

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THEMURAL PAINTINGFROM JHARKHAND
AND WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the livelihood mural traditions in rural Jharkhand and west Bengal. The rural area of "Chota Daona" village Saraikela Kharsawan district of Jharkhand and "Ghosaldanga" village of Birbhum district of West Bengal comprise scheduled cast and scheduled tribes. These rural communities take great pride in their mural and artwork, which are part of decoration of their mud houses.

In 'Chota Daona' rural people are more aware of their traditional wall decoration. They color their wall in a particular style with border on the both side, before applying a mural on their walls. The people of this area compose flowers and geometrical forms to paint their walls. Whereas in 'Ghosal Danga' color is applied on relief mud instead of direct painting on the walls. The architectural units of those houses are the main decorative part of their murals. The population of Chota Daona and Ghosaldanga area composes animal and flowers as the part of their decoration. The architectural structure, art style and techniques are different in both the regions.

This paper composes and analyzes the various styles and techniques of mural paintings with respect to tribal and folk cultural. The study attempts to create awareness of mural art to understand the cultural and tradition of these rural communities.

Key words- Rural mural, design elements, culture

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INTRODUCTION

India is rich in visual art and performing art. Visual art is a term of art which creating aesthetic sense in viewer's eye. Its definition varies with different medium and form in different province of India. "Mural" is a branch of visual artit grows out of the wall and shows the correlation with the architecture an environment. Theterm Mural generally includes art and design on ceilings, pillars and other architectural unites (J. Appaswamy, 1985: 82). In rural India different mural style and technique corresponds to ritualistic¹art. The purpose of the art of tribes and folk communities to equally pacify the malevolent deities and to pay homage and express gratitude to benevolent once (Gupta, 2008: 18). They are never indulged purely for pleasure among the different tribal and folk communities.

LOOKING AT TRIBAL ART:

The villages of Jharkhand and West Bengal practice different expression of mural. The houses of *Chota Daon* village located in Saraikela Kharsawan, Jharkhand and *Ghosaldanga* village of Bhirbhum district are decorated by the different communities manly scheduled cast and tribes with their cultural essence (See Fig.1). This paper examines and composes the variety of murals adapted by the rural communities in eastern states of Jharkhand and West Bengal. The traditional mural paintings of Saraikela Kharsawan, Jharkhand and Birbhum district of West Bengal has been chosen for the study because these are hardly studied areas. This is primarily because these regions are a unique amalgamation of Orissa, Bihar and Bengal. The study attempts to observe and analyse the visual design elements, its importance and relevance in architecture.

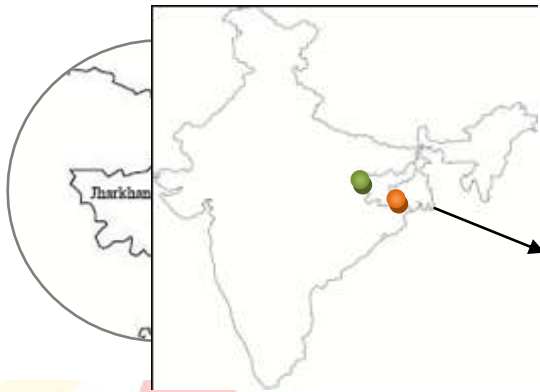


Figure 1 : Location of selected states: 1.Jharkhand 2.West Bengal

¹It is associated with some beliefs and mystical idea (Vidyarthi, 1967)

METHODOLOGY

The chapter is dedicated to ethnographic research. The study has been done in *Chota Daona* village of Jharkhand and Ghosaldanga Village of West Bengal, through close observation of villager's behavior and life style on their terms by understanding their values, needs and vocabulary. A number of questions are clarified of their art practices, role of religion in mural art and changes in design motifs in present scenario. The research data was gathered on site (Village houses, School, Museum, NGO) through observation individual and group interview, interactional audio and video recording. The Data was analysed through qualitative method. Comparative study of mural style and technique constitute findings and conclusion.

PRACTICE OF RURAL MURAL PAINTING IN JHARKHAND

Jharkhand (*the Land of forests*) is a state in *eastern India* carved out of the southern part of Bihar. The state shares its border with the states of Bihar to the north, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to the west, Odisha to the south. The population consists of 28% tribal peoples, so the state has many folk and tribal art forms. *'Chota Daona* is a village of Saraikela Kharsawan² district. The majority of the population is from Santhal tribes follower of *Sarana religion*. The Santhal tribes worshiped *MarangBuru*³ (The god of forest) and *JaherBurhi*⁴ as their village deities during their regional festivals. It is believed that they share the fortune of the villages and involved in ceremonial occasions (Vidyarthi, Rai, 1976:253). Their livelihood depending on agriculture and business centers and

factories. The Scheduled Cast⁵ and Scheduled Tribes both take great pride in their art and design, which is a essential part of the decorations of their mud houses.

²Singhbhum district is divided into East and West Singhbhum and Seraikela Kharsawan districts belong to Jharkhand state.

³Marang Buru the presiding deity in the Sal grove holds a place of veneration and ceremonial worship by the Santhal

⁴Jager buri (village guarding deities) (Gajrani, 2004).

⁵Anusuchit Jati such as Bauri, Bhoogta, Chamar, Dusadh, Lohar, Mushhar.

ARCHITECTURE

The construction of mud housestent is in different point size constitute central courtyard and three to four rooms (See Fig.2). The house is typically comprises of *kulhi* (space in front of the house), *orak* (rooms), *racha* (courtyard) and *barge* (backyard). Kulhi and racha walls are used for painting purpose (See Fig. 3).



Figure 2: Construction of Mud house Figure 3: Kulhi and decorative walls

MURAL PAINTING

Mud houses of 'Chota Daona' village are painted during the festivals. These festivals are linked to the agricultural crop cycles of sowing, reaping, harvesting and storing (October and November), festivals are also related to events such as birth, puberty and marriage (Gupta, 2008:18). The basic mural design of these wall paintings can be mostly divided into three horizontal parts upper border, middle and lower border (See Fig.4). The upper and lower part is filled with flat colors and middle part is used for geometrical patterns (See Fig.5). Running flower pattern and flower bunches are used in middle geometrical form and borders (See Fig.6). Door and window structure have ornamental border (See Fig.7). The front exterior wall (*kulhi*) of the house is the main decorative part. The wall of *racha* is usually painted by basic pattern and the back segment of the house is painted by single color. Bright, contrast colors and mirror pieces used to make pattern. Regional language⁶ is composed to welcome the guest

⁶Santhali (Ol Chiki script)



Figure 4: Horizontal division of wall



Figure 5: Design in middle part of the wall



Figure 5: Design in middle part of the wall



Figure 7: Decorative door and window

PREPARATION OF WALL

Murum Mati mixed with cow dung and bits of straw or rice husk to make plaster. The fiber of straw or husk prevents plaster layer from cracking. Mainly Women are helping in plastering and painting. They apply the plaster mixture on the wall by hand and smoothen it out. When it has set but is still a little damp, women scrub the surface with a stone to smoothening it. At last after drying the surface a thin layer of cow dung is applied on the wall. Three to four hours later background is ready to paint (Bharat, 2015, 35-40).

DRAWING AND COLOUR

Earth colors⁷ and vegetable colors⁸ are used for painting. Dudhi mati or Khariya is used as primer. Geru⁹, Ramraj¹⁰, Neel¹¹ and lamp black are the basic color palate. In present scenario synthetic colors have taken place of earth color. Primary, secondary, tertiary and complimentary colors are used. Drawing is done with the help of thread which is dipped in diluted light color. First all borders are marked horizontally to make three visual divisions of the wall. Upper and lower parts are worked as a supportive background and middle part is used as canvas. With the help of thread spaces are measured and geometrical pattern is created. Binder¹² is used to keep colors permanent

PRACTICE OF RURAL MURAL PAINTING IN WEST BENGAL

West Bengal is a state in eastern India. It is bordered by the countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, and the Indian states of Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Sikkim, and Assam. This state has rich folk art tradition. *Birbhum* is an administrative district of west Bengal. It is fondly called the *land of red soil* and is famous for the topography and its varied heritage. This district lies at the north eastern end of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau and Jharkhand is located at the western border of this district. Ghosaldanga is a small village of Bolpur which is a big city of Birbhum district. This is 3 km far from Vishva-Bharti Shantiniketan University. The rural people of this village are known for neat and clean mud houses and there decoration

(See Fig.8)



Figure 8: Santhal tribes and their Mud houses

⁷The color which is originated from clay earth pigment.

⁸Vegetable colors derive from plant sources- roots, berries, bark leaves, and wood

⁹Geru (Red ochre) is not much bright color. It is earth pigment which abundantly used in Indian traditional painting. It's found in several shades (Drishi and Shristi).

¹⁰ Ram raj (Yellow Ochre) pigment is prepared from natural earth by selection, grinding, washing, and levitation and drying. It's also found in different shades (Gupta, 2008)

¹¹Indigo is originated from Neel plant (Sharma, 2010)

¹²water-soluble medium which made from a synthetic resin binder mixed with pigments.

MUDMURAL

The mud houses of *Ghosaldanga* village constitute an in single room and a big courtyard. The walls of this architectural structure are used for decoration purpose during repairing (See Fig.9). Harvest festival *Bandana*¹³ and marriage ceremony people take great pride to decorate their houses. The architectural units of those houses are the main decorative part of their murals. The people of this area composes animal and flowers in relief mud mural¹⁴ technique (See Fig.10). Colors are used on relief and carved mud to give specific shape. Flowers, animals and birds are used in various forms of imitated from daily life. Flowers and leaves are used in aspecific pattern around the gate and window (See Fig.11).



Figure 9

Figure 10

PREPARATION OF WALL

The mud mural of *Ghosaldanga* village grows on the mother wall of house. With the help of bamboo armature a primary wall is developed, later than they make layers with mud to cover up the bamboo wall to make it thicker. Mud walls are made of murum mati, fibers of jute, hemp and husk and cow dung are used while preparing the layers. The plaster is laid to a thickness of 1 to ½ inches by hand. Every layers of plaster is added after drying the previous layer. The plaster is smoothed to put the thin layer of mud with the help of wooden panel or stone. These dwellings are recognized *Aanchal*¹⁵ by the rural.

¹³ Bandna means worship; this festival is celebrated during Kali Puja in autumn. *Bandna Parab* welcomes 'Shashya Devi' (Goddess of grains) (conversation with B. Murmur 2015).

¹⁴ The sculpted material when raised above the background is called relief. In the mud houses clay dough is used for relief impression on mother wall. This technique is called Mud mural technique.

¹⁵The dwelling of Santhal tribes is emotionally attached with their feeling. They recognize it's as mother and decorating the wall to decorate her *Aanchal*. So the every segment of these mud houses well painted and decorated.

Visual forms are drawn directly on the mother wall. Fine clay and cotton is mixed to make dough and is used to make low relief design. The modeling work is also done in 4-5 layers with the help of spoon, knife etc. The layer of mud is applied to fill the cracks and make the surface even after wash. Detail work is done with fine bamboo stick. Finally different types of texture are applied on the relief. Earth color and vegetable colors are used for designing. Sometimes murals are painted in a single color (See Fig.12) harmonizing with the wall. And sometimes windows and gate border design are painted in contrast colors (See Fig.13). Synthetic hair burses are used for painting and readymade gumas binder.



Figure 12: Single color



Figure 13: Decorative gate border in bright color

FINDINGS

- The Architectural structure is slightly different in both places. The construction of mud houses of *Chota Daona* village typically comprises of *kulhi* (space in front of the house) *orak* (rooms) *racha* (courtyard) and *barge* (backyard).
- *Kulhi* and *racha* walls are used for painting purpose. The mud houses of Ghosaldanga constitute only one single room and *racha*. So the walls of the room and front boundary wall are used for decoration.
- In *Chota Daona* mud walls divided in three parts- upper, middle and lower. Only middle part is used for designing but the walls of Ghosaldanga divided in two parts-

lower and middle- upper. Lower part is filled with single flat color and remaining wall is used for designing.

- The geometrical patterns are created on the middle part of the wall because the lower part (platform) is used for *sitting purpose* and upper part is used for *pigeon dwelling* in *Chota Daona*, but in Ghosaldanga upper segment is also used for pigeon dwelling but instead of using lower platform of the wall people is used to sit in open racha.
- *Mother wall* is used for pasting of mirrors as a border pattern in *Chota Daona* but in Ghosaldanga the whole wall is embossed and carved.
- In *Chota Daona* the middle part mural design is changed during the annual house repairing schedule¹⁶, so only colors are used for the decoration but in Ghosaldanga whole design is changed while repairing.
- In *Saraikela Karsawan* mural Geometrical form is represented in graphical way but figurative images are painted on open flat background in Birbhum district.
- Use of Contrast color in *Chota Daona* village is more attractive than Ghosaldanga relief mural.
- Ghosaldanga murals have limited color range.
- Ghosaldanga mural has folk and traditional forms then *Chota Daona* which are near geometrical mural.
- In *Chota Daona* border of windows and door is always bounded in middle part of the wall.
- Ground color creates the visual geometrical form with the help of foreground color means figure ground is important in *Chota Daona* mural but Ghosaldanga mural has breathing space as plane background so the foreground object comes with the relief impression.
- Flowers and leaves are painted through shading in *Chota Daona* but the relief is painted in flat color in Ghosaldanga.
- Figurative images are used in Ghosaldanga such as birds, animals and flower (inspired from their social life).

CONCLUSION

The Mural paintings of *Chota Daona* and Ghosaldanga village have social and cultural individuality. In present scenario *commercialization* is affecting these murals painting so the new generation has started to take interest of this art practice. From the making of Mud houses and finishing the murals men and women are working together and exchange their

¹⁶After rainy season rural people repair their houses in the month of October & November (Imam, 2012)

thoughts these condition creating a good *working environment* in the society. The students of Fine arts colleges are studying the traditional motifs of these mural paintings is helping to make documentation of these art practices.

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