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LENASIA

WOMEN

HOLD

RANGOLI

EXHIBITION

RANGOLI, the 5 000 — year-old traditional art of India was shown to be still an integral part of present-day Indian life in South Africa when more than a thousand people turned up to see the exhibition at the Patidar Hall, Lenasia.

Traditionally, Gujarati women play little part in public affairs, and although there are signs of change the great majority still tend to lead their lives centred round their homes and families. This was however, not the case when eleven enthusiastic women under the supervision of Mrs Leela Desai, staged the tenth Rangoli Exhibition to show that although Indians have been in South Africa for more than a hundred years, they have retained their cultural traditions.

Art and beauty are part and parcel of Indian life. Every occasion of significance in the Indian community is permeated with colour and artistic feeling.

This was evident at the Rangoli exhibition. Rangoli signifies a happy occasion and provides the opportunity for people to express their artistic talent. These days, Rangoli takes place in practically every Gujarati home — mostly before Diwali.

There is no religious or dogmatic influence on what impressions are depicted in a Rangoli exhibition.

"This depends on the occasion to

be celebrated, said Mrs Desai.

"The basic requirement is the use of natural products in creating dazzling pictures and patterns."

Paintings are done not with paint, but with mealie rice, lentils, water colours, mealie meal and shiny coloured beads.

"The theme of the art work will vary on all important occasions such as national days of good omen," said Mrs Desai.

What I saw at the Patidar Hall, Lenasia, was a kaleidoscope of colour with eye-pleasing impressions, historical images and contemporary designs.

The works were the products of a week's toil and effort by people aged from five to sixty.

A register recorded the number of visitors and each was allowed a comment. Some read: "Excellent," "praiseworthy," "pleasing",

"encouragement of Indian culture", "imagery and colour in the designs", and a host of other compliments.

"Many of our young girls are losing

touch with their traditional heritage, and if these colourful activities of our people are not perpetuated, posterity will be the poorer", said Mrs Desai.

Dances, parties and disco sessions are not the way of life of young Gujarati girls from religious families. They usually have plenty of time on their hands, and to help them do something constructive with it Mrs Desai formed the Shree Bhagini Samaj (Organisation of Sisterhood) in 1965.

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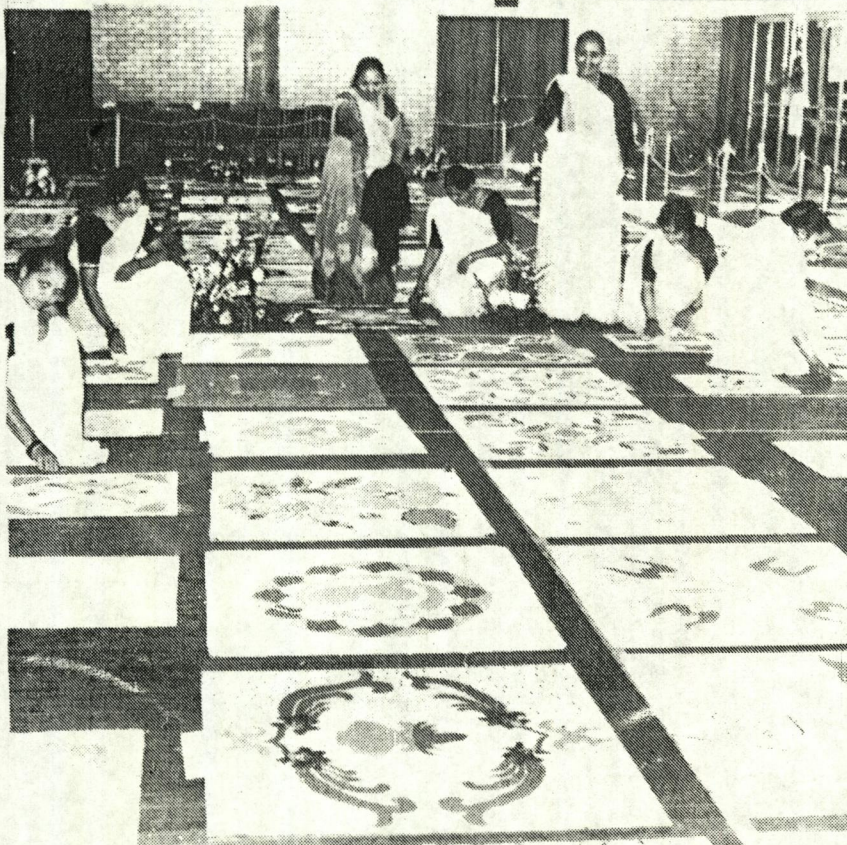
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Members of the Ghagini Samaj put the finishing touches to paintings under the supervision of Mrs. Leela Desai and Chandaben Govind.

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