

Potential and prospects in traditional folk art of Kumaun (Aipan) for livelihood upliftment of rural people in Uttarakhand

Satish Chandra Arya

Scientist- D

Centre for Biodiversity Conservation and Management (CBCM)
G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment
Kosi-Katarmal- 263 643, Almora, Uttarakhand, India

Abstract: 'AIPAN' is a traditional folk art widely practiced in Kumaun region of Uttarakhand state. The history of this art in Kumaon is centuries old. Aipan has been an integral part of the lifestyle of the Kumaun since time immemorial. Aipan art is very important in almost every event and religious rites of Kumaon. AIPAN has good demand in the market due to its religious content, traditional values and a unique kind of art type. It has good demand in Uttarakhand as well the others state of India. Due to its importance, prevalence and good market demand, its importance as an alternative form of livelihood increases considerably. Aipan art can be practiced by local people for their income generation. It is very easy to make and it can be drawn by everyone men, women, old and young and incur a low input cost of materials. The use of Aipan art is no longer limited to homes and outposts only. At present, where migration has become a problem in Uttarakhand, then there is a need to find such alternatives so that employment opportunities can be provided to the rural people.

Keywords: *Uttarakhand, Kumaun, Traditional Folk Art, AIPAN, Livelihood, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship Development*

Introduction

State of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is located in the northern part of India located at the foothills of the Himalayan Mountain ranges (28°43' N to 31°27' N). The state came into existence on 9th November 2000 as the 27th State of India, when it was carved out of northern Uttar Pradesh. Total area of the state is 53,483 sq.km with the population of 100.86 lakh. The state has international boundaries with China (Tibet) in the north and Nepal in the east. On its north-west lies Himachal Pradesh, while on the south is Uttar Pradesh. The state is very rich in terms of biodiversity and natural resources. Maximum part of the state is hilly with undulating topography and snow peaked mountains. It is a famous tourist destination including the religious tourism. Char-Dhams, the four most sacred and revered Hindu temples of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are located in the mighty mountains of the state. Economy of the state is very poor. The main source of income is agriculture but due to low productivity, drying up of water sources, crop damage by wild animals, reduced availability of fuelwood and quality fodder the state is facing many problems. Out migration is the major serious issue in the state. People of the state are marginalised and has small land holdings. Agriculture is totally rain fed with low agricultural outputs. Unemployment is another challenging issue of the state. Keeping in view of above constraints there is an urgent need to sort out these problems and to bring some alternative livelihood options for the people of the state.

One of the potential alternative livelihood options for the income generation is making traditional folk art of Kumaun 'AIPAN'. It could be one of the possible solutions to uplift the economy of the people of the state.

'AIPAN' A traditional folk art of Kumaun

'AIPAN' is a traditional folk art widely practiced in Kumaun region of Uttarakhand state. The history of this art in Kumaon is centuries old. Aipan has been an integral part of the lifestyle of the Kumaun since time immemorial. Aipan art is very important in almost every event and religious rites of Kumaon. Without Aipan no ceremony is considered to be complete. On every auspicious occasion Aipan are drawn, so these are part of the ritual in Kumauni culture. It is also made on Chauki (wooden hard board), floor, cloths, and door, door-frames, window, window-frames and interior house walls etc.

Different types of Aipan designs are used for particular rituals. Such as for wedding ceremony 'Var Chauki' and 'Brahman Chauki' are necessarily used by the bride side. In the same way there are different kinds of Aipans are used for different ceremonies i.e. Shiv Peeth (Used for Shiv Pooja), Saraswati Chauki (Used for Saraswati Pooja), Janeu Chauki (Used in Janeu Sanskar), Namnkanan Chauki (Used in Namkaran Sanskar), Dhuli Arg Chauki (Used in Reception ceremony of groom).

Other than these, various items such as Dwar Patra, Var Chauki, Brahman Chauki, Nimbu, Shasthi, Dikare, Soop, Laxmi Chauki, Vasudhara, etc. are also made by the local people.

Aipans are drawn with the help of wet color. The ochre (Geru) is used for making the background for Aipan. Mainly the natural colours are used as the pigments for Aipan. Overnight soaked rice paste is used as the white color. This (white) is the only color which is used in Aipan.

Market Demand of AIPAN

AIPAN has good demand in the market due to its religious content, traditional values and a unique kind of art type. It has good demand in Uttarakhand as well the others state of India. Since Uttarakhand is famous tourist place therefore, it is very popular among the tourist. It attracts tourists for its uniqueness and cultural values.

Potential and Prospects of Aipan for Socio-Economic Development

Aipan has a good identity in every village, town and city of Uttarakhand. Everyone knows their importance. Specially on the occasion of Diwali, AIPAN art is done at the threshold of every house, temple and at different places of the house. But apart from this, they are depicted on many festivals. The women of every house generally know how to make it and are well versed in it. But there are many types of designs in the AIPAN, which have a certain pattern, so proper training is required to make them. Presently many women are increasing their livelihood through this art and earning a lot of profit. They are selling their AIPAN painting through personal level and through self-help groups. Some women and organizations are also selling it online, from which they are earning very good profits.

Due to its importance, prevalence and good market demand, its importance as an alternative form of livelihood increases considerably. Aipan art can be practiced by local people for their income generation. It is very easy to make and it can be drawn by everyone men, women, old and young and incur a low input cost of materials. The use of Aipan art is no longer limited to homes and outposts only. Now they are being used in decorative items, clothes, religious items, office buildings, makeup items, name plates, etc., due to which its commercial importance increases even more. The value addition of this art can be done by moulding the same Aipan art in different forms, which will further increase its demand. It can be made more popular by working on its product diversification. Due to which not only its price will increase but its trend will also increase, which can certainly contribute significantly to the economic progress of our rural people. In this way, this ancient folk art will not only be preserved, but also the livelihood of the people will increase, which can prove to be an important step in the development of the state of Uttarakhand.

Possibilities

To improve the livelihood of the rural people and make them self-sufficient such practices like AIPAN art should be promoted among the villagers of Uttarakhand. In the present scenario Government of India is encouraging people to promote 'Vocal for Local' to boost up the economy and to uplift the livelihood of rural people. An awareness may be spread among the villagers on AIPAN making and its importance in income generation and to tell them the current schemes of self-employment. Then capacity building and skill development should be done on AIPAN making and its marketing by organizing capacity building and skill development workshops regularly. Various concern stakeholders should work together for best outputs from the workshops.

In all start-ups entrepreneurship skills are need to get success. Therefore, entrepreneurial development skills should be developed among the rural people so that they can sustain them in the complexity of market system. The villagers should have to trained separately on entrepreneurship skills.

For capacity building, skill and entrepreneurship development there is a need to work from grass root level. A participatory approach has to be followed to understand the need of people, selection of beneficiaries and to organize the skill development training workshops. Exposure visits should be organized in Institutes Rural Technology Complex (RTC) and setups developed by the successful entrepreneurs around the area. Organize regular community meetings/interactions with various line agencies/govt is needed to get support from them.

Institute efforts

G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (GBPNIHE) has started green skill development work under the Green Business Initiative includes AIPAN making. Few skill development workshops were organized for women's on AIPAN making in Jyoli village cluster (A cluster of six villages i.e., Jyoli, Kaneli, Bisra, Kharkuna, Dilkot and Kujiyadi) at Hawalbagh block of Almora district. AIPAN painting were made by the women's groups. Some of the paintings were sold during 2020-21 and earned net profit of Rs. 6,200/-. AIPAN made by these women groups are also used as souvenir items to the dignitaries visiting the Institute on several events thus encouraging the local women groups for this local folk art activities and also contributed to their income.

Conclusion

At present, where migration has become a problem in Uttarakhand, then there is a need to find such alternatives so that employment opportunities can be provided to the rural people. The traditional folk-art of Uttarakhand can also be a means of alternative employment. Presently the increasing popularity and market demand of AIPAN art makes this option more important. The institute has also started efforts in this direction, which is getting good response. Therefore, more work is needed in this direction. Success of rural people by adopting this kind of alternative livelihood options will definitely make them smart and successful. Their capacity building and economic upliftment will contribute to the quality of their life and overall sustainable development of rural people in Uttarakhand.

References

1. Anonymous, 2021. Aipan - Understanding the ritualistic Form of folk art of Kumaon region. <https://www.indiaonroad.com/2021/08/aipan-folk-art-of-kumaon-uttarakhand.html>
2. Bano, S., Farid, N., Ashfaq, A., & Mas'udah, S., 2021. Uplifting the socio-economic empowerment of women through handicraft industry. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik* <https://doi.org/10.20473/mkp.V34I42021.367-379>
3. Gahlot M., Bhatt P., Pargai D. & Singh B., 2020. Traditional Aipan art of Kumoun- A Sustainable development tool. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, **9(10)**: 3890-3898.
4. <http://www.euttaranchal.com/culture/aipan-other-artsform>.
5. Jerath, A., 1988. Aipans - folk paintings of Kumaun. *The Indian textile magazine*, **8(9)**: 80-84.
6. Kaushik A. & Gupta M., 2017. "Aipan" Creative Art of Kumaon. *International Journal of Home Science*, **3(2)**: 640-642.
7. Krishna, G., 2018. Cheli Aipan: A unique initiative to make traditional folk art lucrative. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/cheli-aipan-a-unique-initiative-to-make-traditional-folk-art-lucrative-118110201699_1.html
8. Markuna, R.S., 2013. Aipan' designs luring domestic, global art lovers. <http://www.dailypioneer.com>
9. Patnaik T., 2020. About AIPAN Art Kumaon, Uttarakhand. *eSamskriti: Cultural Spirituality Travel*

10. Virmani M. & Bansal, N., 2018. Seeking sustainable heights in the lives of women through Aipan: Case study of Enactus IP College Initiative. *Journal Of Innovation for Inclusive Development*, **3(1)**: 40-44.