

Salient Features of The Mural Paintings In Odisha

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Abstract

Odisha is located on the South-Eastern coast of India. Pattachitra is a traditional painting of Odisha, These paintings are based on Hindu Mythology and specially inspired by Lord Jagannath at Puri. All colours used in the Paintings are natural and made fully old traditional way by Chitrakaras. Pattachitra style of painting is one of the oldest and most popular art forms of Odisha. The name Pattachitra has evolved from the Sanskrit words Patta, meaning canvas, and chitra, meaning picture. Pattachitra is thus a painting done on canvas, and is manifested by rich colourful application creative motifs, designs and portrayal of simple themes, mostly mythological in depiction. The traditions of Pattachitra paintings are more than a thousand years old.

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1. Introduction: History of Mural Paintings in Odisha

The Mural Paintings of Odisha can be divided into three categories from the point of view of medium, i.e. paintings on cloth, paintings on walls and palm leaf engravings. The style of all these remains more or less the same at a specific time because the then artists were commissioned to work in all these media, it is believed. The painting 'Pattachitra' resemble the old murals of Odisha especially religious centers of Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar region, dating back to the 5th century BC. The best work is found in and around Puri, especially in the village of Raghurajpur.

This old tradition of Odia painting still survives in the places

like Puri, Raghurajpur, Paralakhemundi, Chikiti and Sonepur. Lord Jagannath in the present form is being taken as the origin of the Patta style. The color schemes of the deities of Puri are quite similar to those of the Patta style. The oldest record of Patta Paintings does not probably go beyond the establishment of the present shrine of Shri Jagannath at Puri. It may be due to the fact that paintings do not survive like sculptures. The paints inside the shrines of Lord Jagannath at Puri make the date probable. The wooden statues of the three deities are also covered with cloth and then overlaid with glue mixed with chalk, and then given paint only with four limited colours of red, yellow, white and black. The deities who are held in high esteem by the Odias and who inspire religion, life and activity of the people also carry with them a tradition of art and painting which is as old as the deities themselves. These paintings were originally substitutes for worship on days when the temple doors were shut for the 'Ritual Bath' of the deity.

Review of Literature:

Even today in Odisha these two crafts are combined in one and these artists are known as Chitrakara's, whose title being mostly Maharana or Mahapatra. But strangely enough, the paintings appeared in the great temples of Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konark in Odisha do not show any trace of contemporary painting decorations even after several centuries. But from the 18th century onward most of the Temples and Mathas especially in the southern districts of Odisha existing a good number of paintings and aesthetic works which have remained unknown and mysteriously neglected in the limelight of the public and publication in the realm of Indian art and paintings. The art, aesthetic, architecture, paintings, and sculptures of Odisha have drawn countless and innumerable attention of outstanding scholars and sculptures since the beginning. It gives significant and extraordinary impressions upon the renowned artists, writers, sculptures, and other creative personalities to explore the uniqueness in the art and architecture of Odisha. The linear characteristics and crucial aspect of Odisha's art and paintings have historical, mythological, legendary, contemporary and technological magnitude deriving from different sources determined the significant.

Standing of Odisha in the World History of Art and Aesthetics:

The painting customs and traditions of Odisha recognized as stylistic features having been analysed and found to be homogeneous and divergent through different ages. The Odishan sculpture and Temple architecture has acknowledged as a unique dimension in the history of ancient and contemporary paintings. The artists and the painters are mostly using bright and contrasting colours such as Red, Ochre, Vermillion, Chrome Yellow, Indigo, Terra Verde, White, and Black for articulating and modeling strict profile drawing lines of contours, curves, outlines and surfaces adding to further emphasis and accentuation. The painters and artists in the past were using limited colours and ultramarine Blue in the Fresco and wall or murals painted on a coat of lime. Generally the lime coat is prepared out of burnt seashells which are well pounded, crushed, and cooked mixing with the juice of Indian Bael fruit, Molasses and stale or decayed Curd. The mixture is applied and painted with two layers on the base smoothly with jute pieces and straw polishing with a round stone at the surface.

The primary rough layer is called "Kharad" is a powder which is prepared with a mixture of lime, small jute pieces, molasses, gum from Bael and gum obtained from green gram, etc. The secondary layer is applied on the walls with a plaster known as "Dahi Chuna" which is prepared with a mixture of filtered lime (Sipa Chuna) Molasses, Curd and Coconut oil, etc. This mixture is generally kept for a week before applying on the wall surface. the mural paintings on the wall surfaces of Sri Kalika Mandir, Jayapur, Odisha have been executed with tamarind glue and cow dung with a layer of cloth from the local chitrakaras or painters.

The layers of cloth have been used. to bring the smoothness over the painted surface. The colour compositions are to be sketched in light ochre painted within the outline-forms and the black contours directly with a brush. The mural painting of Odisha are composed of several compartments with decorative borders, horizontal bands placing next to each other to ensure a consistent sequence.

Generally the mural paintings are devoted to more important parts in the story and the rest may be adjusted in the remaining space. The mural paintings of Biranchi Narayan Temple in Buguda or Kalika Temple, Jayapur Odisha has unique and dazzling murals on the outside walls under the protruding or overhang eaves of the roofs, inside walls of courtyards within the Temple precincts or premises. Even most of the ancient and prominent Temples like Srikurmam Temple in Andhra Pradesh, Emara Math, Puri, Gangamata Math in Puri, the Jagannath Temple, Dharakote, Lakshmi Temple inside Jagannath temple complex, Puri, Radhakanta Math, Chikiti, Radhakanta Math, Paralakhemandi, Raghunath Temple, Odagaon and even in the sanctum at the back wall (as in

Jagannath Temple, Surangi, Bhagavata Ghara, Karadagadia, and Kosaleswar Temple complex. Keonjhar district Odisha has mural painting across the walls, ceilings and the Mukhasala portion to ensure more aesthetic and artistic value. Usually, the unique murals are occupying the walls and ceiling of the Temples of Odisha. The paintings are also seen on the Temple facades or portico or fascia painted on stucco-work as in Gundicha Temple, Puri which was painted directly on the walls. Owing to passage of time the ancient murals at the walls and ceilings of Paralakhemundi palace,

The Ganjam district of Odisha is badly damaged. Even the old paintings in the ceilings of a Pidha Deul having an architectural pattern, spiral bands, and horizontal bands of the interior roofing are covered with floral designs that are also being dilapidated owing to lack of care and maintenance. The paintings of Jagannath Temple, Buguda and Lakshmi Temple inside Jagannath Temple complex is gradually receding into a conical ceiling formation. The entire flat ceiling of the porch between Mukti Mandap and the main temple inside the Jagannath Temple complex at Puri is full of wall and ceiling paintings. The main figure meant for Goddess and deities are often painted in trifold arched niches occupying the smaller compartments figures with the vertical bands close to the border and the base. The specific wall, ceiling and horizontal and painting figures are mostly seen in the idols of Hanuman, Jaya, Vijaya etc. in the Jagannath Temple, Dharakote and the attending lady figure with patras (vessels) in hands have been shown in large arched niches in the fashion of serving the deities enthroned or installed inside the whitewashed and badly damaged walls and the horizontal pillars which has been lost in the last decades.

Many of these crucial mural paintings have been deteriorated, depreciated and scratched owing to apathetic and lethargic attitude by the Temple administration and the Government.

The composition pattern and predominating factor of all the murals painting in Odisha emphasizing the action of a few figures in an easily comprehensible environment which always dominated by the main character painting attracting the larger attention of the viewer.

It is imperative to bring forth the peculiar feature of women folk in Odisha that a large proportion of ladies do not wear blouses or chemise even now in rural areas. Thus the use of blouses by women in Odisha is an acquired practice because of the tribal, hilly and rural ladies hardly wear blouses owing to illiteracy and backwardness. Even this is also a trend prevailing in upper-class families in the urban and semi-urban areas of the state but it is very pertinent to reveal that in mural paintings in the ancient and contemporary Temples of Odisha depicting the female characters and goddess or deities wearing a blouse which has been clearly illustrated the wearing of blouse or chemise by Sita, a character in Ramayan upon the wall and ceiling murals painting of Biranchi Narayan Temple and Manika in Srikurman Temple. There are references in Odia literature to the practice of wearing Kanchli. The wearing of blouses or chemise is not common in the palm-leaf manuscript. It is very relevant and significant to reveal that the appearance of blouses in mural paintings in Temples of Odisha is mostly influenced and followed from the Mughal and European empire. Even another peculiar and unusual characteristic feature in the history of mural paintings of Odisha is that no tracing of undergarments wears underneath of the sarees by the lady characters nor the ladies in rural and tribal Odisha wear undergarments. Most of the women in the rural and semi-urban areas are wearing the sarees in a simple fashion and style while the panata/pallu (one end of the saree) passing over the waist around and half covering the breasts portion hanging and falling back of the left shoulders. This type of traditional dress costume, outfit and attire are substantiated from the painting of Vastra Harana scene where the Gopi's are shown bathing naked in the river Yamuna and their sarees hang over the branches of the tree where Krishna plays on the flute except the sarees neither the blouse nor the underwear is shown on the branches.

Nevertheless, there is another illustration in Bhagavata manuscript in the collection of the Odisha state museum whereas the Gopi's are shown taking off their sarees before taking a bath in the river

Yamuna which is a prelude or prologue or preliminary scene to the Vastra Harana having no illustration or graphics of using palm leaves, etc. During 18th and early 19th centuries had been shown and revealed the breast bands (bodices or cholis) with a medallion or flower decoration which falls upon the breasts. As far as the ornaments or knick-knack are concerned the men's wear or male traditional attire is quite different and uncommon in traditional society. For instance, the divine personalities like Vishnu in Dasavatara paintings, Rama and other kings like Kamsa, etc. be dressed in Kirata Mukuta respectively. Similarly Lord Krishna wears a Bankachla mukuta with an Ambakasi (Mango shaped) medal or decorating ornaments prominent or famous in the center having lotus petal medal in the center. By and large, the men or male members put on a thin chain around the neck with a pendant jewelry to enhance the bodily appearance. Generally in the case of kings/monarchies or man of higher status wear more chains, bracelets, aemlets, bangles, wrist bands (khadu) and makara kundalas are used as ear ornaments for Gods and the male and female members which were recognized as a popular ear ornament of the Brahmans. Yajnopavita or the sacred thread is also prominent or famous wear or show off for the Brahmans. On the other hand the ladies were using different kinds of traditional and indigenous ear-rings which is called in Odia language as Notha and nose pendants which are called in local Odia language as Basuni, Naka Chana, Hamsa Guna, and Dandi etc. The women folk used "Mathamani" on the forehead which is fixed to a chain that runs over the partings of hair on the head and tied to Sinthi with the other decorative chain worn around the head and tied in a bun hanging on the left shoulders or roped into a long pigtail ending with decoration over the ponytail ending are fixed silver and golden flowers in the shape of stars which is prevalent in Andhra and Malwa paintings and drawings.

Generally the ladies of Odisha are wearing traditional ornaments or curio's which is called in local Odia language as Ankles Bala, Pahuda and Jhutia producing a peculiar and different sound with the gait or while walking. Even a large number of ladies put on a griddle or broil type of ornament around the waist called Antapatia followed with a number of rings on the fingers, hands and on feet etc. It is relevant and imperative to reveal the fact that naturalistic depiction of trees, landscape, clouds on a darker sky, hill stations, natural vegetation, and trees represents a vital and significant place in the art and aesthetic of Odisha. Even in Biranchi Narayan Temple and Srikrmam Temple, depicting foliage, dark sky and cloud paintings are seen on two top corners of the painting ensuring a visual eye-catching to the tourist, visitors and the pilgrims. It is a pertinent fact that the hills and clouds occupy the major attention of the Odishan painters which are shown in dome-shaped half circled gradually receding to the top like Pyramids. Owing to the availability of space, size and proportion in the ceilings and the walls of the ancient Temples in Odisha different kinds of animals and birds like Tigers, Elephant, Bears, Wild Boars, Peacock, Parrot, Wild Cock, Hens and Snakes etc. are shown in the cavity or hollow space of the rocks ensuring maximum attraction among the visitors. The animals and birds are also painted on the walls, ceilings and the rocks of the ancient temples in Odisha. The portrait or picture hermits/saints are painted in a meditation posture, pictures of hunters waiting for prey or collecting the hunts which have been depicted in a miniature naturalistic style on the walls and the pillars of the Temples in Odisha. The painters and artists in Odisha are extremely clever, intelligent, and humorous in painting the animals in a different action, caricature, and accomplishment in a posture of resting, playing, fondling with the younger ones which have been executed in various Temples of Odisha. One of the notable features of Biranchi Narayan Temple painting is a depiction of a musical concert by the monkeys in one of the caves be reminiscent or reminds the musical instrument "Dhumpa" (a long hollow bamboo which is beaten with sticks by a group of musicians sitting on either side of this bamboo) prevalent in the Southern district of Odisha.

The painters and visual artists have gone into details of depicting the nature in the Vastra Harana scene of Srikrmam Temple that has been painted the rows of ants lining up on the branches of the trees and bees humming around the flowers hanging over the boughs or branches. Yet the sensitive depiction of hills, hillocks and natural sceneries finds a significant repetition in the aftermath or later

murals less vigorous or dynamic way at the ancient Sri Kalika Temple, Jayapur which has gradually ended in an in-artistic illustration and delineation with grey and indigo patches. Even the mural paintings of Odisha are portraying and representing the ponds with lotus flowers, hills having a cave, and the size of the rock in a dome-shaped in the different old and ancient temples in the 18th century. The ancient Temples of Odisha also depicting the river beds drawing the waves with indigo or blue back-ground often showing in straight or bent lines having drawn small borders or a floral designing or dots running in between the creatures of fishes, crocodiles, ducks, crabs and cranes are painted as if x-rayed through the water surface or lotuses in a very conventionalized and traditional manner paving the way for enhancing the art and aesthetic values and traditions in Odisha. There was neither submission nor implication of seasonal scenes, landscape, or depiction of individual animals in the art history of Odisha. There was quite less use of animals and the seasonal sceneries in the ancient temple murals. However in the 18th century the palm leaf illustrations and designs in Ushaharanan and Bidagdha Madgava Nataka which has been noticed in the collection of the Odisha state museum and state archives, The elephants and horses were finding a significant place in the art history of Odisha. The elephants of the Sitabinji mural are quite attractive and voluminous showing the power and supremacy and ways of walking upon the walls and stone sculptures of the mural paintings. Similarly the horses depicted in Kanchi Vijaya Yatra are inflexible, stereotyped and less vigorous portraying in a unique baroque or decorative style in the mural paintings in Odisha Temples.

It is very pertinent to reveal the fact that the pictures of elephants and horses representing a significant role in the mural art history of Odisha. Even the representation of the house always shows mandap as sitting places probably made of wooden mandap or a stone structure built in imitation of wooden architecture. Generally the ancient painters, sculptures and the visual artist portraying the king's in courts or darbar, vihara spot of lovers and the waiting places of Radha for Lord Krishna and similar wooden mandapa's are still existed in Gadajata areas and in Brahman Sasana's which are often used as assembly places to hold community rituals, meetings, gatherings, adalat and recitation of Bhagavata Gita etc. The arch type frames are also painted over the individual idols and deities like Narasimha, Narayan, Garuda and Hanuman etc. The mural paintings and patta chitra paintings play a significant role in depicting the background scenes and sceneries having pendants and half-circular fans hanging from the upper frame of the painting looking like a canopy or shelter. The entire walls and the adjoining periphery of the Biranchi Naraya Temple, Buguda has been depicting or illustrating the mural paintings with a floral motifs/pattern or decoration drawn with horses, appliqué chhatris, Chamara, alata (fans), flags and banners etc., on wheels which were a practice materialized in Ratha's (chariot) a minimized proto-type or model of Jagannath Ratha of Puri.

Even few such repeated motifs or designs like swords, shields, spears, sticks, bows, and arrows appeared occasionally in the mural paintings of Odisha in general Biranchi Naraya temple in particular. It is a significant fact that the town plannings and the temple structures of historical place Puri are specially mentioned and painted on the outer southern wall of the Biranchi Narayan temple, Buguda, resembling an aerial view of geographical map. Moreover, the pilgrim spots like Narendra pond, Markandeya Temple, Lokanath Temple, the famous sea beach or shore, the palace of the Puri king called Sri Nahara, Adapa Mandapa, the premises of Jagannatha Temple complex with the presiding deities of Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra and other activities of the entire township of Puri, which is relevant and significant to carry out and revealed the procession or parade scene of the king going to have a darshan of the deities have been painted upon the outer walls of the Biranchi Narayan temple, Buguda. It is quite practicable and feasible that the main idea behind depicting and illustrating the town/city paintings to popularize the Lord Jagannath of Puri to satisfy the religious cravings and sentiments of pilgrims who were unable to visit the town themselves owing to different reasons. Even now also the pilgrims from the southern parts of Odisha are stopover at Buguda while they are proceeding on the route to Puri. Most of the pilgrims visiting puri from south Odisha are taking away home the unique Puri paintings, portraits, and other antiquities depicting the temple

complex to worship, in the Biranchi Narayan Temple. The significant and predominant fact of the mural and wall paintings of Odisha is the action, postures, liveliness, enthusiasm, profile faces of the human figures/lives depicting in the Biranchi Narayan temple murals. But it is a revealed fact that the human body or figures are absent in later Jagannath and Lakshmi Temple paintings in Odisha. The murals of Odisha characterized as a unique traditional and conventional art having a distinctive look with bright colours, bold lines, and inflexible delineation of forms. to give a separate identity in the context of Indian mural painting history. Similarly the paintings of Ajanta and Ellora murals occupy a unique place in the art history of India despite lacking delicacy and fragility having freshness of colour harmony. It is very pertinent to reveal that the previous or earliest or ancient paintings had regional style evolved through the centuries. The important characteristics of Yana Temple painting Chitrakuta Parvata. Depicting and illustrating the dome-shaped hills, plants and animals like monkeys, wild cocks, rabbits, deer and ducks etc.

With full bloom lotuses in a lake seen at the foot of the hill. It is imperative to say that the painters of Odisha have a familiar practice of typical and traditional murals depicting and illustrating the monkey Hanuman, Narisimha, Jambavana and individual figures with lines on the body to suggest the texture and plain and simple hairy bodies representing the murals as a Telugu and Odia captions in the Sri Kalika Temple murals in Odia script. Usually the palm-leaf illustration and depiction of male figures, neck, chest in the ancient painting of Odisha. It also illustrated in the various mural paintings of the male having (a trifold) ear, broad chest, and narrow waist. On the other hand, the traditional mural arts in Biranchi Narayan is that the females have well-rounded breasts, heavy hips, short statures, two lines to suggest the ear and wide open fish-shaped (minanayana) eyes etc.

Reference: Dinanath Pathy, Mural Paintings in Odisha with a foreword by Dr. Eberhard Fischer, Published by the secretary, Odisha Lalit Kala Academy, Bhubaneswar, (1981)