

# Story-telling through the practice of Indian Art

## (‘Rangoli’)

This lesson plan focuses on teaching children about the benefits of practicing one of the ancient forms of Indian Art known as “Rangoli”. This art has been passed down several generations in many local Indian cultures not just because of its auspiciousness and connection with festivity, but also because of its scientific roots that making it psychologically beneficial for people. The different geometric patterns of rangoli manifests into various vibrations inside the mind of the observer that have been found to bring a calming and soothing effect (Stuckley, 2010; Leckey, 2011).



### Need for this Concept:

**Rangoli** is derived from the *Sanskrit* word '*rangavalli*'. It is a form of art, originated in India, in which patterns are created on the floor in living rooms or courtyards using materials such as colored rice, dry flour, colored sand or flower petals. It is usually made during Diwali or Deepawali, Onam, Pongal and other Indian festivals related to Hinduism. Designs are passed from one generation to the next, keeping both the art form and the tradition alive. The purpose of rangoli is decoration, and it is thought to bring good luck.

Along with the aesthetic and spiritual connotations, the vibrant colors and patterns are supposed to bring psychological calm to anyone looking at the designs, and also bring the same benefit to the creator themselves. The constant movement, fluidity and freedom that creating a good rangoli requires are a great way to release stress and promote an inner calmness. This technique has also been found to be very beneficial for a child's growth and development of a healthy mind. It helps them learn about different geometric patterns without having to think about its association with Math. It also helps them with motor skill development, eye-hand coordination and improving focus because of the complexity and patience required to draw the free-hand patterns (Cohen et al., 2006; Gueue, et al., 2009).

It is a well-established fact in neuro-science that the brain actually responds to visual patterns and depending on the shapes & patterns, it can have different effects on the mind. There have been research publications on how even a simple geometric shape like a triangle can activate neural circuitry and affect emotions. Not just shapes, but colors also play a role in stimulating the brain. Modern science is still evolving and lot of research work is going on in this field with new discoveries related to visual patterns, brain stimulation etc.

Visual art represents a powerful resource for mental and physical well-being (Bolwerk et al., 2014). Drawing and visual art has also been considered a form of expression of a person's inner psyche (the Unconscious). Hence, through the use of creative techniques such as any form of art, freehand drawing or stencil templates can help children get through an emotional situation as well as aid in development of motor and cognitive abilities. My project plan aims to propagate the use of this form of art for children and make positive contribution towards their socio-emotional health and cognitive development.

### Target Audience:

Children in the age range of 3 to 15 years will be a good fit for this lesson plan. However, there isn't an upper limit of the age range to use this creative form of **self-expression**. The drawings or the stencil templates can be made more complicated for older kids. The 'Rangoli' has its origin in India, but its use isn't limited to the children living in this country. It can be used by children from any country, culture or ethnicity. No prior experience with art of drawing is needed to use and implement this plan. This can also be used for children diagnosed with learning disabilities, attentional deficits and who are under behavioral remediation plans or therapies.

## Learning Goals:

- Familiarize with the concept of 'Rangoli'
- Use this skill in everyday life to reap its psychological, emotional and cognitive benefits
- Learn a different form of creative art
- Improve the child's focus and attention abilities
- Become mindful while using their creative energies
- Use narrative/story-telling skills to design a storyline around a pattern
- Encourage team-work and cooperation among students.

## Concept Description:

Rangoli designs can be simple geometric shapes, deity impressions, or flower and petal shapes (appropriate for the given celebrations), but they can also be very elaborate designs crafted by numerous people. The base material is usually dry or wet powdered rice or dry flour, to which sindoor (vermilion), haldi (turmeric) and other natural colors can be added. Chemical colors are a modern variation. Other materials include colored sand, red brick powder and even flowers and petals, as in the case of flower rangolis.

The teacher or parent can create 'Rangoli' stencils using any computer software such as Adobe Illustrator. Children can use those stencils to create different patterns by using the 'Rangoli' materials as described above. If the children don't have access to these materials, then they can also use simple sketch pens or colored pencil to make these patterns.

Once the children complete their 'Rangoli', they should be encouraged by a parent or teacher to narrate a story or experience that they can associate with a pattern. By narrating a story, they will get a medium to express their thoughts, conflicts and complexes in a creative and healthy way. The stories needn't be personal; they can be fun and totally fictional. The key component of this project is to practice this art technique in a therapeutic form. Creating a patterned rangoli stencil, filling the patterns with various colors and narrating a story or experience will facilitate a constructive way of self-expression for children. Research has shown that art used in a therapeutic manner is very helpful in promoting a healthy psychological development for children (Brown and Church, 2013).

The aim is not so much on evaluation of children's work as the focus is on improving their emotional, mental and cognitive well-being. It is basically to empower them with techniques that they could use in their lives whenever they feel too stressed or overwhelmed. Therefore, the facilitator needn't worry too much about evaluating or grading a child's work, instead should encourage the child to think beyond grades and use this a medium to express his inner creative energies or thoughts.

Alongside, the children should be motivated to give constructive feedback to other team-mates so that the activity helps in fostering the feelings of cooperation rather than competition.





### Learning Theories that support this Lesson Plan:

#### ➤ **Universal Design for Learning**

This theory focuses on designing experiences that fits the learning needs of all due to which I think this is a highly suitable and relevant theory for this lesson design. The topic, concept and lesson plan accommodates the individual learning needs of different students. It is basically focused on using their creative energies to make them more focused and at the same time, improve their well-being in the long-term perspective.

#### ➤ **Generative Learning Theory**

This is based on the idea that learners can actively integrate new ideas into their memory to enhance their educational experience. In essence, it involves linking new with old ideas, in order to gain a better

understanding of the instructed concepts. Through the story-telling, they will use their memories to create or narrate experiences which will aid in their cognitive abilities.

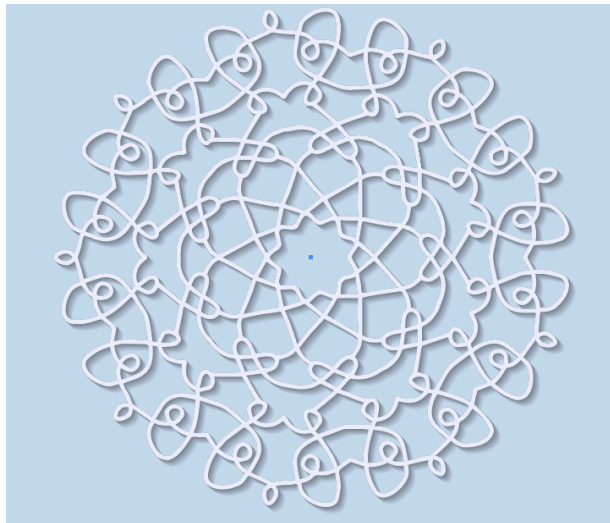
➤ **Social Constructivist Theory**

This theory focuses on learning by interacting and collaborating with others. Throughout the lesson plan, the children will be required to work with each other towards a common goal. This will make them as active learners, not just passive recipients of the learning material.

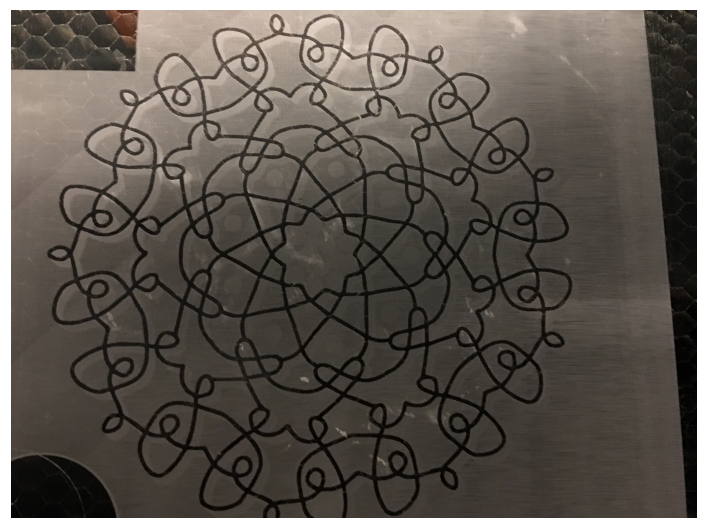
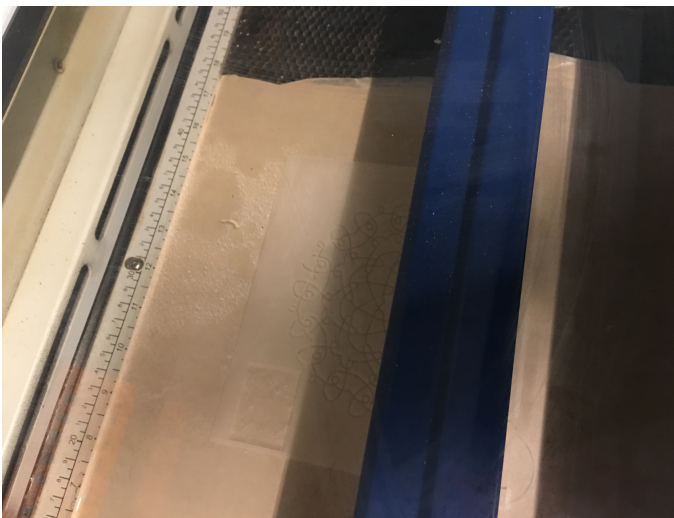
➤ **Affective Theory**

This theory is highly relevant for this project plan since it focused on using a form of art and associating a story with it as a medium for self-expression and promotes optimum development of affective cognition.

**My Drawing:**



(on Illustrator)



(on Laser Cutter)

## Process Documentation:

- I got inspired to create a project on this topic because this is the 'Diwali' week in India. This is one of the most widely celebrated festival and 'Rangoli' is one of the trademarks of this festival celebration.
- I have always been passionate to connect Positive Psychology, Mindfulness and Creativity and I thought this week's assignment was a way to create a project around these domains.
- I used Adobe Illustrator and an online pattern creator tool to design this Rangoli stencil. I used small patterns from internet, edited them and merged them together to create this design. It was initially pretty messy but one of my friends, who is an expert in Illustrator gave me some useful tips to smoothen out the edges and the make the design look even which was really helpful for me.
- Thereafter, I printed the pattern on the laser cutter which was a fabulous experience because that feeling, when you see a design you created coming to life, is unmatched!

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