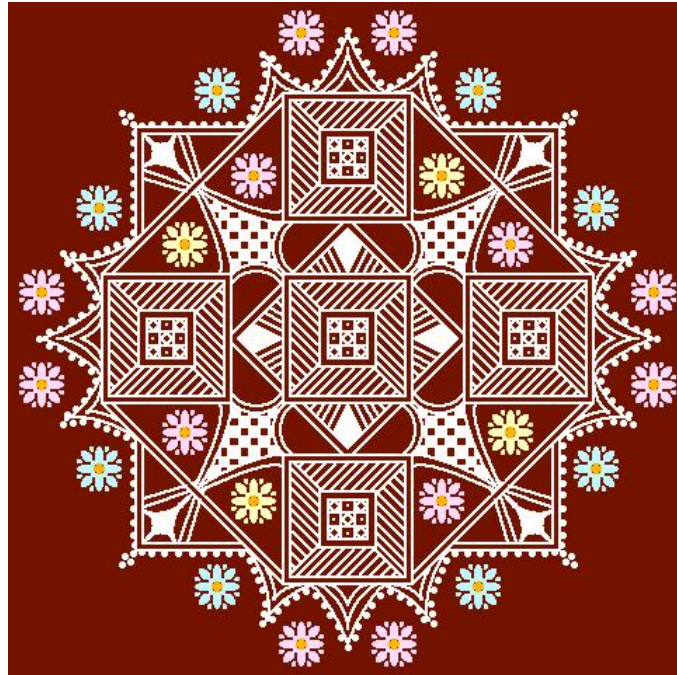




Marriage rangoli are elaborate, and may have smaller patterns around them, extending to fill the whole household courtyard. Flowers, tea lights, and incense beautify wedding rangoli. The bride and groom may sit at the center, receiving well-wishers.



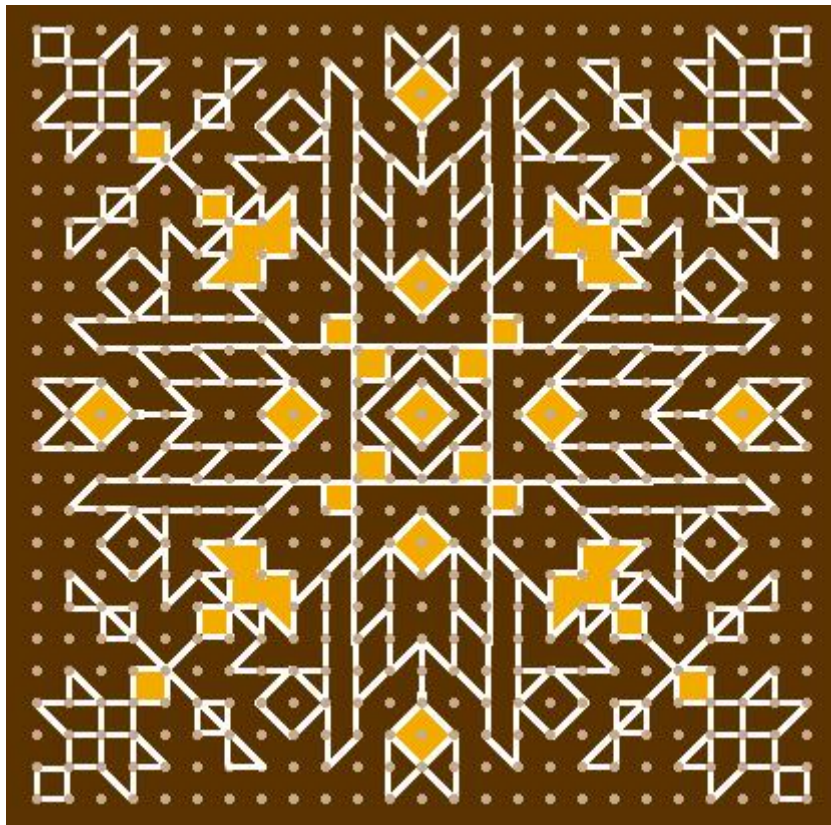
A pregnant woman has an “athawansa”, or “filling of the lap” party during her seventh month. Her friends and family bring her fruit and gifts, and henna her as if she were a bride. “Cowk”, offering table rangoli, patterns are drawn for the athawansa party.



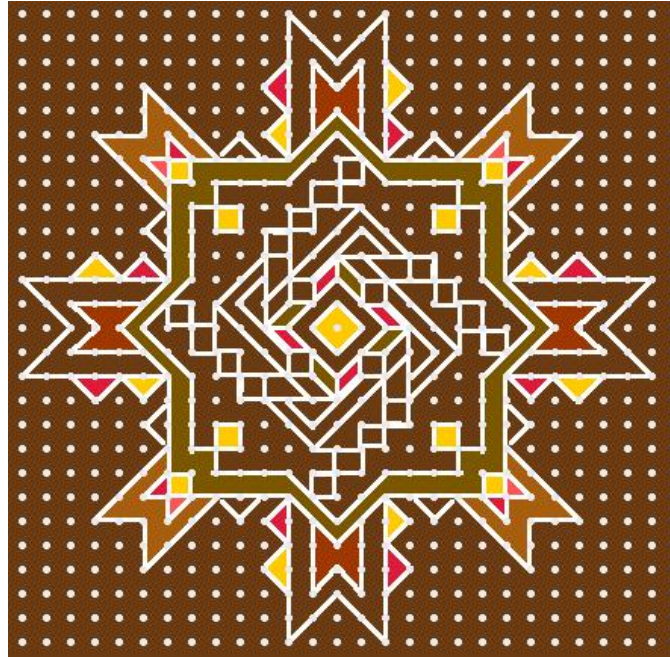
Women may paint baby's footprints in henna or red paint by the mother's door so the child's soul will know where to come live.



In Kerala, women make rangoli by laying out a grid of dots, then connecting the dots with rice flour lines. They fill these patterns with colorful herbs and spices.



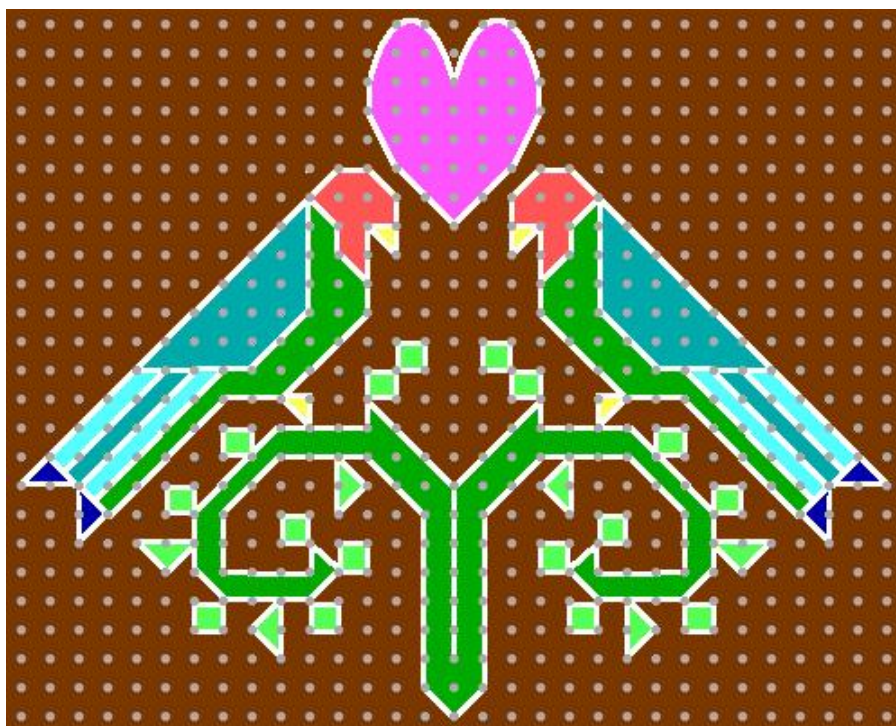




Indian women's magazines and books have modern rangoli designs. A woman draws a grid of dots on the floor, and then connects the dots with rice flour lines. She fills the resulting pattern with bright colored rangoli powder, sold in Indian bazaars.



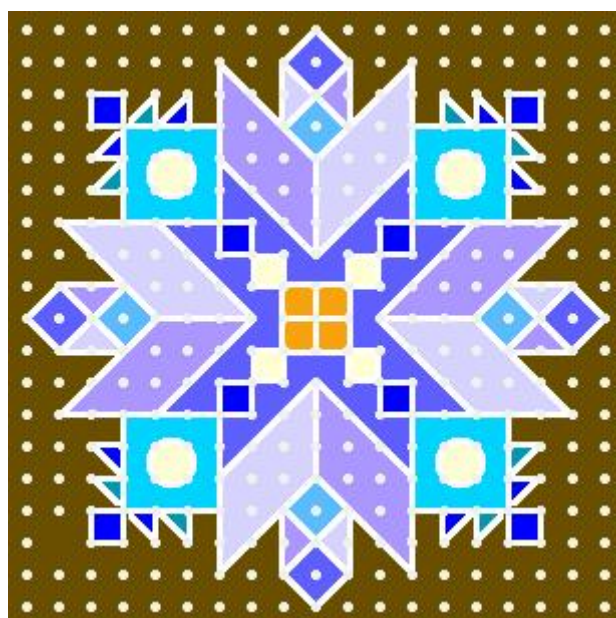
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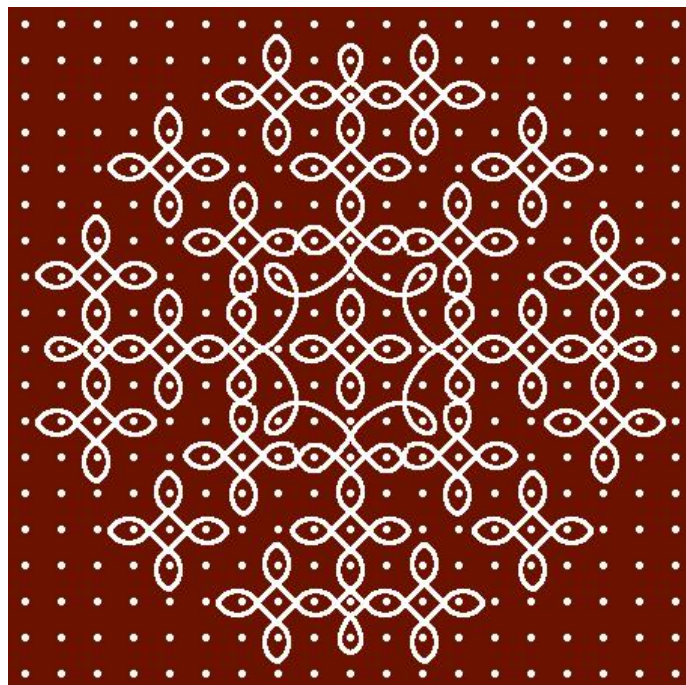
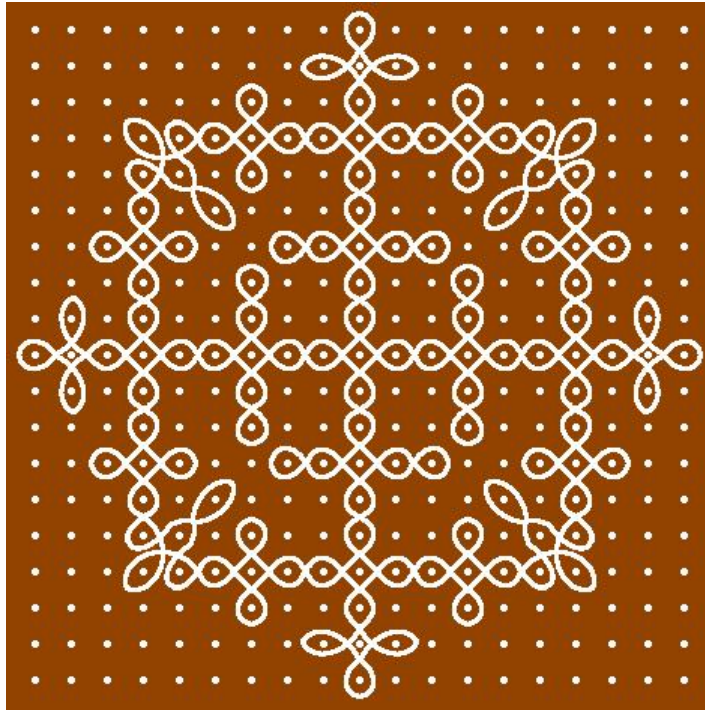
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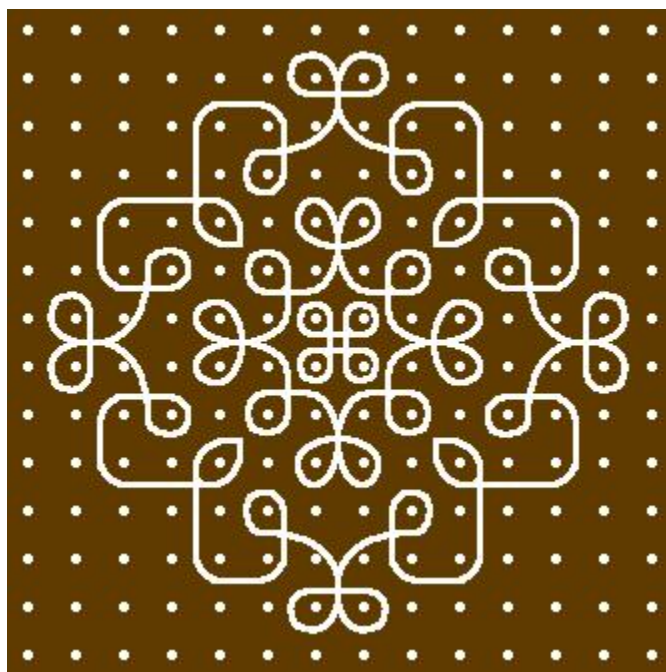
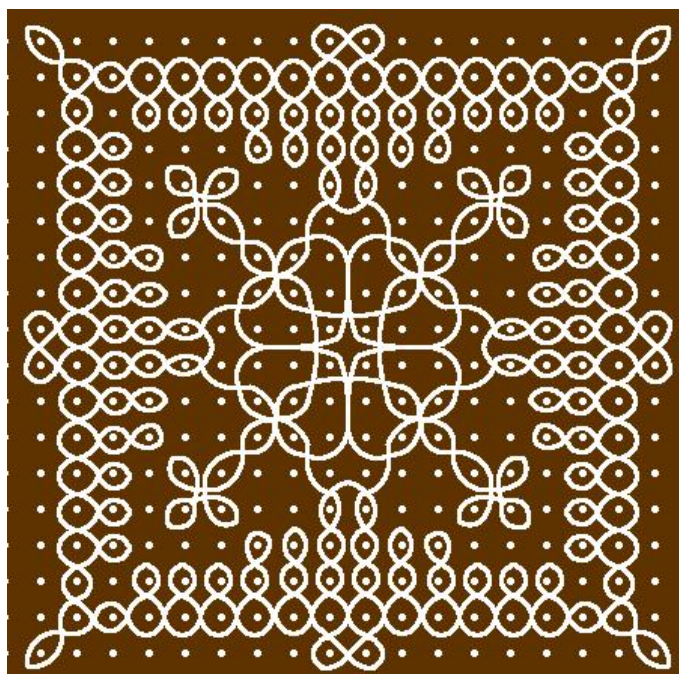
Kerala rangoli were filled with small flowers or flower petals for special occasions. These rangoli could be very large for a wedding, filled with colorful fragrant flowers and tea lights, and were meant to depict a celestial garden.



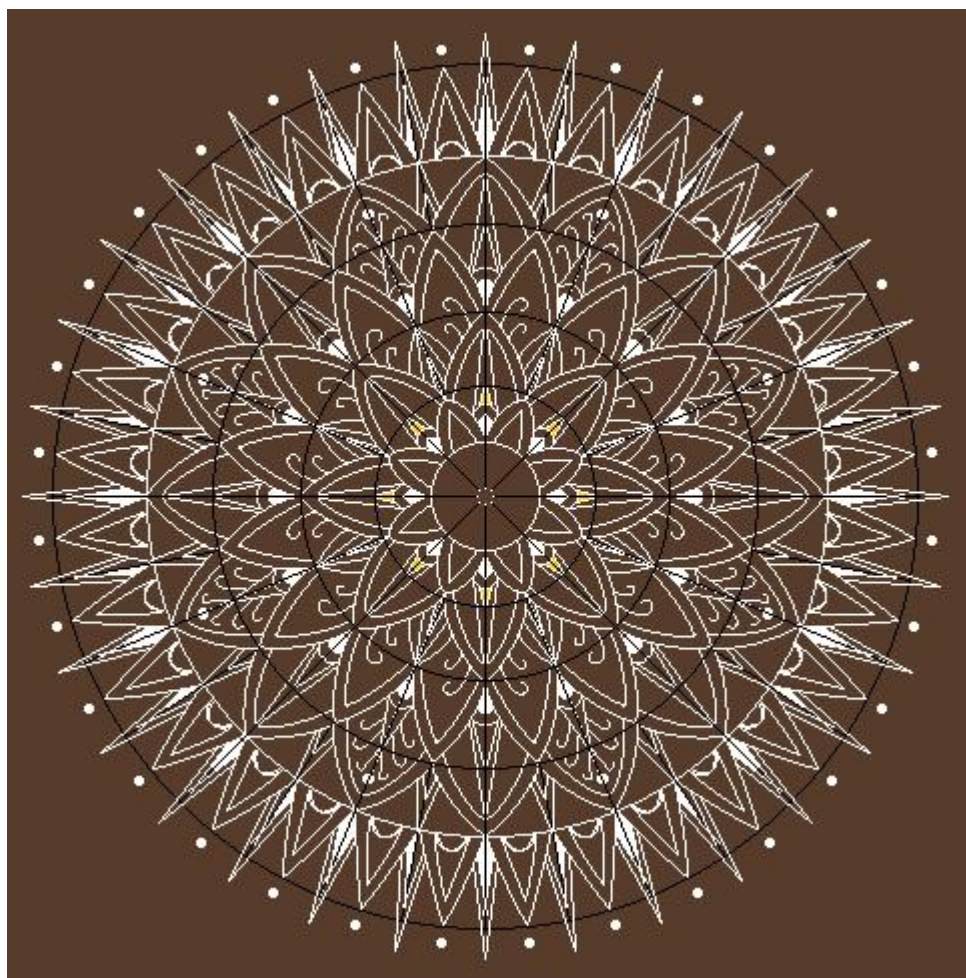


Tamil Nadu women create Kolam patterns by twining lines around dots.

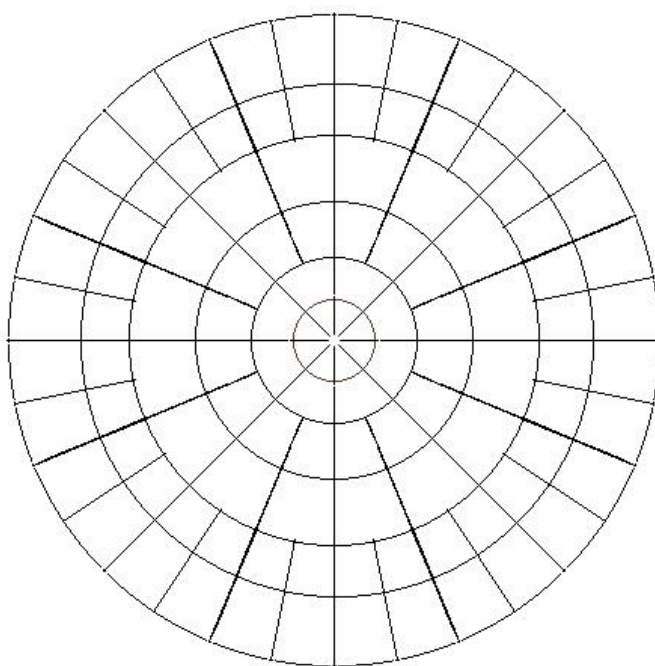
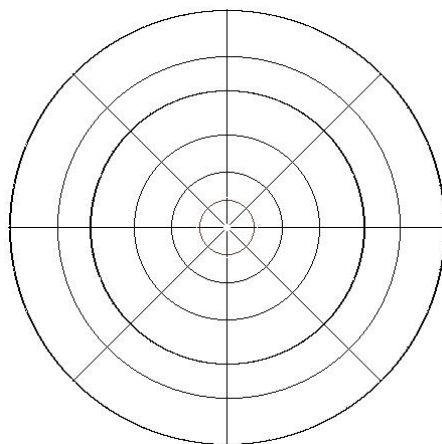




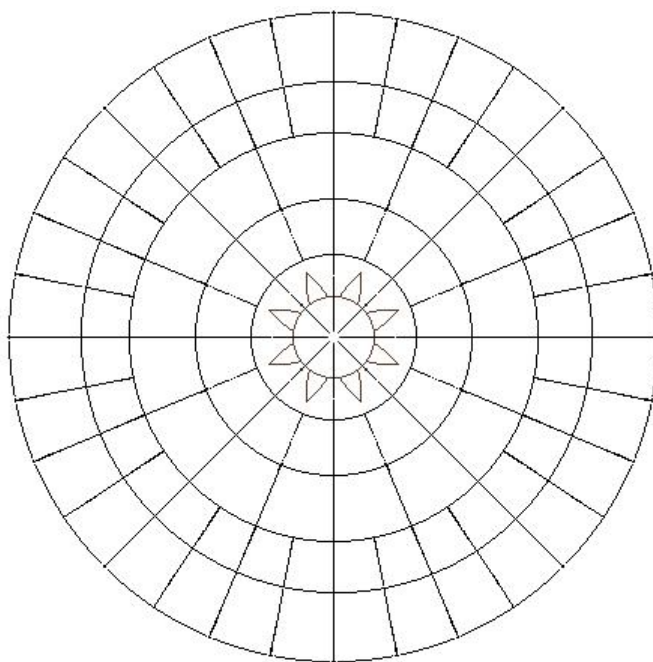
Step-by-step for a large lotus pattern:



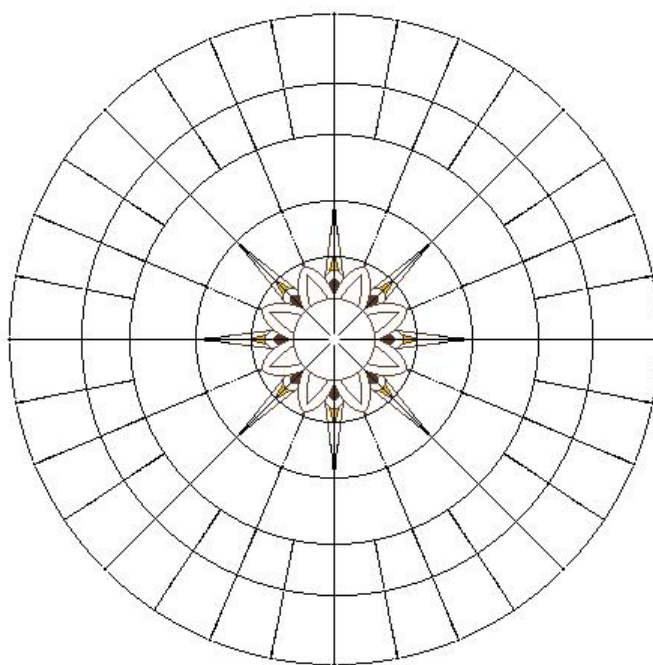
This rangoli seems complicated, but it's constructed simply. Make concentric circles. Then, divide the circle into eighths.



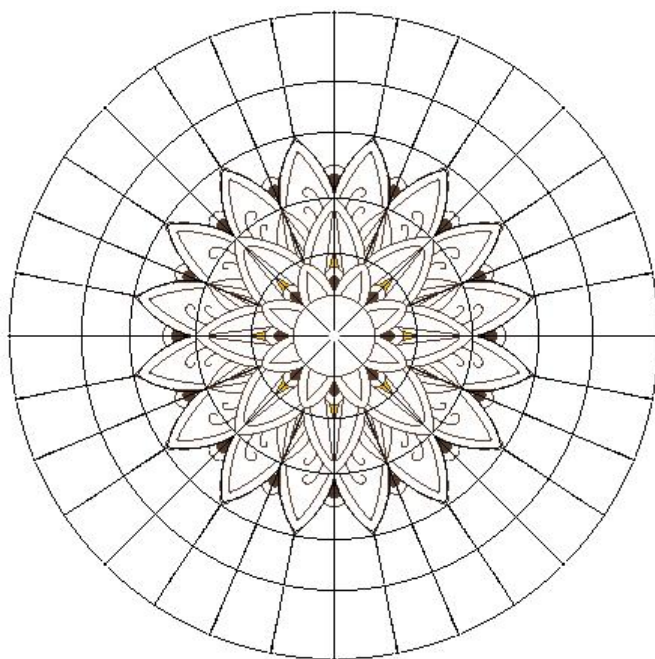
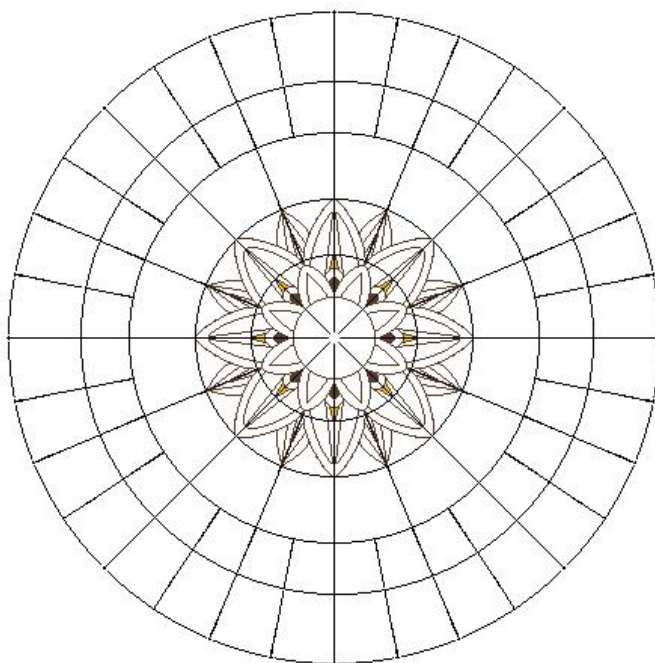
Divide the circle again.



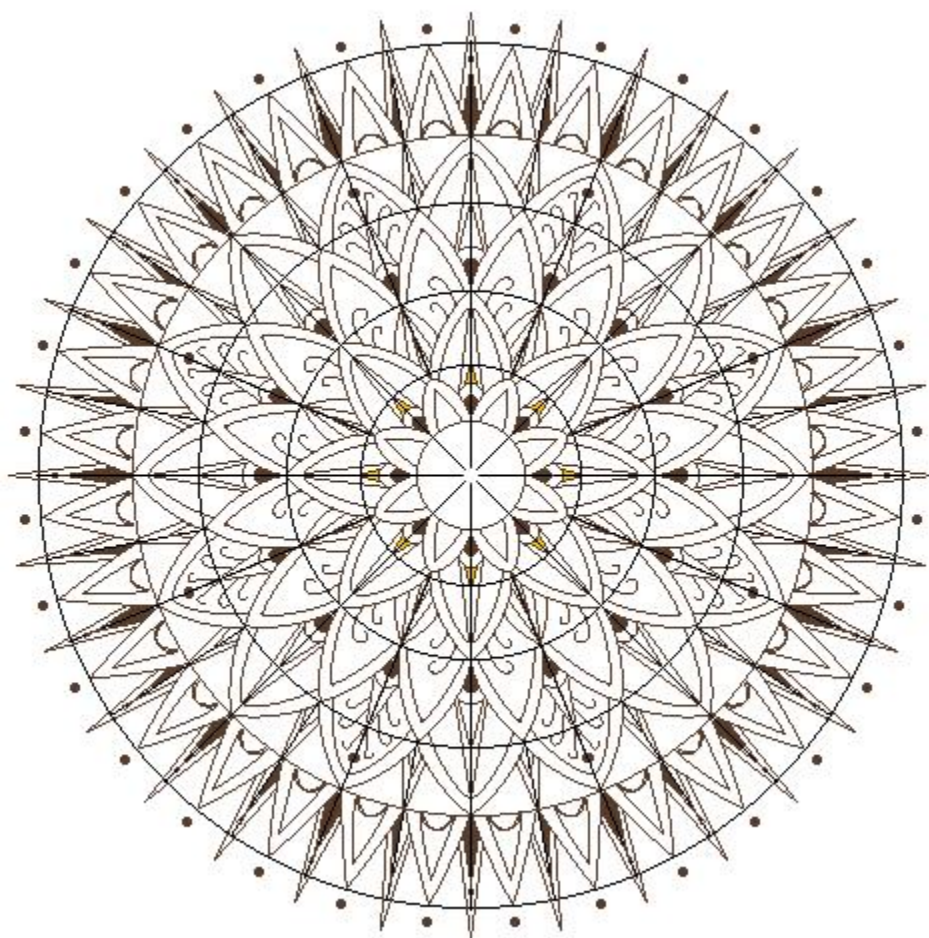
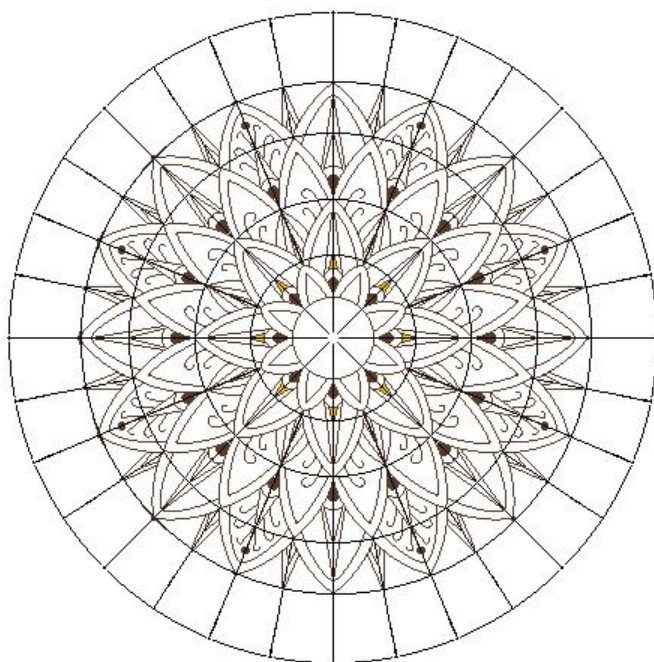
Begin the pattern at the center.



Work out from the center.

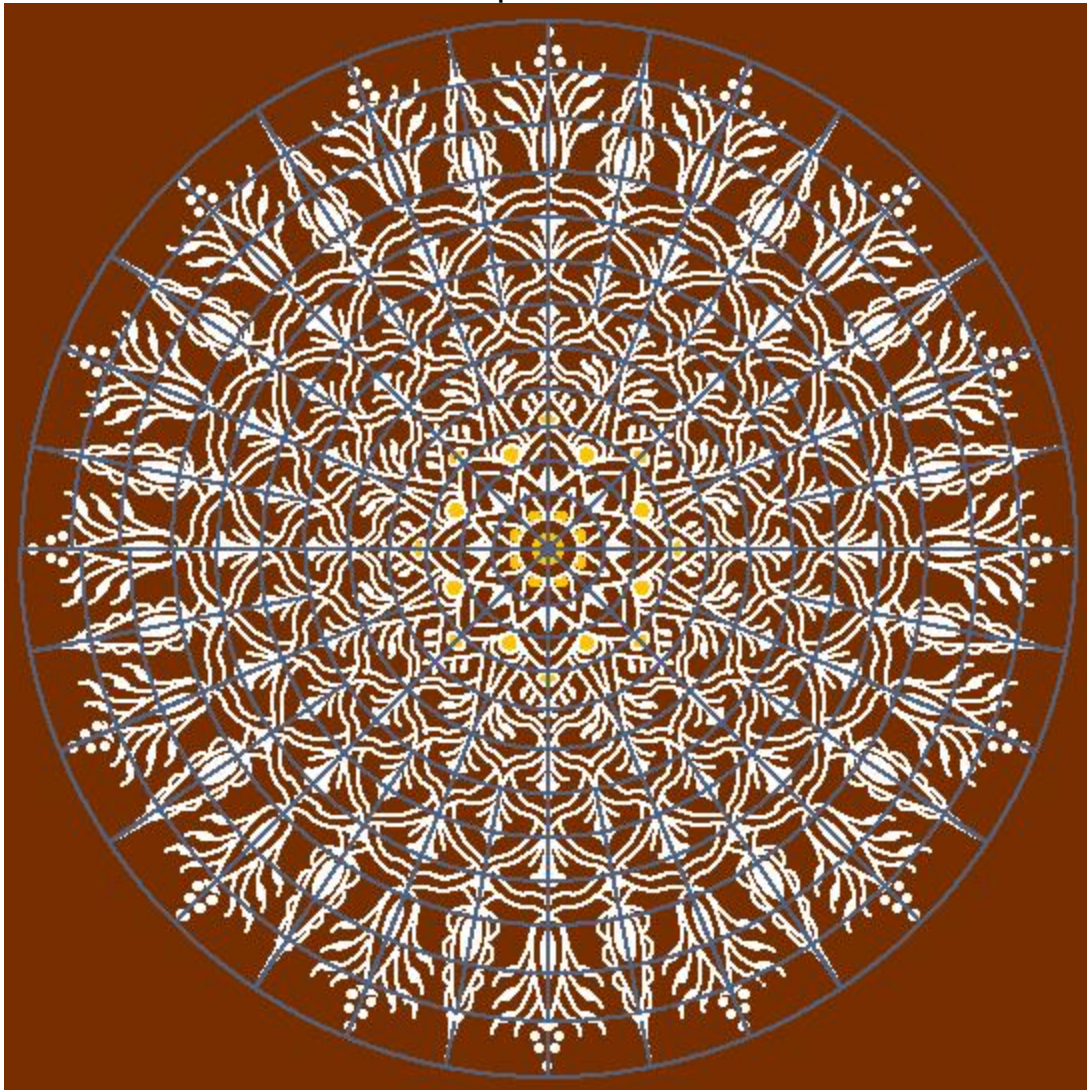


Continue working out from the center.

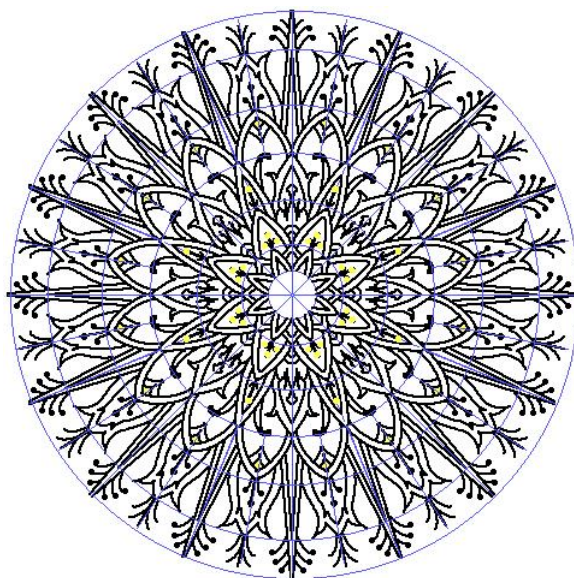


Complete your rangoli.

Gupta Lotus

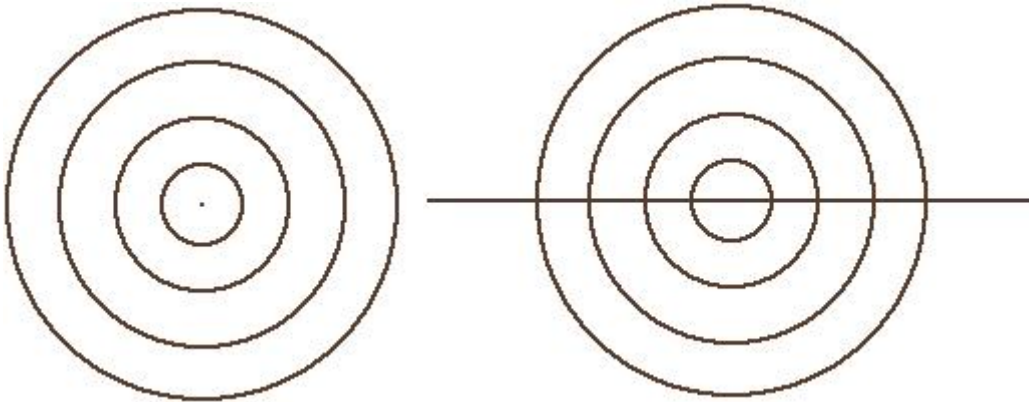


Gujarati Lotus

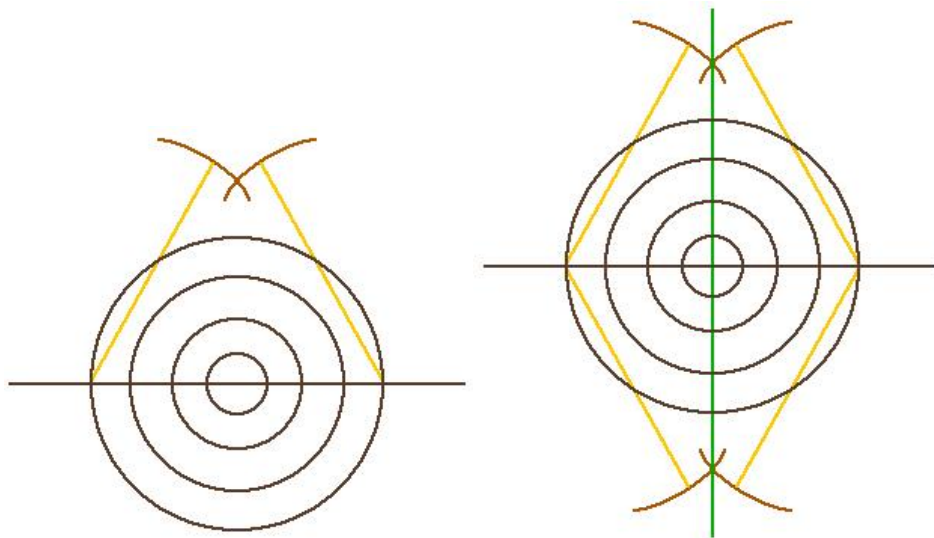


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If you make a small rangoli, you can scratch it in the dirt first, then put in your lines. If it's small and simple, you may be able to do this easily. Women made large rangoli for special occasions, and these take more planning to get them symmetrical and perfect. Lotus patterns are not difficult to lay out, and can cover a very large area.

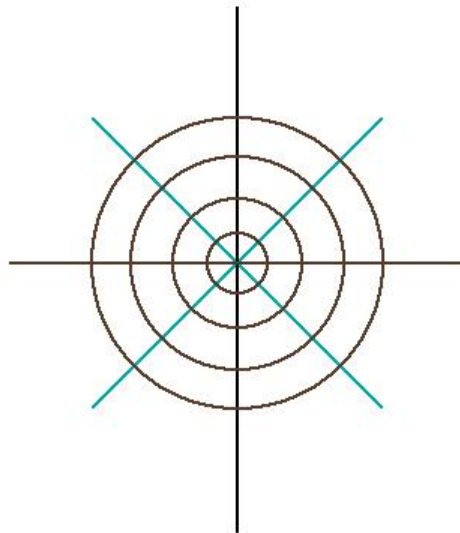


You can create a large lotus rangoli with a string, and two sticks. Pound one stick into the ground at the center of the lotus. Tie a string on the stick, and tie that to another stick. Mark concentric circles on the ground with a second stake. Keep the string tight as you make the circles. Mark a diameter, a straight line through the center of the circle.

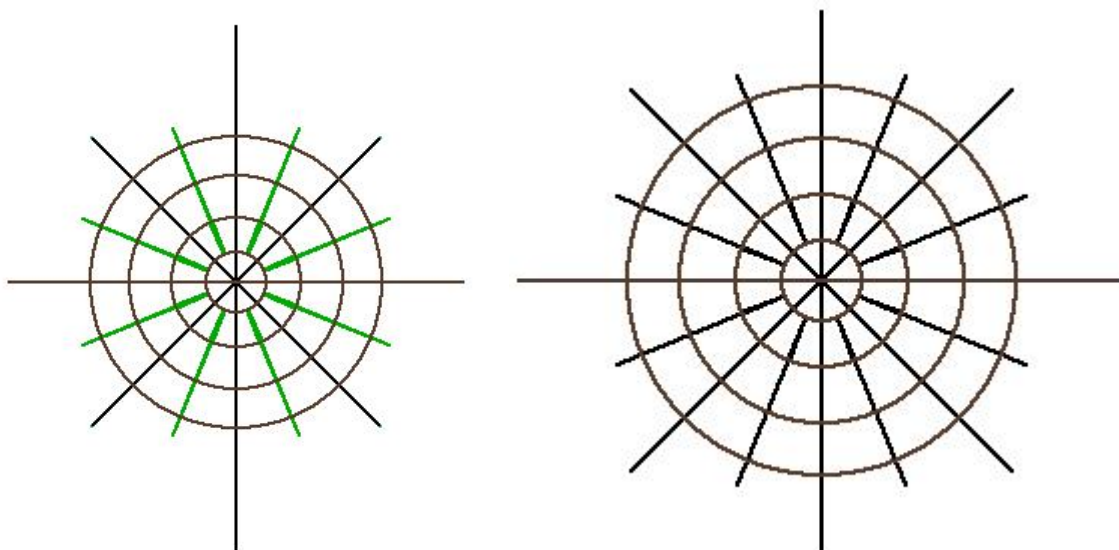


Bisect the diameter. Hold one stake at where a circle intersects the diameter. Stretch the string tight and strike an arc on the ground with the other stick. Do the same thing on the other side with exactly the same length of string.

Do the same things on the other side of the diameter, then draw a line from where one pair of arcs intersect and where the other pair of arcs intersect. This line should go straight through the center of the circles and be at a 90° angle to the diameter.



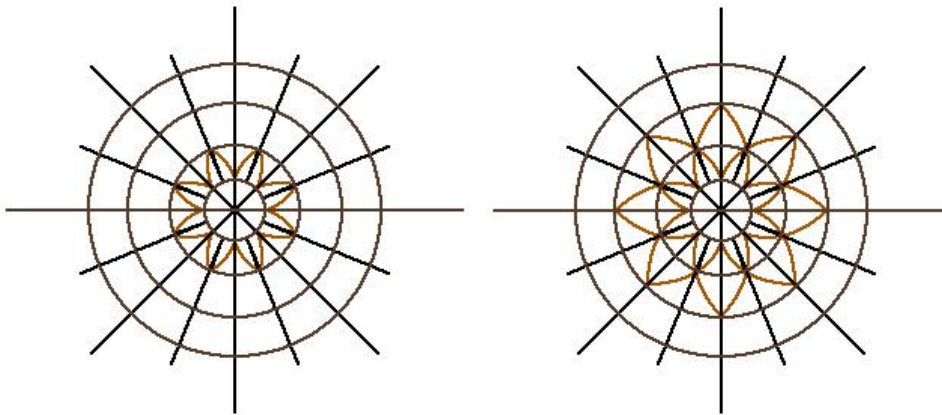
Divide the circles into 8ths.



Divide the 8ths into 16ths.

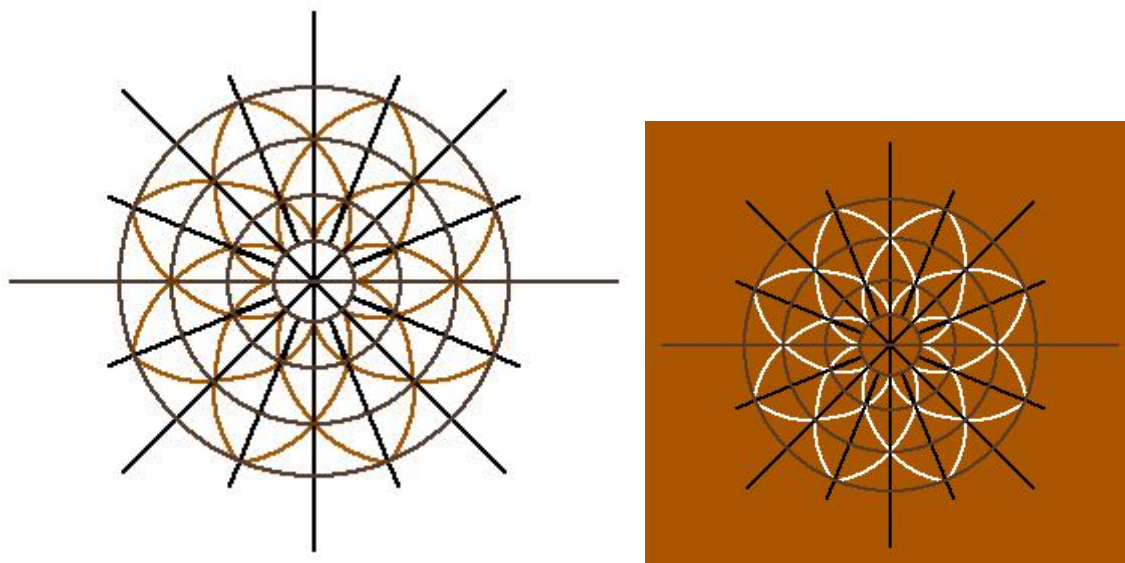
When all these lines are scratched on the ground, you can start making the lotus.

Scratch the lotus petal lines into the ground first with a stick. Start at the center. When you have the lines right, fill them in with rice flour or corn meal. Put rice flour or corn meal into a ziploc baggie, and snip off the corner. The flour will pour neatly out the corner and make your rangoli line. Wheat flour tends to clump.



When the center petals of the lotus are done, do the next circle of petals.

When the lotus is finished, brush away the original circle and radial lines as well as the footprints.



Add flowers, tea lights, and turmeric powder for color, and more lines for a more complicated Lotus!



Have Fun!