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Narrative Tribal Pithora Graffiti Style and its Fantasy Pictographic Presentation with Topographic Configuration

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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Abstract

Pithora graffiti is a means of penance, thanksgiving and commemoration of auspicious occasions and this typical indigenous painting tradition is counted among the oldest art forms of Indian art horizon. Basically, it is an original and distinctive form of ritual and daily life activities based paintings with mass acceptance among the specially Rathwa, Bhil, Bhilala and Nayak tribal communities; who are native to the eastern Gujarat region. Basically, in the some parts of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, where the two states share their borders; among the native tribes there, this art has remained exemplary since ancient times till today. This art form reflects specific religious and social concerns among the aforementioned tribes; and also, an integral part of their typical marital customs and religious beliefs. The objective of this paper is to investigate

the contemporary changes in Pithora art on the basis of its depiction-method, depiction-subject, pigments used, colour-combination, depiction-surface, etc. and make a comparative evaluation.

Key Words

Lakhara, Pigment, Osari, Rituals, Jhokra, Barwa, Pictograph, Graffiti, Motifs.

Introduction

Unlike many other tribal painting styles, such as Warli, the Pithora art form is a male-dominated painting style. There is a uniqueness of this painting style, which makes it completely different from any other tribal painting styles, like the picture combinations in this art form include 'Anthropomorphic' (depicting a non-human character with a humanized form), 'Zoomorphic' (divine motif of animal), 'Phylomorphic' (description of the physical form and external structure of a plant), 'Phyomorphic' (physical world), 'Phenomena' (painting), 'Cuevamorphic' (symbolic geometric designs based on repetition of nature and water elements) shapes and motifs are designed in a topographic manner, which is not seen anywhere else.

Pithora art refers to the religious, mythological and ritual paintings traditionally painted on the walls of their houses by the Rathwa, Bhil, Bhilala and Nayak tribes inhabiting the border region of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Under this ancient traditional tribal painting style, various types of picture panels are combined according to a well-planned plan and all types of Pithora picture panels have been accepted in this community; Among those various types of picture panels, the depiction of a narrative painted panel combining "Seven Horses" has been the most exemplary. Along with this, using vibrant colours and contrasting colour harmony

to depict trees, wild and domestic animals, birds to symbolically reflect the closeness between nature, creatures and humans; Apart from this, various types of resources used in carrying out the activities of daily life are also shown in a single and combined manner.

Figure 1: Pithora graffiti painted in traditional style on three threshold walls of the house



(Source: Pithora Paintings, Story of Indian crafts and craftsmen, gaatha.com)

For the past hundreds of centuries, the Rathwa, Bhil and Bhilala tribes classified under the Bhil community have had a tradition of creating captivating paintings using eco-friendly painting resources, which has been emulated from generation to generation; it remains relevant even today. The scope of this indigenous ancient art form of the vast horizon of Indian art is no longer limited only to the social heritage of primitive communities; rather, it is enhancing India's pride by creating its own identity on the global art forum. At present, this art is not limited to mere tribal community's ritualistic activities or expression of spiritual feelings; but, its creators have made innovative changes in its form and transformed it into a source of income by linking it with professionalism.

Presently, various Government and non-government organizations are making remarkable and commendable efforts to expand and preserve this indigenous traditional tribal art form on a large scale by documenting and organizing workshops and exhibitions from time to time to spread awareness among the masses.

Etymology of Pithora Painting Style

The word **Pithora** is derived from the name of the deity "**Pithora**" worshiped during the marriage rituals of **Rathwa, Bhil** and **Bhilala** tribes.

Glossary of Specific Words of Pithora Painting Style

1. **Baba Pithoro:** Baba Pithora or Pithoradev is also one of the major deities revered by the tribal communities; Who is described as the creator of many creations of the universe and the god of grains in the myths prevalent in the Rathwa sect; The name of Pithora art style is derived from his name.
2. **Lord Ganesh:** In any Pithora painting, the work of illustration is started by portraying him first; And he is revered as a father.
3. **Baba Ind:** The tribes practicing Pithora art address Indra, the king of gods, as "**Baba Ind**" in their local Kutchhi language; And they depict him in their frescoes with the recognition of the revered deity as the protector of good rainfall on earth and domesticated cattle.
4. **Devi Pithori:** In the Pithora murals, she is acknowledged as the goddess of fertility.
5. **Devi Gawri:** In the Pithora graffiti, she is referred to as the goddess of buffalo.

6. **Goddess of Birth:** There has been a tradition of depicting both ‘*Abhor Kunbi*’ and ‘*Mathari*’ goddesses in the subject matter of their paintings as the presiding deities of social-spiritual practice and disciplinary rules among their followers in the tribal communities.
 7. **Rani Pithoro:** She is believed to be the daughter of the goddess *Abho Kunbi* and is appropriately depicted in frescoes as a goddess protecting from unpredictable monsoons.
 8. **Rani Kajal:** According to the religious beliefs of the tribes, like other goddesses of community importance, she is also depicted as the mother or “*Kuldevi*” of her tribe.
 9. **Raja Bhoj:** This deity is accepted by his tribal community along with other deities for the protection of his livestock and good harvest in agriculture, is also depicted paying homage to him.
 10. **Badwa :** One who performs the role of the ‘*Chief Priest & Adviser*’ in the religious ritual as per the customs during the painting process of traditional Pithora Graffiti, and simultaneously, explained about the problems and their solutions; and also they methodically determine the auspicious time and time limit for the work of painting the graffiti and in the present context, they can be compared to an astrologer.
 11. **Ghardani:** This refers to the ritual performed by ‘*Barwa*’ (chief priest of the tribal community); Which is done to find the right time for the creation of Pithora paintings and to determine the time limit for the illustration work.
 12. **Lakhara:** In their local colloquial language, it is used by the tribal community to address the traditional painters in Gujarat, who paint Pithora graffiti. They usually paint in a team of eight to ten painters from the same family, the father being the senior painter and his son or nephew, etc., acting as assistants or apprentices. They are also known as “*Lakhindra*” in Madhya Pradesh.
 13. **Jhokra:** This word refers to that person; Which keeps an account of the Pithora graffiti.
 14. **Deva:** This word is used for the person who plays the role of a ritual expert (priest) in the ritualistic worship ceremony called ‘*Pangu*’, organized to publicly dedicate the graffiti after its completion.
 15. **Khatri Horses:** In the tribal community these are recognized as the horses of their ancestors.
 16. **Pangu:** After the completion of the Pithora murals, a special formal celebration is called ‘*Pangu Utsav*’ in the locally spoken tribal language, lasting all night, from Wednesday evening to Thursday morning; Which has an important role in Pithora painting process.
 17. **Tip:** When the painting process is completely finalized, then the tradition of marking orange colored dots with fingers as a mascot in the center of the mural is followed, the ritual of marking these dots is called ‘*Tip*’.
 18. **Lippan:** The method of preparing the painting surface on the wall for creation of a Pithora frescoes from a substance prepared by mixing appropriate amount of water in cow dung and smooth white clay and kneading them together very well is called ‘*lippan or plastering*’.
 19. **Osari:** It refers to the verandah or threshold (*Dahali*) at the entrance of the house usually where traditional Pithora graffiti are painted on its three internal walls.
 20. **Kalo Dugar:** It is a term used locally by the Rathwa tribal community of Gujarat, in their colloquial Kutchhi language; Which means ‘*Kalipahari*’ or ‘*Black Hill*.’
- B. Words Related to Fantasy Pictographic Characters**
21. **Phylomorphic:** It is a special term of terminology used to understand the external structure of plants or their physical form related to ‘*Plant Morphology*’. Based on this, Lakhara used to observe the physical forms or appearance of different types of plants, determine their pictorial form and then depict them in frescoes.

22. **Phyomorphic:** Basically it is a word derived from Sanskrit language; Which is specifically used in regarding to physical world to understand energy, nature of atoms and its properties, functioning of machines, speed of light, and cosmic secrets, etc.
23. **Cuevamorphic:** This term designates functional geometric patterns, which indicate the tendency of shapes to be repeated with frequency on large scales, such as the branches of trees, water flow of rivers and mountains, etc. physical forms which are repeated in a recurring manner in pictures. In the Pithora painting tradition, there is also an inclination to depict symbolic pictographs with frequency and these are depicted to convey certain meanings in a symbolic manner.
24. **Anthropomorphic:** This term is used to describe something that has human equivalent characteristics or appearance. It is often used to describe animals, objects or deities; those who are depicted in Pithora frescoes or any other art form with human-like qualities, emotions, intelligence or physical characteristics. For example, in some art forms, anthropomorphic animals are often depicted with human-like personalities and behaviour.
25. **Zoomorphic:** The term refers to a species of animals adapted as decorative pictographs to be combined into Pithora style frescoes; Which are also sometimes described as “*Animal Style of Painting*”.
26. **Phenomena:** This word originally referred to observable events, facts or circumstances in the Pithora style of painting, often to describe things that are unusual, remarkable or extraordinary, such as “*Saval Dharmi*” Horses, departure of wedding processions on horses, typical tribal community events based on everyday activities, etc.; which the viewer experiences through his senses.

C. Types of Pithora Graffitis

27. **Ardho Pithoro:** This type of Pithoro frescoes are decorated with various pictographic motifs and geometric patterns, usually depicting 5 to 9 rider-less horses, including depictions of Ganesh.
28. **Akho Pithoro:** This type of Pithoro frescoes depict various divine images, celestial bodies (Sun, Moon, etc.), everyday events of tribal communities, elements of nature, diverse pictorial motifs and geometric patterns; and along with this 18 horsemen are also depicted.

Germination of Pithora Style of Painting and its Historical Backdrop

From the ancient times to the modern era, various phases related to the development of Indian art include prehistoric period, Indus Valley period, Vedic period, early medieval period (Jain and Buddhist art), medieval period (various court painting styles like Rajasthani, Mughal and Pahari painting The continuity of changes in Indian art is clearly reflected in the various art forms that developed in the colonial period (especially the Company painting style), the post-colonial period (Bengal and nationalist painting styles) and the modern period. In this context, by reviewing the typical indigenous Pithora painting style, it appears that it was an extension of the prehistoric painting style and its next phase. Which was developed with more sophistication and clarity of composition; and it is still being imitated in a traditional manner in some Indian tribal communities parallel to the mainstream of Indian art.

Due to the lack of authentic evidence, it is difficult to confirm the place of origin of this art form; Because a group of people having different opinions believe that in the vicinity of a hill called “*Kalo Dungar*”, 97 km from Bhuj district headquarters in the Kutch region of Gujarat state and about 25 km from the nearest town Khavra, It was originated by the tribal communities living in the areas. On the contrary, dissenters hold that this distinctive traditional indigenous painting style originated in the distant past in the tribal dominated region of Madhya Pradesh during the monarchical social system around the 11th century; which is adjacent to the border of present Gujarat state.

In the year 1947, when India was freed from the clutches of slavery and by merging all the erstwhile princely states, the whole of India was again divided into separate states by determining the geographical

boundaries; Since then, the 'Aadharkanch' area adjoining the border area of Gujarat state is making its relevance felt with the specialties of the local tribal Pithora art prevalent under Alirajpur district of newly formed Madhya Pradesh.

This can only be said conclusively based on the very limited factual evidence and folklore generally available; inspired by thousands of years old cave paintings on a mountain top near 'Karo Dungar', this art form was born around the 11th century by the local tribes in Bharuch, located in the central part of India. Bharuch had a special importance at that time because traders traveling from the north to the western and southern parts of India used to stop there for rest between their onward journeys. From then till the present time, Pithora style is proving its relevance.

The typical Pithora painting style, promoted, nurtured and expanded by the tribal communities, was not an art form limited to mere emotional and narrative expression of their community beliefs; Rather he developed a "Zonal Geographic Tracking Coding System" in pictographically form; Which can also be called a very early and narrow form of the ubiquitous "Global Positioning System" (GPS) in today's era of communication revolution. Some facts related to the practicality of this art in ancient times in these tribal communities are described in below:

1. **Adaptation of Profession for Livelihood:** In the past, the roads leading from Bharuch to other nearby divisions were incomprehensible, inaccessible and dangerous; that is why the local tribal people took advantage of that challenging situation and adopted it as a new profession to earn money and they started working with domestic and foreign traders. They started working as guides to take people through the difficult terrain and in return for this work, traders provided them with silver coins as payment for their hard work.
2. **Topographic Graphical Coding System:** The geographical location of that inaccessible area should always remain mysterious like an inexplicable puzzle, and their livelihood dependent on it should also be secure; for this, the creation of map equivalent paintings marked with symbolic topographic pictorial codes according to the geographical location of that area by the leaders of the local tribal community living there came into practice. Thus, map-like paintings made using symbols of topographic symbolic graphic code can be called the threshold of development of 'Pithora painting tradition'.
3. **Pictographic Setting:** To implement the "Topographical Coding System", to give a pictorial form similar to a map and to mark geographical places in symbolic pictorial forms, the contemporary painters of the tribal community started painting the local seven hills like the figures of seven horsemen, They were also depicted in the pictorial form of two tigers to refer to the two banks of the Narmada River that flows through there. Similarly pictorial motifs like sun, moon, peacock, parrot, elephant, monkey, spider, scorpion, deer, buffalo, camel, goat, hen, hut, etc. are used to mark various other geographical locations; And different types of trees, plants etc. were also depicted appropriately on maps in the form of similar images.
4. **Transformation of Painting Technique into Practical Utility:** To implement the "Topographical Coding System", to give a pictorial form similar to a map and to mark geographical places in symbolic pictorial forms, the contemporary painters of the tribal community started painting the local seven hills like the figures of seven horsemen, They were also depicted in the pictorial form of two tigers to refer to the two banks of the Narmada River that flows through there. Similarly pictorial motifs like sun, moon, peacock, parrot, elephant, monkey, spider, scorpion, deer, buffalo, camel, goat, hen, hut, etc. are used to mark various other geographical locations; And different types of trees, plants etc. were also depicted appropriately on maps in the form of similar images.
5. **Community Classification and Nomenclature:** The chief of the tribal community had ordered all the people of his community to make sacred Pithora paintings, equivalent to a geographical map, on the walls of their homes to practice the religious beliefs of the society. The people of the community who

had expressed their loyalty to the order by getting the paintings made; they received social recognition in their society as “Rathwa”, and so did those who did not follow the instructions; they were classified as “Talavis”.

6. **Expansion Period of Pithora Painting Tradition:** The people of the Rathwa community, who followed the instructions of their community chief and got the sacred Pithora murals painted in their homes, got the social right to live and use the seven local hills as a reward for following that order. Thereafter, during the colonial period, the tradition of Pithora painting continued to flourish there until restrictions were imposed by the British rulers on the use of the hills in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Eventually the act of making Pithora paintings came to be accepted as a ritual among the tribes.
7. **Varieties of Pithora Painting Styles Dimensions:** If the traditional painters of this style are evaluated on the basis of their respective composition-methods, colour-combination and creative-skills, etc., then all of them have their own original specialties, the impression of which is clearly reflected in their paintings. Therefore, it would be unfair to delimit the entire Pithora art within the scope of just one style.
8. **Dimensions of Graffiti Panel:** Traditionally, the smallest picture in the series of Pithora paintings could be of 1.5×1.5 feet area and the largest size graffiti picture could be of measurement of 145×10 feet.

Uniqueness of Patron Tribes of Pithora Art

The people of the tribal community who nurture Pithora art, along with their typical language, community religious beliefs, ethnic customs, their distinctive clothing, food habits, unique architectural plan of their residences; They have been living their lives as completely self-reliant social units by strictly following their socio-economic-cultural systems and making abundant use of natural resources.

Practitioners of Pithora Graffiti

Historically, the “Aadharkanch” region of ancient India held significance as the original habitat of tribal communities, and was used to demarcate the geographical boundaries of different regions of post-independence India; accordingly, now this entire region has also been divided and joined with the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. As per the present situation, the area wise classification of the native places of these tribes is as per the following table:

Area-wise Classification of Native Places of Tribal Communities

1. **Rathwa:** People of this tribe mainly live in Gujarat.
2. **Bhilala:** This tribe is native to *Malwa* and *Nimar* region of Central India, where their total population is about 15 lakhs.
3. **Bhil:** This tribe has been one of the original inhabitants of Madhya Pradesh since ancient times; However, apart from this state, they have been listed in the category of Scheduled Tribe in many other states also.

Leading Practitioners

The creation of Pithora wall paintings has been practiced in almost all the tribal communities mentioned in this table; But among all the other Indian tribal arts, this indigenous art form with its prominence of topographic representation and ritualistic depictions has been recognized on the global art forum; The most notable role has been played by the “Rathwa” tribal group of Gujarat state, where the practice of this typical art form still remains relevant and an integral part of the glorious art heritage of the state. People of tribal communities associated with this art form are very simple natured, sociable and extremely religious.

One of the oldest indigenous traditional art forms of India, the Pithora painting style has its own unique identity and is still being followed today as an ancestral art heritage. The Chhota Udaipur region of eastern Gujarat, the border region of Madhya Pradesh and partly parts of Rajasthan are not only recognized as the original habitats of tribal class groups like Rathwa, Bhil, Bhilala and Nayak, etc.; Rather, it has also been

special for its unique Pithora painting style, its artistic skill, cultural heritage and religious beliefs, which was nurtured and flourished by these tribals.

Review of Literature

Many studies have been presented targeting the ancient indigenous Pithora art form in the ancient period with the aim of unveiling its various aspects. There is also abundant literature available on the evolution of this tribal painting style, its relevance and its depiction techniques, etc.; but generally there still seems to be a great need for further refinement and inclusion of authentic facts. The following related literature reviews were conducted to confirm the statement of the problem:

- i. **Jaitley Jaya**, (2000) "Tribal Identity through Crafts", Language Research and Publication Centre, Baroda; this study was conducted on Indian tribes; Especially the social, cultural, religious conditions of the communities supporting Pithora art, their customs, socio-religious beliefs, ritual invocations, lifestyle; And to establish the comparative and historical context of the role and relevance of their specific art form in their lives.
- ii. **Marshall Gordon**, (1994) "Oxford Dictionary of Sociology", Oxford University Press, Oxford, England; The objective of this study was to investigate the meaning of the specific words and their names as used in local colloquial language of various materials used in the paintings of various original traditional art forms, originated, spread and practiced by various tribal sections of India.
- iii. **Tripathi, S.N.** (1998) "Tribals in India: The Changing Landscape", Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi; this study was done to investigate, especially in the context of Pithora painting style, how the cultural heritage of these tribes and the factors affecting their religious beliefs over time influenced their artistic expression; And specifically what impression has global modernity left on their art?

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research paper is to factually document the age old Pithora tribal art and especially some of the related ones like religious beliefs, ceremonial customs and cultural traditions, etc. which have influenced the original traditional art exemplified by the elite tribes.

Research Methodology

The study employs primary data collected from physical observations and interviews of traditional Pithora painters and secondary data analysis based on sources such as various books, articles published in journals, tribal literature and monographs related to the selected topic. Based on the data collected, the main objective of this study is to evaluate the current status of this centuries-old indigenous painting tradition with special reference to the ritual significance, community acceptance, chronology and tribal upliftment of this tribal art form and its form as a result of the inclusion of innovative elements. To discuss the factors responsible for the changes that have occurred. The effect of religious, cultural and ideological changes over time is clearly reflected in the illustration theme of Pithora art form. However, there is a contemporary need that this art heritage should be preserved and their art forms, which nourish the social traditions and religious beliefs of the tribes, should be used for their economic development by linking them with commercialism.

Significance of the Pithora Graffiti

Today, the Pithora painting style has created its own identity not only on the national but also on the global horizon on the basis of its unique design, topographical combination method, bright colors and its community ritual utility among the tribes; which reflects its relevance and importance from the past till today. This is a unique and surprising example of tribal art, in whose depiction environment-friendly mineral and botanical depiction materials have been used; And along with this, the way in which religious-social beliefs, universe, physical forms of nature, animal-bird and human coordination are depicted, also indicates its importance.

Utility of Pithora Graffiti

In some tribal groups, this art form, which has been adopted from ancient times till the present time, has been following the tradition of creating murals in their homes and their temples to fulfill their religious beliefs for purely ritual purposes. This very indigenous painting style has adapted to the current changing environment and has come out of the shackles of its past and has embarked on the path of professionalism; and now its form is also changing into modernist forms, as a result, this art has crossed the limits of graffiti and is spreading its influence on canvas, paper, clothes of modern choice and other useful items as well.

Pictographs Used in Pithora Graffiti

A variety of unique elements can be seen in the Pithora graffiti style paintings nurtured and nurtured by the tribes; which have also been repeated with frequency in graffiti. The classification of these fundamental elements is as per the following table:

Classification of Typical Pictographs used in Pithora Graffiti:

1. **Horses:** In the Rathwa tribal community, horses have always been accepted as a sacred animal and that is why they are associated with abundance of Pithora murals; Because according to one of their community beliefs, horses were often used to carry prayers and offerings to heaven, apart from this they also consider horses as the medium of transportation for the gods.
2. **Deities:** In the traditional ritualistic paintings of this tribal painting style, a wide range of deities are depicted according to the theme; All of them have their own original and distinct identity and community importance like 'Pithora' has been recognized as the god of grains, 'Pithori' as the goddess of fertility and 'Gawari' as the goddess of buffalo. Similarly, there are many popular deities; Which are depicted with due devotion in these wall paintings.
3. **Mythological Characters:** The mythological themes of Pithora murals generally focuses on different popular themes from interesting mythological stories prevalent in their community such as the origin of the tribe, creation of the universe; Apart from this, the miraculous incidents of its revered deities and the amazing exploits of its community heroes, etc.
4. **Characters of Everyday Events:** The livelihood of the people of this community mainly depends on farming and hunting; Apart from this, to get mental peace, entertainment by doing group dance with self-made typical native instruments has also been a major part of his daily routine. The pictorial themes of the Pithora murals also include various aspects of their lives related to these everyday activities. In the Pithora paintings based on these scenes, a clear glimpse of the culture and traditions of the tribes who nurture the Pithora style can be seen.
5. **Pictorial Elements:** The variety of motifs that are combined in the "Akho Pithora" frescoes; Their number can be 165 according to the theme of the fresco and all the images depicted in this type of narrative painting have their own hidden mystery based on tribal myths. It is especially noteworthy here that all the characters included in the Akho Pithora frescoes are depicted in the role of a hero related to any one important event described in the grand mythological epic of the tribes based on "Baba Pithora".

The creators of Pithora paintings used symbolic harmony of such motifs in their frescoes; which presents a clear narrative glimpse of their daily life activities, socio-cultural customs and closeness with nature. The entire script of the traditional paintings of this tribal painting style seems to be woven around the heroes of the depicted subject such as their community deities and ancestral horse; and the panoramic colours used in the paintings give them a heart-touching look.

Selection of Pictographic Theme

These murals, which are traditionally done with utmost simplicity, contrasting color harmony and very beautifully, seem to tell a story in narrative form of the daily activities of the life of the people of that community

and their various notable events; who have been loyal to theme for centuries. At present, these murals are also being widely adopted for interior decoration of walls of urban modern homes, offices etc.

As far as the painting theme of these graffiti is concerned; so authentic traditional depiction of the rural life of the tribals, with their hardships and sometimes to give a glimpse of celebration or ritual is depicted. Thus, the paintings represent in narrative form the harmonious existence of favorable and unfavorable conditions in the lives of the tribal people through simplistic and symbolic depiction of their daily life activities and religious beliefs, etc.

Pithora frescoes often feature ritual motifs, a variety of animals and scenes of exotic daily activities associated with their lives, always combined with map-like topographic settings; in which there is a feeling of inferiority of attitude. In these frescoes, various Hindu divine gods and goddesses, etc. are also depicted appropriately.

Furthermore, having local acceptance in their community; Also highly simplified and highly symbolic depiction of deities, heroes and ancestors such as *Baba Ganesh, Ind Dev, Pithora Dev, Pithori, Kajal Rani, Bhoj Dev, Abo Kunbinkati Bhuten, Lakhari, Jokhari*, etc. painting theme is a major part.

Similarly, the forms of various animals like horse, elephant, goat, cock, deer, lion, tiger and the scenes related to agriculture, hunting and group dance etc. as part of their daily life activities are also depicted with great liveliness.

Materials Used in Pithora Graffiti

Like most Indian tribal art forms; Eco-friendly painting materials have also been used in the creation of the Pithora mural. A variety of minerals and vegetables were used to prepare colours. Refined dyes were treated with different binders. Details of various similar materials are mentioned in the following:

A. Consumable Materials

1. **Pigments:** Traditionally, eco-friendly colours are made from milk, Mahua liquor, flowers, seeds and leaves of various plants; But in the present times, commercially produced chemical colours easily available in the market are being used extensively.
2. **CowDung:** This is a major component of the method of creation of Pithora graffiti, and the dung of such a young cow is always used in coating the painting surface; Who has never given birth to a child.
3. **Chalk& Lime:** It is a type of naturally occurring mineral substance and is also commonly known as soft white clay. After drying the surface of the painting made from amalgam of clay and compost substance of cow dung for seven days, it is mixed with water to prepare a solution of the desired consistency; This is then coated or repeated at least twice until the desired result is achieved. Lime was sometimes used as a substitute for chalk.
4. **Cotton:** Its use was mainly to make a 'Bud' in the traditional manner by systematically wrapping it around one edge of a small piece of thin wood; Which was commonly used in the process of graffiti to mark the linear form of geometrical patterns.
5. **Medium:** Traditionally, to make frescoes, cow or goat milk is used to dissolve the colour powder and make a pigment paste.
6. **Binder:** The colours used in painting this style of frescoes are of two types as follows:
 - a. Traditionally, apart from Mahuwa milk, it is also mixed in limited quantity to make pigments for use in Pithora graffiti. Essentially, it is a liquid collected through a controlled seepage process from the trunk of the Mahuva tree, and when mixed with colours in prescribed quantities, it acts as a binder
 - b. To keep the colours of Pithora graffiti lasting and bright for a long time, local "*Mahuvo Kadha*" made from the fruit of the Mahuva tree is also added as a binder.

7. **Solvent:** Basically it is a liquor made locally from Mahuva fruit, which the Pithora painters call “*Mahuvo Kadho*” in their local colloquial Kutchhi language and they also mix it as a binding liquid in the colours; Because this keeps the brightness of the colours intact for years.
8. **Water:** Its use is usually while preparing a mixture of soil and cow dung; And after painting, the paintbrushes are washed and cleaned.
9. **Paraphernalia:** After the painting-work is well completed, the graffiti is worshiped ceremoniously as per the tribal customs and rituals, which is an integral and last “*Barwa*” ritual of Pithora marking. On this occasion, items like coconut fruit, chicken, Mahuva liquor, etc. are offered to Pithora.

B. Non-consumable Materials

10. **Khakhra Leaves:** Among the locally available tree species, this is a variety of tree whose leaves are large in size and slightly hard; Traditional Pithora artists used these leaves to make conical vessels to store the prepared colours.
11. **Vessel & Container:** It is a simple vessel of large size, shallow structure, made of terracotta or metal, etc. and is used to store the mixture prepared from cow dung and soil for creating the painting surface. Similarly, container is used for storing water for various purposes related to graffiti work.
12. **Sticks:** Traditionally these were prepared by repeatedly beating one end of locally available ‘*Bamboo*’ or soft twigs of the ‘*Bawal*’ tree with a hammer or stone and placing cotton on one end of a thin piece of wood and some Paintbrushes were made. It was also made by wrapping; Although factory-made paintbrushes are now widely used and can certainly be seen to improve the quality and morphological representation of images, it is also worth noting that; Painters often used their fingers to create certain geometric patterns in frescoes.

Eco-friendly natural materials in the making of traditional Pithora murals; like fresh dung of young cow, chalk and mineral colours mentioned in the above table have been used; however, in the present times, many changes are also being seen in these materials. Now commercially produced chemical based colours are gradually being used in place of eco-friendly natural painting pigments.

Creation Process of Traditional Pithora Graffiti

The making of such type of graffiti is a joint prosecution of genuine community traditions of religious belief, its associated myths, painting, music, group-dance, invocation, poetry-recitation and story-telling; All these are done simultaneously in a very specific and systematic manner.

According to tribal religious beliefs, these paintings are considered very sacred, hence only men of their community are allowed to learn the method of making them and married women are neither allowed to practice this art nor are they allowed to complete the painting. Is included in the process of; However, the surface of wall painting is prepared by the young girls of their family.

Some tribal communities like *Rathwa*, *Bhil*, *Bhilala*, *Nayak* and *Taadi*, etc. settled in Chhota Udaipur and Kavat areas in the eastern part of Gujarat state and some parts of Madhya Pradesh bordering Gujarat; they have also played an important role in preserving the existence of this ancient art and continuing its regular practice. Some professional painters from these communities, called ‘*Lakhara*’ in the local community language, now make these paintings commercially and also on the occasion of special auspicious rituals. There is a widely accepted belief among these communities that by getting these paintings made on the inside walls of the verandah of their house, they seek blessings from their adored deity.

The importance of these murals in the life of the tribes related to Pithora art is not only like the artistic forms of wall decoration made by them to fulfill the vow asked by them in the state of mental stress; In fact, they also pay homage to him as an image of God.

Traditionally these murals are painted jointly by a team of eight to nine professional artists (Lakhara or Lakhindra); it is also worth mentioning here that according to community beliefs, the work of creation of these wall paintings is started on the auspicious morning of Tuesday and is completed by Wednesday evening. After this, a ceremony called “Pangu” is held from Wednesday evening to Thursday morning to publicly dedicate the mural.

During this night-long event, the tribals offer various materials for painting in accordance with their folk beliefs, such as chickens and goats and liquor made from Mahua; And ‘Deva’ represents a ritual specialist who uses his body as a conduit.

Figure 2: A group of ancient traditional Pithora painters engaged in illustration work



(Source: Pithora Painting1 - Rathwa - Wikipedia)

For the painting of Pithora frescoes, the following step-by-step painting processes are followed: Selection of suitable place for creation of Pithora graffiti, Priming of the Painting Surface, demarcation of painting layout, geographical demarcation, pictographic settings on painting panel, shades preparation of pigment and finally colour filling process.

Highlights of Pithora Graffitis

- Traditionally this art form is a completely male-dominated painting style.
- Topographical combination of images, forms and motifs depicted in Pithora graffiti.
- The main feature of traditional Pithora tribal graffiti is the arrangement of seven horses depicted on the surface as per the prescribed format. Patron and creator of this tribal style of painting; The Rathwa, Bhil, Bhilala and Nayak tribes represent the seven hills with symbolism in their wall paintings that surround their entire geographical area.
- Another specialty of these frescoes is that in them, variable, ritualistic and transcendental contexts are depicted with symbolism and by following the method of self-combination.
- The most notable specialty of Pithora frescoes is that their panoramic brightness and contrasting colour harmony effortlessly captivates the mind and heart of the viewer.
- The local eco-friendly painting materials used to create these traditional murals also give them the eco-friendly status.
- Beyond the use of elements of Indian classical art like texture, perspective etc. and in contrast to the complexity of the principles of picture composition, the map-like topographic composition method of Pithora murals is their fundamental identity.
- A distinctive feature is the decoration of various types of geometric ornaments including thick lines; which gives it a beautiful look.
- In the colour scheme of Pithora frescoes; various vibrant colours are used in abundance and now the use of metallic colours like silver, etc. has also become common.

Similarities in Primitive and Pithora Styles of Painting

This regional and traditional Pithora wall painting style, prevalent in some of the most tribal communities of India and deeply linked to community allegiances and religious practices, has a rich and long history dating back centuries. To seek blessings and protection for family members and villagers from their favorite deities; the practice of getting these pictures painted is still relevant and exemplary.

The fundamental identity of these two painting styles is determined by comparative evaluation focusing on their thematic presentation, composition method, colour substances used, colour combination, form of simplified motifs, linear figurative decoration, etc. That the Pithora graffiti style is basically an extended and improved adaptation of primitive art.

Based on the facts mentioned above the critical investigation is as follows:

- i. The theme of Pithora painting style seems to be partially matching because the predominance of very simplified but emotional depiction of everyday activities is the distinctive identity of both the styles; However, the scope of subjects depicted in Pithora painting style got further expanded and along with daily events, the subjects having prominence in ritual activities also got a wider expansion.

Figure 3: Innovative pictographic image of Pithora style



(Source: <https://mapacademy.io/article/pithora-painting/>)

- ii. Both styles have in common the use of refined mineral and vegetable eco-friendly colours from local resources, although the creators of the Pithora style took their knowledge of colours a step further and ultimately mixed the colours with each other. He had learned to create and use new shades of colours, whose picturesque presentation in his paintings effortlessly fascinates the viewer.
- iii. While in the primitive paintings, symbolic representation is seen in straight and simple linear compositions and in some places flat coloured images, in the paintings of Pithora style, this has been repeated, while a partially three-dimensional effect has arisen naturally, and Topographical composition without worrying about perspective, planning of cosmic structures etc. are indicative of their own uniqueness.

- iv. Simplified rendering of forms and motifs and pursuit of geometric decoration are preferred in both painting styles.

Resurgence of Ceremonial Style of Pithora Graffiti

Based on the analysis of the factual results of this research analysis work, it can be conclusively said; That in different regions of India; They have a very vast range of rich indigenous traditional and folk arts, sprouting with their own local customs, community beliefs, religious beliefs, local tastes and distinctive uniqueness, and one link in that range is the ritualistic Pithora wall painting style. Which is searching for a ray of hope in the horror of the dark dungeon for the revival of its glorious past.

At present, appropriate steps are being taken at the Government level to revive this art; similarly, at the individual level, many people and voluntary organizations are also taking active part in its conservation. At present, many fashion designers and young professional handicraft artisans are adopting various interesting and creative elements like motifs, shapes and motifs, which have been used repeatedly for centuries in this ancient tribal art Pithora art, both for their practical use as well as for the modern public interest in them. While adapting, various types of designer dresses and many other innovative artistic products are being manufactured commercially and are also doing commendable work towards transmitting the roots of this art heritage; It can prove to be a milestone in the revival of this art form. The result of all this is that this ancient art form, which was completely associated with ritual practice, has freed itself from the shackles of its past and has become associated with commercial activities. This will not only create new employment opportunities for local artisans but will also help them establish their presence in the national and global handicrafts market.

Orthodox Beliefs of Tribals in Context of Pithora Tradition

In the Pithora style of graffiti, apart from the various due changes, it is also noteworthy that some traditional practitioners of Pithora murals are not in favor of commercialization of this tribal traditional ritual art; Because their stand is that this form is not an art but its creation is a sacred ritual, created for the purpose of remembering the ancestors and gods of the communities. This is why they oppose the commercial use of this art form on household and decorative artistic commercial items.

Facts and Recommendations

Based on the detailed factual evaluation of various components related to Pithora art being presented through this research paper, their conclusive description is as follows:

Facts

- This heart-touching indigenous art tradition has attracted the attention of many Indian and foreign researchers and art lovers due to its topographical form, accompaniment of bright colours and ritual significance. Like other Indian traditional and folk art forms, it is rarely available as an artistic commercial product in modern markets.
- In the modernist present day, the younger generation belonging to such communities or families; People who have abandoned the traditional handicraft skills adopted ancestrally and cherished their folk and tribal heritage are wandering in search of new jobs to earn their livelihood. However, some traditional artisans still; they are struggling to keep their art relevant and give new life to their art heritage by following their ancestral handicrafts, converting their traditional skills into practicality and creating beautiful artworks as per modern taste.
- However, some traditional artisans still, by keeping their art relevant and following their ancestral craftsmanship, translate their traditional skills into practicality and create beautiful artworks as per the modern taste; Struggling to give new life to their art heritage. But, in today's era of industrial revolution, the availability of 'automation' and 'computerized control and machines' (CNC) not only reduces the production cost but also increases the quality and output. On the contrary, due to the slow pace of

production of traditional artefacts and handicrafts, their production costs also increase. In such a situation of commercial competition between modern and traditional production processes, it has become a very difficult task for the traditional creators to preserve their heritage and their unique artistic artefacts along with their creative products among the customers.

Recommendations

- Like the tribal Pithora art which has ritual importance, many other indigenous traditional and folk art forms of India are being used to connect them with the industrial and organized market; It will prove to be a worthwhile initiative to make the typical traditional creation methods which have become impractical in the past, and make them inclusive by adapting them with contemporary new technologies.
- To address this, the traditional artisans should go beyond their own standards and re-enter the global art market with technological enhancements, improvement in the quality of artefacts and inclusion of modernity in the selection and presentation of creative themes, competitive selling prices, etc.; thus, they have to establish their own unique art tradition.
- In India, the indigenous tribal communities or those who are doing creative work by making use of their ancestral art skills acquired naturally from their ancestors; If they have to preserve their skills and own art heritage, then the artists associated with those creative works definitely overcome the contemporary circumstances and meet the demands of the market, maintaining their traditional art heritage, basic survival and economic balance in life, in the rapidly changing world. At the same time, we will have to keep ourselves prepared to keep pace with the needs of the times.
- At present; Traditional artisans are left with only limited options such as abandoning their traditional art heritage, adapting their art to modern practices, adopting other sources of income like jobs or reviving their traditional crafts with innovative adaptations.
- The centuries-old Pithora graffiti style is completely different from other traditional art forms due to its unique topographic composition method; Which has a strong potential to adapt to the thinking of modern society by making new experiments in the stylistic peculiarities and presentation of the traditional graphics used, which can give a new direction to new social values and symbolic relationships. Along with this, tribal or specific indigenous artisans can also get an opportunity to make their presence felt in the contemporary market and let their native art heritage flourish.

Conclusion

One of the unique features of Pithora wall paintings is that when a scene with a broader narrative is painted; then, in Pithora graffiti, up to 165 types of figurative and symbolic motifs have been combined according to the subject's requirement. Every motif combined in the frescoes also seems to have its own relevance in meaningful representation of the story being depicted. Often, in the pictorial theme of all Pithora wall paintings, the character of 'Baba Pithora' is depicted as the central hero of an important event in the vast mythological or ritualistic epic. This is clearly reflected in the various motifs depicted in the frescoes, as well as in the postures and gestures.

The basic objective of this study is to authentically and factually document the traditional Pithora wall painting style; which has reached the verge of extinction in today's modernist lifestyle and along with it social consciousness has to be awakened for revival.

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