

## DARPAN: AN INSTALLATION PORTRAYING THE CULTURE OF BIHAR

GAUTAM KUMAR  
VISUAL DESIGNER

PALLAVI RANI  
RESEARCH SCHOLAR

NONI AVITAL  
PRODUCT DESIGNER

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN, GUWAHATI, ASSAM, INDIA

### Abstract

*Bihar has held significance in education and culture for a long time. The state's mention in religious texts and epics show, it was a center of power, learning and culture in classical India. Home too many native art forms; literature, Tikuliart, and traditional Chhat festival and heritage site 'Deo Sun Temple' are inherently linked with the lifestyle of the residents of Bihar. Sadly, the state's rich cultural heritage has not achieved global attention yet. Insufficient visual medium showcasing the essence of ethnicity of Bihar is one reason for such lack of awareness. Inadequate information on different cultural aspects among tourists is gradually diminishing the identity of Bihar and its heritage.*

*'Darpan' is an installation reflecting the cultural legacy of Bihar. The initiative focuses on the ancient pious festival Chhath Puja and its four-day-long celebration. In the installation, the characters of devotees are amalgamated with design elements of Tikuli art. Inspiration is also drawn from the ancient sun temple's architectural elements, portraying the values of rituals. The design process is also demonstrated. The purpose of this installation is to help visitors connect better with the heritage of Bihar, helping enhance Bihar Tourism.*

**Key Words-** Bihar, Culture, Festival, Art, Design, Heritage, Tourism

## **DARPAN: AN INSTALLATION PORTRAYING THE CULTURE OF BIHAR**

**-GAUTAM KUMAR**

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### **Introduction**

**B**ihar is a rich cultural land and house of many art practices from the beginning of civilization. The folk forms of art practices rose in various streams of culture and harmonize in social and religious aspects. The religious aspect follows different festivals and their celebration which are an indispensable part of the culture of Bihar. *Chhath* festival is one of them which is performed in order to seek blessings and thank God Surya for sustaining life on earth and to request the granting of certain wishes. The social aspect encourages the hospitality of pilgrims and helping to make a proper image of Bihar. Project titled as 'Darpan' (Mirror) has been used as a reflection of culture of Bihar. This project helps to project the cultural identity of Bihar at global level.

### **Problem Identification**

- Present Information on different cultural aspects among tourists is gradually diminishing the identity of Bihar and its heritage.
- There is a lack of awareness about the ethnicity of Bihar and insufficient visual materials are the primary reason behind this.

### **Aim and Objectives**

This study was done to provide better information to the people visiting Bihar and encourage them to connect with the local culture.

- To promote the use of visual medium for publicity in Bihar Tourism Department.
- To create an artistic representation of *Chhath* festival of Bihar.

### **Concept**

The idea was amalgamate for design approach to focus on the religious heritage site, festival and traditional artwork.

## Methodology

The study was carried out through participatory approach where data was collected on the field through observation, group interview and video recording. The interviews have taken out with the concern people in Bihar Tourism department, Devotees of Chhath festival, Tukuli craft artist (give the name) and devotees from Sun-Deo Temple, Aurangabad, and Bihar. The methodology includes five stages: Discover, Structure, Design, Prototype and final design.

1. **Discover**(Interview and data collection)
2. **Structure** (Observation, Conceptualization& Brain Storming, Analysis)
3. **Design** (Initial concept making, sketching, deciding on form, material and dimension)
4. **Prototype** (3D Model Design, planning with paper & Board)
5. **Final Design**



## Chhath festival

Chhath is a festival of Sun worship. In Prehistoric and Vedic tradition Sun worship was continued by symbolic representations. In the epic Mahabharata, Sun has been regarded as supreme deity and got a human form. Puranic tradition mentions about the establishment of Sun temples and present various Sun festivals (Saran, 1992). Agni Puran mentions the existence of Ravi Shashti or Chhath Vrat in Bihar, because according to Hindu calendar it is celebrated on Shashti in Kartika month (Chandra, 2009). In Bihar Chhath festival is also known by several names like Chhathi, Chhath Parv, Chhath Puja, Dala Chhath, and Dala



Fig. 1: Celebration of Chhath Festival in Bihar

Puja. It is started on two days prior to Shashthi in and end the day after Kartik Shashthi. It follows four days celebration (See Fig.1). From the first day onwards, for the next 36 hours, the woman, men worshippers go on a fast without having water. During this period, the worshippers observe ritual purity, and sleeps on the floor using a single blanket.

### **Chhathi Maiya**

The Goddess that is worshipped during the famous Chhath Puja is known as Chhathi Maiya. Chhathi Maiya is known as Usha<sup>1</sup> in the Vedas. She is believed to be the consort of Surya, the sun god.

#### **Day 1: Nahaykhay (bath and eat)**

On the first day of Chhath Puja, the devotees take a dip in a holy river Ganga and carry her sacred water to prepare the offerings. The main worshipers who are usually the women, have only one meal on this day known as “*kaddu-bhat*” in some region.

#### **Day 2: Kharna or Lohanda (the day before Chhath)**

On this day the women worshippers observe a fast for the whole day, which ends in the evening. Just after the worship of earth, the offerings of rice delicacy, puris (deep-fried puffs of wheat flour) and bananas, are distributed among family and friends. From this day onwards, for the next 36 hours, the devotees go on a fast without having water.

#### **Day 3: Chhath Sanjhiya Arghya<sup>2</sup> (evening offerings)**

The day is spent preparing the Prasad which is offered to the dusky sun. The folk songs sung in the evening. On the night of day three, a colourful event of *Kosi* is held. Lighted earthen lamps are kept under a canopy of five sugarcane sticks which signify the human body made of Panchatattva (the five great elements - earth, water, fire, air and sky). This is a symbolic ritual in Chhath Puja; the lighted lamps signify the solar energy sustaining the human being.

#### **Day 4: Paarun (the day after Chhath)**

The day starts with offering water to the rising sun. The festival ends with the breaking of the fast by the women worshippers and friends visiting the houses of the devotees to receive the Prasad. Puris and bananas are distributed among family and friends.

The equipment used during this festival is diya, supati, Daura and Sup. These are prepared by Dom and Kumbhar communities of the society. In this way the festival itself possesses a dynamic function of social integrity (Kesari, 2009)

<sup>1</sup>Wife of Surya

<sup>2</sup>Offering water to Sun god

### **Deo Sun Temple**

Built in 8th century AD by Chandravanshi King Bhairavendra Singh, this is one of the ancient Sun temples of Bihar. A unique thing about the Deo temple is that it faces west unlike the traditional Sun temples which face east. The devotees of Chhath puja generally visit this temple only twice in a year.

### Structure

The structure of the temple divided into three parts: Plinth, Body and Shikhar. The plinth (lower portion of the temple) is in square shaped. The entire structure of the temple from neck to pillar is designed as *Shikhara*. Structures of temple follow the *Nagarstyle*<sup>4</sup> temple architecture (See Fig.2) in plan, the temple is a square with a number of graduated projections in the middle of each side giving a cruciform shape with a number of re-entrant angles on each side (See Fig.3).

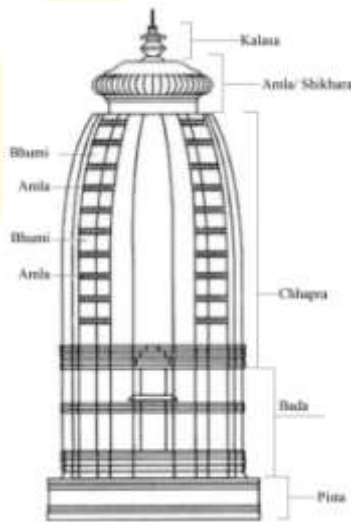


Fig.2: Nagara style temple Architecture



Fig.3: Sun Deo Temple, Aurangabad, Bihar

<sup>2</sup>The Nagara style of temples always show a square ground plan with number of  
<sup>3</sup>Surya's wife.

### Tikuli Crafts:

Tikuli or Bindi is a make-up item used on forehead by Hindu women. Thousand years ago Tikuli was a commercially flourishing trade item serving as a beauty aid for the royal ladies and attracting traders from the far off states of northern and western India to Patna. Tikuli's made in gold and silver foils (See Fig.4) with glistening glasses acting as solid bases. Somehow gradually Tikuli art lose their existent.

In 1954, Chitracharya Padmashree *Upendra Maharathi*, painter, artist and designer, provided a new dimension to the Tikuli art. Inspired by his visit to Japan and adopted the Japanese method to portray the dying Tikuli art on glazed hardboard, but all his efforts

came to a standstill as after his death neither the local artists, nor did the Bihar government.

Since, 1974 the undeterred efforts and undying spirit of painter and craftsman *Ashok Kumar Biswas* and his wife, entrepreneur Smt. *Shibani Biswas* has given richness to this tradition.

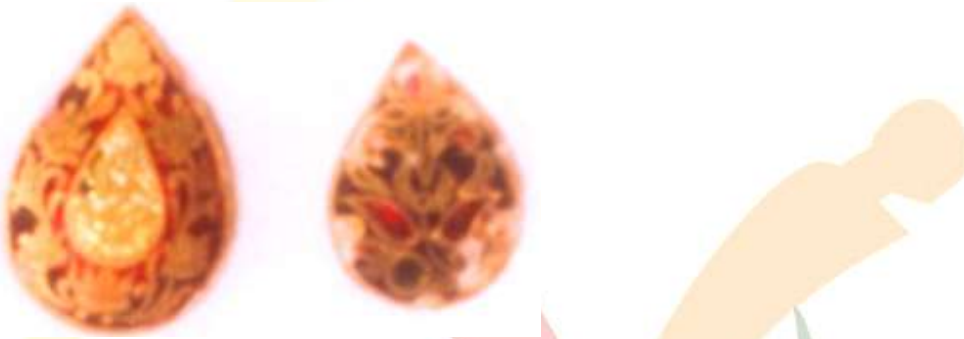


Fig. 4: Tikuli's made in gold and silver foils With glistening glasses acting as solid bases.

**Material**

Wood, Enamel Paint, Thinner / Astringent, Sandpaper, Brushes, color palette, Tracing paper and cleaning cloth

**Technique**

First of all carve out the wood in the desired shape. Basic size of the shapes for Tikuli has the hardboard cut into circular, rectangular, triangular or square shape (See Fig.5). The wood base prepared is coated with black enamel paint using flat brush four to five coats. After every coat, the piece has to be rubbed by sandpaper. After the final coat, the design has traced on the surface using a pen and white color. With the help of the paint colors like royal blue, red, green and orange are applied one after the other. The last step in to paint black outlines using 000 round brushes. Every layer allowed drying, preferably under direct but low sunlight, but dust proof area to avoid any noise on the surface.

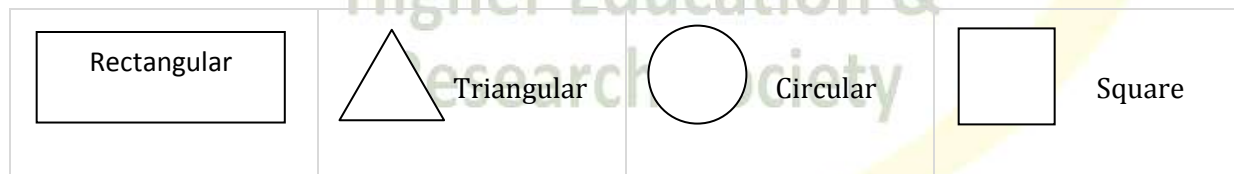


Fig. 5. Basic wood shapes of Tikuli crafts

### Process of Tikuli Crafts making:



### Modification in Tikuli Craft Practice

Traditionally background color of Tikuli craft is painted *black*, but to enhance cultural essence *Gamboge hue* is used as background color. The shape of plywood modified according to the structure of installation. Traditionally Tikuli craft painted in two dimensions but to increase the hierarchy of characters two dimensional surfaces arranged in three dimensions.

### Modification of Characters

Tikuli craft is a traditional art practice but a number of changes happened from ancient to modern. Generally Tikuli human forms are drawn in dramatic posture. In this Installation human characters measure and draw in 7-1/2 head (Perard, 2004) (See Fig.6). Side profile of characters and detail textile motifs is enhancing the realistic approach of the target group.

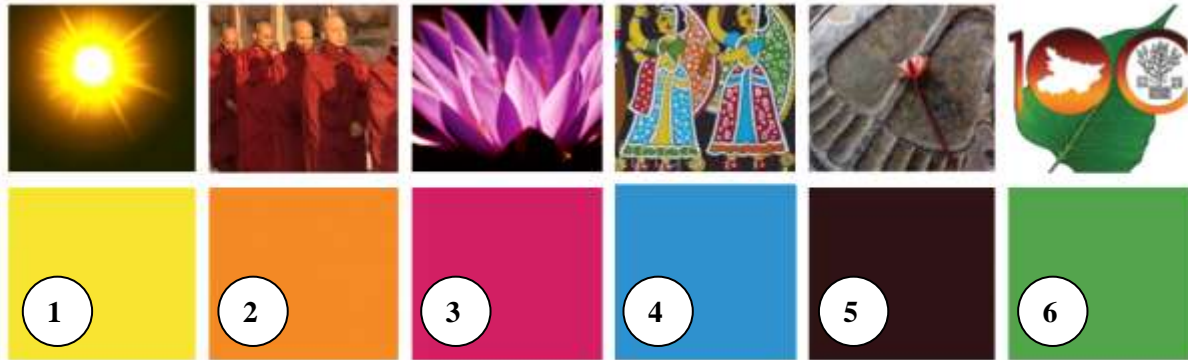
Fig: 6



Tikuli Crafts Character    Fine Art Character    Modified Character

**Color Inspiration from my culture**

Bright and contrast colors have chosen to show the cultural essence of Bihar.



1. Sun God (Yellow) from Chhath festival
2. Buddhist dress (Orange) from Bodh Gaya
3. Lotus (Pink) from Mahabodhi temple, Buddha.
4. Tikuli Crafts (Blue)
5. Buddha (Umber) footprints, Bodh Gaya
6. Bodhi Tree (Green) Buddha knowledge, Bodh Gaya

Prototyping phase & Dimension



Before proceeding final prototyping, went through 1" X 1" Dimensions. Material has been used paper, hardboard, glue, ruler, paper cutter (Fig, 7).

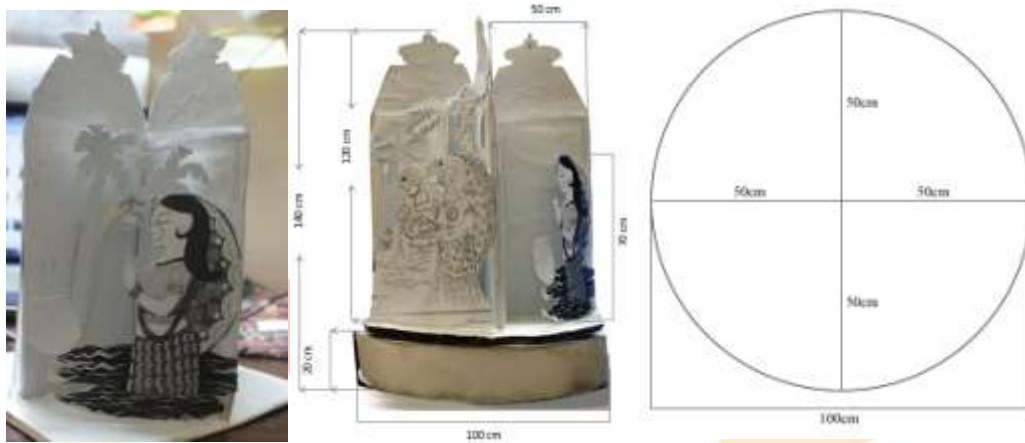
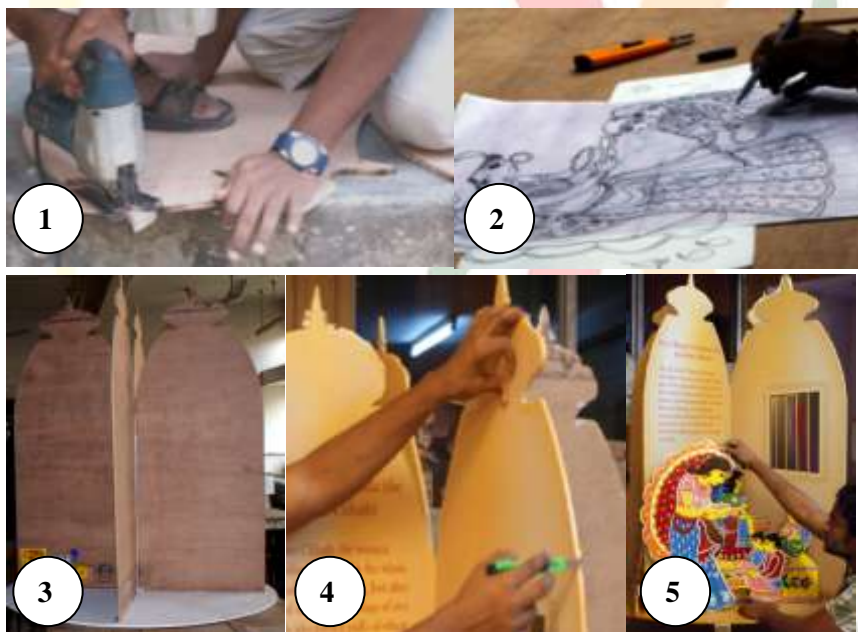


Fig. 7

Final Installation design making process:



Cutting Plywood (Size: 6mm) into Nagar style temple and base in the circular form.

1. Tracing on Plywood (Size: 4mm) and cutting into character shape.
2. Sun Deo temple Architecture shape divided into four sections to show the each day of Chhath festival process.
3. Pasted vinyl sticker print (flex) on each sections, every sections has contents.

4. Arranging of each section Characters.

## Final Design

The final Installation design is showing the four days celebration of *Chhath* festival. It shows visually artistic illusion and creating impact to the visitors who visit Bihar.



Day: 1, Nahaykhai

Day: 2, Kharna or Lohanda

Day: 3, Sanjhya Arghya

Day: 4, Pooran

## Conclusion

The importance of Darpan is to promote Bihar values, and local craft richness. This Installation design kept carefully the all traditional handouts of local artisans. In the form of good documentation, this installation gives detailed information of this pious festival. Visual element and relevant Contents are both have equal significance and composed according to importance of each day. An emphasis of Human ergonomics has been considered during the whole process so that design can be viewed comfortably at eye level. The folk characters of *Tikuli Craft* and *Sun Deo Temple* are getting global attention through real and web experience from visitors. A customized ornamented typeface has been used to address the specific needs and ritualistic essence of this project. The anatomy of typeface is carrying the *ornamental flow* to show the ritualistic essence.

## Future Scope

*Interactive* and *tangible* Installation can help the visitors to get depth cultural information future project can explore different kind of material like iron for longevity purpose. Putting small size installation at important sites across the state can help in promotion of the festival.

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