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## MODULE – 4

Floor Painting



Notes

# KOLAM (KALAM IN KERALA)

Dear learner, in the previous lesson, you learned about the traditional folk art Alpana. In this lesson, you will learn about the folk art Kolam. Floor decoration is one of the most popular forms of folk art in India. The decoration on the floor is called *Kolam* in Tamil Nadu (South India), and it is drawn at the front (courtyard) of the house. This zone is protected by the design traced on the floor.

Under a native term, *Kalam* is seen in its developed form in Kerala, but the context, structure, and function are not the same as *Kolam*. In Malayalam, the term *Kalam* means the specific space for doing something. In this context, Kalam is a space where the deity is expected to appear. Once the drawing of *Kalam* of the concerned deity is completed, a series of rituals including appeasing songs, offerings and ritual performances are carried out by the persons which concludes by erasing *Kalam* by possessed devotees or oracle. The main difference between *Kolam* and *Kalam* is that *Kalam* is the drawing of either a deity figure or its symbolic representation in symmetrical by using five colours. In contrast, *Kolam* is the line drawing of certain patterns using white powder. There are two types of *Kalam*. One is the drawing of the deity as such, and the other is the permutation of geometrical figures representing the space for the deity to appear. The first one can be divided into two: *Bhootavativu* and *Chitravativu*. In the case of *Chitravativu*, the figure of the deity is drawn in the same proportion as the human body whereas in *Bhootavativu* it is drawn in an exaggerated way.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the features of *Kalam*;
- identify various colours used in *Kalam* as also materials used to prepare these colours;



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- state the context and function of this folk art form;
- identify the motifs used in *Kalam*;
- make the traditional drawing of *Bhadrakali*;
- explain various ornaments and weapons of *Bhadrakali*.

### 7.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Learner, first, let us understand the general description of Kolam painting. The drawing of *Kalam* is a part of the common folk religious practice that prevails all over Kerala, irrespective of castes. *Kalam* is the space where the deity is invoked and pleased by proper rituals. According to the belief people are not much bothered about the boarding place of the deities. Still, they are sure that the deity will appear in *Kalam* once they draw *Kalam* and perform the required rituals. Gradually from *Kalam*, it enters into the body of the concerned ritual person or the oracle. Finally, the performer gets possessed. At the end of the performance, the possessed person or oracle erases *Kalam* using a flower bunch from the area nut tree or by the oracle through rhythmic dance. It is a night-long ritual.

*Pulluva, Kuruppu, Namboodiri* are some of the communities that are traditionally engaged in *Kalam* rituals. Many other castes perform this duty for their castes. Each caste has its tradition of drawing *Kalam*, but the basic principles are the same. The traditional space for *Kalam* drawing is the front courtyard of the shrine of the concerned deity or the house's front yard where the rituals in connection with *Kalam* are performed as a vow. The colours used in the drawing of *Kalam* are known as Panchvarnam (Five colours): Namely black, white, yellow, red and green. However, in Malayalam, the word *Kalamezhuttu* denotes the drawing of *Kalam* as nothing but flour/floral drawing. White or black colour is used to make sketches, and once the sketches are drawn the columns are filled with decorations made in specific colours. Traditionally it is decided which colour goes to which portion of the figure.

### 7.2 TRADITIONAL MOTIFS

It would be best to recognise the traditional motifs used in Kolam painting. The dominant motif in the villages of Andhra Pradesh is the dot arranged meticulously all around the inner walls of the houses. In Telangana, Andhra, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu, the thresholds are mainly dotted in red and yellow. The vermilion dot is a potent symbol, which is associated with blood, the source of the life and the mother goddess.

**List of Kolam Motifs**

1. **Dot** : Dot is a symbol of the seed, the source of life. It is also a symbol of the Mother Goddess.
2. **Vermillion Dot** : potent symbol –The archetypal meaning of which is associated with blood -the source of life and primordial Mother Goddess.
3. **Alavuttom** : It is an ornament around Kundalam which falls on both sides of the Goddess *Bhadrakali* (From the forehead to the waist).
4. **Kireetam** : Crown - It is an ornamental headdress worn by the God/ Goddess
5. **Kundalarrt** : Ear ornament of Goddess *Bhadrakali*.
6. **Trident** : Spear with three points carried by goddess *Bhadrakali* as a symbol of power.
7. **Shield** : Protection against attack. This is carried by the *Bhadrakali*.



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Fig. 7.1

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8. **Sword** : Weapon with a long thin metal and a protected handle  
- The Goddess *Bhadrakali* hold it as a sign of authority.
9. **Chilambu** : Anklet: An ornamental band worn by the Goddess *Bhadrakali* around the *ankle*.
10. **Darika** : The demon killed by the Goddess *Bhadrakali*.
11. **Naga** : Serpent worn by the Goddess *Bhadrakali* (Symbol of fertility and prosperity).
12. **Loop** : Shape produced by a curve that crosses itself.

### 7.3 MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR KOLAM

- Canvas
- Natural colours
- Natural objects such as leaves, flower etc.
- Charcoal for black colour
- Raw rice for white colour
- Turmeric powder for yellow colour
- Green leaves of tree for green colour
- Drawing sheet, pencil, eraser and colours to draw Kolam

### 7.4 TRADITIONAL METHOD OF KOLAM

You have learnt the traditional motifs. Now you will learn the traditional method of Kolam painting. Canvas for this drawing is the floor. Therefore, the first step to draw *Kalam* is making the floor suited for drawing. So, level the floor, make its surface hard and at the same time smooth. Next, level the specific plot with muddy earth harden it with the beat of a wooden plank and plaster it with the paste of cow dung to make it smooth. After that, one can employ any native technique to level and smooth the surface.

#### Preparation of Colours

As mentioned earlier, five colours are used to draw *Kalam*. All of them are natural colours prepared from natural objects such as leaves collected in and around.

**Black:** Put the husk of paddy in a frying pan and fry it until it gets the colour of charcoal. Then make it powder.

**White:** Soak raw rice in water for 3 to 4 hours, remove water and spread it on the floor to get it dry. When it is dried, flour it.

**Red:** Turmeric powder is embrocated with chunnambu (quicklime) in a ratio of 3:1. The colour of turmeric powder becomes red.

**Yellow:** Turmeric powder as such is used for yellow colour.

**Green:** Green leaves of tree such as Vaka (*Acasia adoratissima*) are dried in shade and floured. It gives the colour green with a grey tone.



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### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Learner, let us illustrate one Kolam painting. The theme is the Bhadrakali Drawing.

More than a hundred *Kalams* and their regional variations are still alive in Kerala. Among these, Bhadrakali and different kinds of Naga (serpents) are common. Here, for practical purposes, Bhadrakali, one of the popular Kalams, is selected. Crown, face, from face to belly, From belly to lower border of the dress, feet.

The step by step method of drawing the *Kalam* of the deity, *Bhadrakali* is given below.

#### Drawing of the outline

1. Draw a square. Divide it into two equal parts by drawing a vertical line.

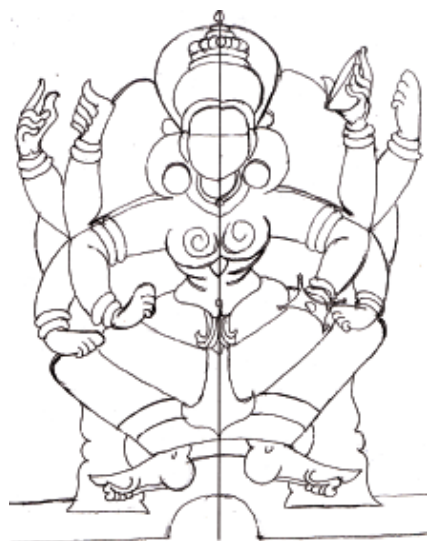


Fig. 7.2



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2. Draw the sketch of the forehead of *Bhadrakali* leaving a space on the top where crown of *Bhadrakali* is to be drawn. Draw the outline of the crown.

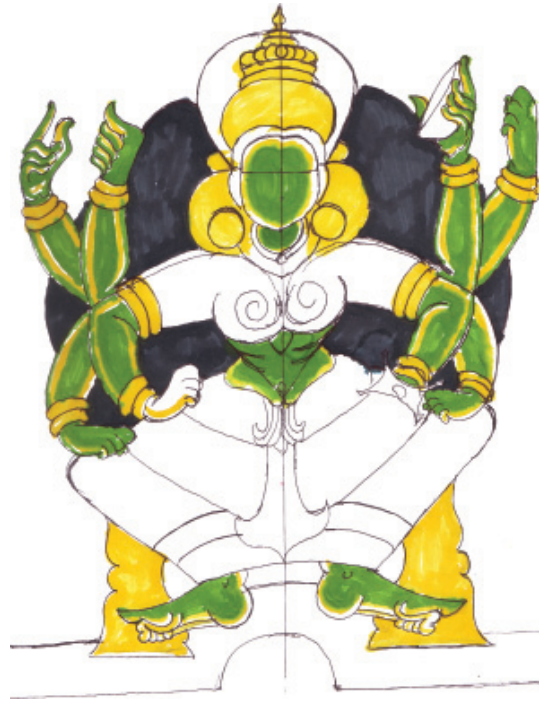


Fig. 7.3

3. In the same way, the outline the face that begins with the forehead to the tip of the nose.
4. Draw the outline of ear-ornament, *Kundalam* on both sides of the face.
5. Sketch the “*Aalavattam*” on both sides of the *Kundalam*. The upper edge of the *Aalavattam* should be at the level of the upper forehead and the lower edge at the lower edge of the breasts. *Aaluvattam* is the decoration that falls on both sides of the figure, from the two sides of the forehead to the waist).
6. Draw an outline of the breasts, belly, waist dress and feet.
7. Draw the sketch of eight hands and weapons in each hand proportionally and fill colour as per the illustration.
8. The background of the waist dress is black, and therefore the whole costume part is filled with black powder, and a shade of red is given by spreading red coloured powder over that.



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Fig. 7.4

9. Then put a border for the dress. The border is white in the middle of black lines on both sides and a thin white line outside of it. One is free to select the background of the dress. The designs may be in green/yellow/white.



Fig. 7.5

10. Wherever a bare body is seen outside it will be 'filled with green powder. This is because the border of the organs of the body is thickened with black powder. The face, neck, breasts, belly, legs and hands are the parts of the body, usually in green colour.



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11. The colour of the ornaments is yellow in a red tone. Fill the area with yellow and spread the red powder over that. Wherever a border is needed for the ornament it will be drawn with black powder. The background colour of the crown is black, and the borders are drawn with red coloured powder with an outline of white colour.
12. The outer border of the figure in a round shape is known as “Prabhamandalam” and it is drawn in white colour, and decorations are in any other colours selected by the artist. The artist has the freedom to choose designs to decorate the “Prabhamarrdalam”. The figure is now complete.



Fig. 7.6

**PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2**

Now, you need to know the preparation of floor design in geometrical shapes. The theme is Geometrical Kolam Design.

For making Kolam, you will need a flat surface. The material used is rice flour or rice paste because rice to all Indians is a sign of prosperity. Finely ground white stone powder or chalk is also used these days, as this is easier to apply and makes the Kolam brighter and well finished.

When making Kolam on paper, you can use a scale and pencil to make equally spaced dots.



**Drawing Kolam with Dots**

**Step 1:** Start making Kolam by drawing equally spaced dots on the flat surface using chalk, and make eight lines with 8 parallel dots.

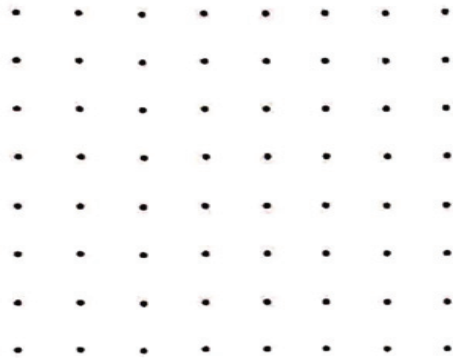


Fig. 7.7

**Step 2:** Make a Swastika sign in the centre. Join the dots end to end by using the straight lines in a pattern as shown below.

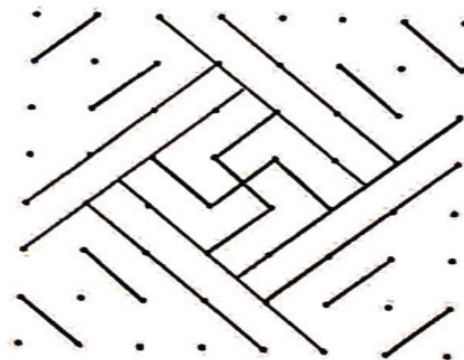


Fig. 7.8

**Step 3:** Complete one side of the design first. On any side, draw to join all the curves. Also, complete Diya as shown below.

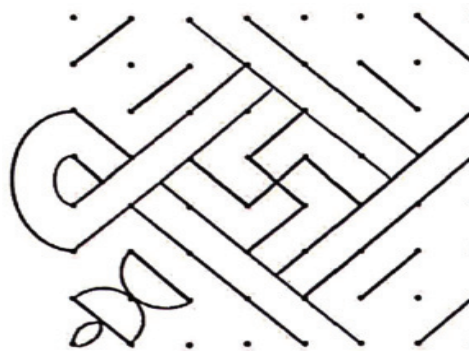


Fig. 7.9



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**Step 4:** Finally, complete the design by repeating step 3.



**Fig. 7.10**

You can make Kolam on a coloured flat surface as well. Ordinary Kolam powder is a white stone powder mixed in the right proportion with rice powder to ensure smoothness. For coloured Kolams, you can use Rangoli coloured powder.

### PRACTICAL EXERCISE 3

Now we will get to know the preparation of one more Kolam. That is Pongal Kolam.

Pongal is one of the most popular harvest festivals in South India, mainly in Tamil Nadu. One of the major traditions of the celebration includes the drawing of Kolam. Pongal is the harvest festival, and people decorate their houses with Pongal Kolams. Pongal Kolams are normally done in many different colours. It can be decorated with flowers, rice flour or colours. The earthen pot has a huge significance in Pongal rituals. It is symbolic of prosperity and mostly drawn in Kolam as it is considered a good luck symbol.

The next thing that is associated with Pongal is sugarcane. Sugarcane represents the mind and the five senses. It is believed to control five bad things: lust, anger, greed, pride and envy.

**Step 1:** Start making Kolam by drawing equally spaced dots on the flat surface using chalk. Make seven lines with 7 parallel dots.

For making Kolam, you will need a flat surface. The material used is rice flour because rice to all Indians is a sign of prosperity. Finely ground white stone powder, chalk or Rangoli colours are also used these days. This is easier to apply and makes the Kolam brighter and well finished. When making Kolam on paper, you can use a scale and pencil to make equally spaced dots.



Fig. 7.11

**Step 2:** Let's make pot first. Join all the horizontal lines. Then, curve the lines as shown below. Also, draw 4 crosses in the middle lower side.

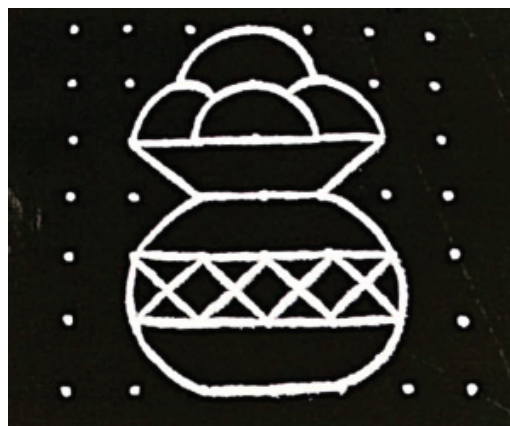


Fig. 7.12

**Step 3:** Now, we will add sugarcane on both sides of the pot. First, draw horizontal and vertical lines then draw leaves.



Fig. 7.13



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**Step 4:** Finally, draw other signs around the pot. Here, we have drawn the Sun and flowers. Sun and flowers symbolize the connection of man with nature.

Next, add some more design elements using geometric shapes. You can use Rangoli colours, coloured rice, or flower petals to add colours. Be creative in this step to make art beautiful.



Fig. 7.14



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

**Kolam Design** →

- Floor drawing
- Front of the house
- Kerala Kolam drawn in five colours
- Symbolized prosperity and fertility
- Dots, Kundalam, Kireetam etc. motifs used
- Outline of the figure is drawn first
- Then figures are filled with colours



### TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Name the places/states where the *Kolam/Kulam* drawing is practised.
2. What types of *Kolam* are found? Explain their importance in the Socio-cultural context?
3. What type of materials and colours are used in drawing *Kalam*?
4. Identify some of the important motifs used in *Kolam*.
5. Identify some of the important basic techniques that are applied in drawing *Kolam*
6. How the *Bhadrakali Kolam* is drawn? Identify the major steps that are taken in drawing the figure.
7. Name some of the important communities in Kerala that are traditionally engaged in the *Kolam* rituals?
8. What are the colours used to paint *Kolam*, and how these colours are prepared?

### GLOSSARY

Aalavattam	Ornament that decorates around Kundhalam
Bhadrakali	The Devi killed the demon, Darika
Chilambu	Anklet
<i>Chitravativu</i>	Figure of the deity drawn in an exaggerated way
Chunnambu	Quicklime
Darika	The demon killed by Bhadrakali
Kireetam	Crown
Koralaaram	Necklace
<i>Pulluva</i>	A caste society
<i>Kalamezhutttu</i>	Floral drawing tradition of Kerala
<i>Kuruppu</i>	A caste society
Kundhalam	Ear decoration
Naga	Serpent God/Goddess
Njori	Two frills in the front portion of the dress



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Kolam (Kalam in Kerala)



### Notes

<i>Namboodiri</i>	A caste of South Indian society
<i>Panchavarnam</i>	Five colours used in Kalamezhuttu. They are black, white, red, yellow and green;
Pandal	A temporary structure with four poles in four corners and over the flat roof usually thatched with coconut leaves and a red cloth is spread beneath.
<i>Pulluva</i>	A caste society
Peethakkalu	Legs of divine stool
Tirumudi	Crown
Vaka	Acacia Adoritssma
Vishneesham	The ornament wear in between the crown and the forehead.