



Toran

A decorative door hanging

Toran architecturally referred to a free-standing ornamental or arched gateway which was employed for ceremonial purposes, seen in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain architecture. Toran then acted as a sacred gateway built in stone or wood. It provided for an evident entry point into the built form and offered a grand welcome. This system of toran was then adapted by the common mass and was used by everyone at their homes in different forms. Torans later came to be referred to as the decorative hangings on the doors and windows of homes.

The entrance of one's home was considered the point of division between the outside and the inside, where negative energy from outside was to be kept away from the inside. One was to enter pure and fresh. Different activities were carried out to emphasize on the same belief, from washing the guests feet before entering to having aartis done at the entrance. And torans served

Toran made of mango leaves and marigold have been used since ancient times and hold extreme cultural and scientific importance. A jute thread, length as long as one's door length (approximately 1m- 1.5m) is used to bind the mango leaves and marigold flowers together. A marigold flower is placed on top of each mango leaf and both of them are stitched together. A garland is made out of the leaves and flowers and hanged outside on the doors.

It is considered extremely auspicious as it is believed that it keeps the evil spirits and negative energy at bay. The mango tree and its leaves are believed to be the residence of Gods like Lakshmi, Govardhan, Gandharva, and the God of fertility. The significance of tying a garland of mango leaves relates to Lord Ganesha and Lord Murugan, the two sons of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva, who were fond of mangoes. The main idea behind decorating the homes is to please and attract the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. What many see as just a tradition actually has scientific backing.

The garland is made with fresh green mango leaves because they are able to absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. This helps in keeping the surrounding atmosphere clean and fresh. Theoretically, the air is purified when it is filtered through the leaves. At the same time, insects get attracted to the leaves. So it acts as a very cheap and safe insect repellent. Apart from the scientific reasons behind the same, the color green of the mango leaves is also soothing and refreshing to the mind which helps to lower anxiety. Having a garland of leaves hanging at the doorway automatically relaxes you as soon as you get home.

With growing times, people started preferring more visually appealing, aesthetic torans and thus torans were embroidered, or printed, or made of beads and pearls. Also using fresh mango leaves and flowers became a task over time as it had to be frequently changed to fresh ones so more permanent torans later replaced the traditional mango leaf ones. Artificial flowers were employed to sustain the aesthetic look and at the same time use and reuse of the same garland for prolonged periods became possible. Then there are beaded toran hangings which are made of different colored beads. They are noted for their visual appeal. These toran hangings also come with conventional motifs

Left to Right:

- 1) Embroidered toran with mirror work
- 2) Embroidered toran with beads and motifs



like the swastika, Om, betel leaves, etc. These toran hangings provide an excellent finishing touch to the house. The choice of toran also puts a light on the status of the person in the society and the status the person wants the society to know. Heavy torans, with beads, motis, mirrors, beautifully embroidered talks about how the person wants the impression an outsider has of his/her house, also showing how much one cares for the gesture of welcoming the guest. Torans along with other decorations such as rangoli, motifs, etc are used largely during festivals and ceremonies such as Diwali, marriages, temple functions. It is considered extremely auspicious.

Torans in Maharashtra are widely used in Kolhapur and Sangli as they have a key role in making their tradition unique and exceptional. Mango leaves were often used in Southern India, whilst in Northern India, marigold flowers were spun and were featured over the doorways of most homes. In Gujarat, torans have evolved and are beautifully embroidered (also providing a source of income to many housewives). In Rajasthan, textile torans have been famous and mirrors have been widely used there.

Indian culture strongly believes in the gesture of welcoming since ancient times. The quote Atithi Devo bhava is strongly rooted in the Indian tradition where Atithi meaning a (uncalled) guest is treated equivalent to that of God. This says a lot about why people extend a warm welcome to the guests and hanging torans at the entrance was one of the ways to do so. In Hinduism/Sanatana Dharma Personal God is worshipped in a five-step worship; this is known as Panchopchara Puja. The five steps from the worship become the five formalities to be observed while receiving guests, one of them being Dhupa (fragrance). The use of torans at the entrance helps in providing a good fragrance and easing the mood of the guest. The activity of hanging torans speaks heavily of how we Indians believe in the ideology of hosting guests and providing them with the best treatment. Atithi satkar, to welcome the guest with warmth and respect is something believed by Indians.

{1}<https://www.oxfordartonline.com/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000085631>

{2}https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=oNAwl-jS3gWC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=toran+hangings&ots=oCa0_7o1ik&sig=pQQ159P9arwDvwtw30r1nL4ySo&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=toran%20hangings&f=false

{3}<https://astroulagam.com.my/lifestyle/article/102309/scientific-reasons-behind-hanging-leaves-on-doors>

