

Drawing Down Desires: Women, Ritual and Art in Tamil Nadu

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1. Introduction

The kolam (Fig. 1), a threshold ritual art form practiced extensively by millions of Tamil women, is the focus of this paper. This paper will explore the multiple sites in daily life in which the kolam plays a significant role. Theoretical categories from the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, art history, and environmental studies will be set in the context of a form of ritual geometry. Design forms will be the sites of exploration of this paper. Indigenous terms, women's voices, their own narratives of their own ritual forms will be the primary research focus (NAGARAJAN, 2001).



Fig. 1. A 14 years old girl finishing a giant labyrinth Kolam in Tamil Nadu. Beginning with a grid of dots, she takes one and a half hours to complete the continuously lined kolam. Photo by the author.

2. Ritual Art and Design

Ritual purity and ritual pollution, embedded ecologies and disembedded ecologies, village to city competitions, all these will be elaborated and understood in the context of specific designs and shapes of everyday life, as expressed in these beautiful, exquisite kolams. Ritual drawings and the folk beliefs surrounding these ritual drawings as expressed by hundreds of women are the focus of this paper (NAGARAJAN, 2007). Gender constructions, ritual constructions of space and time, and the shifting post-colonial contexts of fieldwork in the past twenty years will also be examined. Photographs, drawings, and oral texts will all be the evidence of the themes presented.

3. Conclusion

The kolam is seen as a multi-faceted object and a subject in its own right, drawing to itself an enormous layering of cultural themes and metaphors. This is a literary, aesthetic, ritual, and geometric journey.

REFERENCE

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