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Documentation on traditional Madhubani painting of Mithila, Bihar

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Abstract

Madhubani is the traditional painting of Bihar in Mithila locale, which has changed the social structure of Bihar as well as social personality and styles of painting from time to time. To keep our designs or motifs alive utilization of traditional motifs in textiles is essential. In creating new designs, Indian folk arts along with painting play an important role. Due to increasing demands of consumer and changes in fashion necessitate modifications in the fashion industry with regard to design, colour, style and technique. The article deals with the study of origin and history of Madhubani painting, raw material, motifs, and colour used in Madhubani painting, categories of Madhubani painting and styles of Madhubani Painting. Rahika village under Rahika block and Simri, Jitwarpur, Ranti village under Rajnagar block and Bhadrupur village under Darbhanga Sadar block were selected for the study. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Madhubani, Mithila, Madhubani painting, Categories, Styles of painting, Folk Painting of India

Introduction

The rich tradition and religious culture of India are reflected in the expression of folk art. The art and craft of India are very simple and ethnic, and yet colorful and vibrant enough to express about the rich heritage of the country. Indian arts and crafts have great demand in both national and international market because of their traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity (Sharma, 2015) [8].

Madhubani district of North Bihar is the heart of Mithila where arts and crafts have reached their footsteps of excellence. Painting is more than an art, hope and aspirations for the people. It is the expression of day-to-day experiences and beliefs. Madhubani paintings are mostly based on religion and mythology and are accomplished by generations of skilled artists.

The Indian folk arts play an important role in creating new designs. Increasing demands of consumers require modification in the fashion industry with respect to design, color, style, and technique (Gupta and Gangwar, 2016) [5].

During social and religious festival, the women of Mithila used to decorate the walls and floors of their houses in a very simple manner. These paintings were not only aesthetically appreciated but also won critical acclaim (Agarwal, 2015) [1].

Objective

Documentation of the origin and history of Madhubani painting, raw material, motifs, and colour used in Madhubani painting, categories of Madhubani painting, and styles of Madhubani Painting.

Origin and History of Madhubani Painting

In India, Madhubani painting is one of the many famous art forms and is practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar and Nepal, it is called Mithila or Madhubani art. Madhubani paintings originated in the Mithila region of Bihar. The references to the Madhubani paintings were found in the Hindu epic Ramayana when King Janaka, Sita's father, asks his painters to create Madhubani paintings for his daughter's wedding. The knowledge was passed down from generation to generation and the paintings began to adorn the houses of the region. The women of the village practiced these paintings on the walls of their respective homes and illustrated their thoughts, hopes, and dreams. (Gupta and Gangwar, 2016) [5].

Before 1930, the Madhubani paintings were not known to people who lived outside the Madhubani region. But in 1934, the city of Bihar experienced a major earthquake, and British officer William G. Archer of the Madhubani area noticed these unique arts on the damaged walls of Madhubani during his inspection. He admired Indian art and culture and introduced this unique art to the people that reside outside Madhubani.

Raw Materials, Motifs, Process and Colour Used In Madhubani Painting

The motifs of Madhubani art are drawn from mythology, depictions, rituals, and local flora and fauna and are often painted with papers, fabric, fingers, twigs, matchsticks, and pen nibs as shown in Fig.1. Documentation of Madhubani Motifs is an initiative to preserve and promote the rich tradition of Mithila (Madhubani). All products are handcrafted and hand-painted with precision and care which go well with modern aesthetics. Their style of painting symbolized fertility. Common motifs such as lotus plants, sacred symbols, fish, tortoises, parrots, and birds, flora and fauna can be seen in their art. With time as the social acceptance widened, they have now started painting motifs of gods. Madhubani art form is easily recognized its colorful geometric designs which depict scenes of the royal courtyard, and Indian weddings, marriages, and symbols of fertility and prosperity with the dominance of motifs like fish, parrot, elephant, turtle, sun, moon, bamboo tree, lotus, etc.

Madhubani art is usually done by filling the colours with a brush. This process is done by either filling or hatching. Hatching refers to the use of lines in the paintings. Both filling and hatching are used in many paintings.

Madhubani art is often painted with natural bright colours using the paste of rice, cow dung and mud to provide it with a better texture. The rice paste is usually used for painting of the outlines. To get different natural colour the juice of kusum flower is used for crimson hue, blue from indigo, turmeric extract for yellow, red from sandalwood and so on. Different natural materials often used by the artists for their color needs.



Fig 1: (Internet sources)

Categories of Madhubani Art

In Mithila this Madhubani painting is categorized (Halder and Pandey, 2018) [6].

Painting on floor

In floor, painting is done with the paste of crude (Arva) rice as shown in Fig. 2; this paste is called “pithar” in the local language. Apart from the floor, it is also made of banana leaves and pidhi (wooden seat). A woman or a girl does this with the fingers of her right hand and during tusari puja, unmarried girls do this painting to appease Gauri and Shiva for a suitable husband.



Fig 2: (Internet sources)

Paintings on walls

Walls are painted with multicolored. Usually, three to four colours are used to paint the pictures which include the images of fish, carriers of curd and jackfruit, fruit trees such as mango and pomegranate, and birds such as peacocks as shown in Fig. 3. Attractive floral motifs are used to decorate the wall around the entrance.



Fig: 3(Internet sources)

Paintings on movable objects

Movable objects such as pottery, elephants, birds, bamboo structures, mats, fans, objects made of sikkhi (thin wood) and brides are decorated with motifs of Madhubani painting as shown in Fig. 4.



Fig 4: (Internet sources)



Fig 6: (Internet sources)

Styles or Types of Madhubani Painting

There are five styles (www.authindia.com.2019)

Bharni

The Bharni style painting is known for its vibrant and bright colors. This art form depicts Hindu gods and their historical contribution to Indian mythology. Bharni is a Hindi word, which means to fill; therefore the art form is full of colours and designs. Typically, Bharni paintings depict images of Hindu gods and goddesses as shown in Fig. 5.



Fig: 5(Internet sources)

Kachni

The Kachni painting style in Madhubani paintings is originating from the Kayastha community and has a unique individual style of using a one or two colours and highlighted the distinctive features of natural aspects with a limited colour range. Kachni painting style has come from the small town of the Ranti village of Madhubani District and is mainly seen in the line work of the paintings. These paintings mainly depict animals, flowers, and other natural aspects as shown in Fig. 6.

Tantrik

The Tantrik style of painting of Mithila or Madhubani art represents traditional and religious texts in a very accurately. Tantra is a basic text describing Hinduism and depict Hindu mythological characters, a strong belief of the Hindu masses. People in India usually include these images in their homes or on special occasions to pray with conviction as shown in Fig. 7.



Fig: 7 (Internet sources)

Godna

Godna painting style is considered as one of the simplest ways in the race of Mithila art style it is believed to have been discovered by Chanu Devi in which she used a pen made of bamboo and kajal to create the designs. This art accurately depicts natural creatures like animals, birds, plants, trees of life, and flowers. This painting style is done on canvas, but human body, especially on the skin is also used as a tattoo as shown in Fig. 8. The people of Mithila are very fond of skin decoration especially women like it very much. They gets tattoos done on her body for femininity. This was done with the help of needles, which was a laborious process.



Fig: 8 (Internet sources)

Kohbar

Kohbar art also known as Tantra Raj, Yog Yogini, and Shiv Shakti, which means that Shakti resides with the blessing of Lord Shiva. This painting depict Hindu wedding ceremonies, and they are primarily made on the walls of the bride and groom's house. Together, kohbar ghar means wedding room where most important rituals are performed and the newlywed couple stays together for at least their initial four days. There are many symbolic images such as lotus plants, bamboo trees, the union of fish, birds and snakes, which represent fertility, sexual potential and the spread of life. He used only red color on kohbar painting, no colour other than reds allowed, which is traditionally considered very favorable as shown in Fig. 9.



Fig: 9 (Internet sources)

Conclusion

Indian art history has given a rich repository of traditional painting in the Indian sub-continent from pre-history to the present day. The style of painting varies from region to region and time to time. There is a living tradition in the art field of Bihar called Madhubani painting that enlightened about the

social structure as well as the cultural identity of Bihar and the style of painting is changing from generation to generation.

Folk art has mostly been started for utility purposes or for rituals. Most of the depictions are religious in nature. In Mithila, mostly wall or floor painting was done since ancient times. The wall paintings are also called bhitti-shobha.s In southern Bihar (now Jharkhand), it is called urehana. Brahmin and Kayastha caste women practice Mithila art in its sophisticated form. The other castes worked on utility items for use in their homes (Ghosh. 2020) ^[4].

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