



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PICHWAI PAINTING AND PHAD PAINTING

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Abstract

Pichwai painting and Phad painting are a type of traditional paintings of folk fabric that are rooted in Rajasthan in India. These traditional folk paintings mostly containing various tales and episodes of different mythological legends, heroic deeds. Because of the skillful technical feature of an existing type and design, the object is recognized as unique in type and decorative motifs and called works of art. They're rooted in and representative of a community's cultural life. The vital and continuously revitalized artistic traditions are influenced by values and expectations of quality that move through the presentation, discourse, and practice from generation to generation, most often within family and community.

The main purpose of this study is to define the distinctive features of Pichwai Painting and Phad Painting. Being traditional folk art, they share many distinguishing characteristics.

Keywords:*Pichwai Painting, Phad Painting, Traditional, Folk, Mythological, Characteristics.*

Introduction

Pichwai art features intricate paintings illustrating the history of Lord Krishna (Shrinathji) and his exploits. These paintings have profound religious origins and are executed by the artists with absolute dedication. In the Shrinathji temple at Nathdwara and other Krishna temples, they are formed and used as backdrops. Shrinathji is worshipped as Lord Krishna's icon (i).

Phad painting is a folk painting style of religious scrolls. Traditionally it is done on a piece of fabric or canvas called 'Phad' (ii). These paintings form a backdrop to the epic tales of the local deities and legends of the former local rulers, frequently carried from place to place and accompanied by traditional singers narrating the theme depicted on the scrolls (iii).

Historical Background

Pichwai (pichvai) is a painting style that originated in the town of Nathdwara near Udaipur in Rajasthan, India, more than 400 years ago. The word Pichwai comes from the words 'pich' back and 'wai' means hanging textiles. In the year 1672 AD the temple was moved to Rajasthan in anticipation of the raids of the Mughal King Aurangzeb, where it would be protected in the hands of the Rajputs. Maharana Raj Singh has decided to provide refuge (iv). Even the priests, halwais, cows, and their caretakers and the Pichwai painters went along with Shrinathji's idol, the lord's sevaks. They stopped at Eklingji in Rajasthan, where Shiva's momentous temple was located, but because two temples of great significance can't exist in one place, they moved on. The bullock cart was stuck in the ground at one point, and wouldn't budge. So it was determined to establish the temple in the city of Nathdwara to Shrinathji, meaning 'the lord's gates.' There is behind Pichwai's painting a beguiling background that keeps the Govardhan hill. The Vrindavan dwellers took shelter under the hill. Lord Indra then realized his mistake and stopped the tribulation. People have worshiped Govardhan Hill ever since (v). Some devoted artists from the nearby places of Mount Govardhan came to Nathdwara with Shrinathji and began painting Shrinathji's divine form of separation (vighraha)(vi). With this, the Nathdwara art style also entered the other regions of Mewar, but Udaipur became the most important center of this art (vii).



The word 'phad' was simultaneously derived from the Hindi word 'pad' which means to read or kathan-wachan. It may derive from the Sanskrit word 'patt' (viii). Phad is a unique style of traditional folk art from Rajasthan on a long horizontal piece of cloth about 700 years old, now well established on a global scale. It is a type of hereditary art, passed from father to son and practiced by the Chipa caste professional painters known by the clan name 'Josi.' Their expertise is in textile printing, and they work in Rajasthan district of Bhilwara from their traditional towns of Shahpura and Bhilwara (ix)(x).

Main Structure

Pichwai Painting

The shrinathji temple found this cloth-hanging very sacred, both as an offering to take home at the temple and as a souvenir. Radha, gopis, cows, and lotuses are common subjects found in the Pichwai paintings. In Pichwais, festivals and celebrations like SharadPurnima, RaasLeela, Annakoot or Govardhan Puja, Janmashtami, Gopashtami, NandMahotsav, Diwali, and Holi are always depicted (xi). The Pichwais theme varies depending on the season and their moods. Every Pichwai denotes Shrinathji'sseva (worship) in a different season. The pichwai summer has pink lotuses as the backdrop, while the pichwai winter has intricate jamawar design, providing the warmth required for the season. The main Pichwai denoting the 'Anukooth,' the day after Deepavali when Shrinathji raised the parvat of Govardhan, has the deity in a silver poshak, exquisitely adorned with pearls, dabka, zardozi work. It is a technique that goes back to the Mughal times using high relief on a stellar. Over time, because of their aesthetic appeal, pichwais have found a spot in the homes of art connoisseurs.

Themes

1.1 GopashtamiPichwai

Gopashtami is a festival held in India to commemorate the day Lord Krishna became a qualified cowherd (xii). People bathe their cows on this day, pray for them and thank them for their services to humanity. The painting depicts a surrounding frame of 20 different Shrinathjishringars. These shringars are inspired by those in Nathdwara's temple that change for each season, festival, month's day, and occasion.



Plate 1: Gopashtami Pichwai



1.2 Rasa Leela&SharadPurnimaPichwai

MahaRaas is the RaasLeela celebrating the festival, or the divine dance that Krishna performed with Braj'sGopis (cow herding girls) (xiii). The dance symbolizes the divine union and spiritual love between Krishna and his devotees, and it is said to take place on the first full moon night or Purnima after the monsoon, which marks the beginning of autumn, or Sharad. The Shrinathji Idol at Nathdwara is dressed in brocade and jewels on the night of the festival to symbolically prepare him for the dance. This pichwai portrays MahaRaas traditionally performing Krishna's RaasLeela dancing in a circle with the Gopikas and a full moon over the dancing figures.



Plate 2:Rasa LeelaPlate 3: SharadPurnima

1.3 JanmashtamiPichwai

One of the most important festivals for devotees of Krishna is Janmashtami, which celebrates the birth of Krishna. It's usually held in either August or September. A traditional Pichwai depicting Janmashtami would have Shrinathji's central figure dressed in saffron attire, with feathers for the peacock in his crown. Also traditionally a cradle is depicted with the child Krishna, right under the central figure. In some Pichwais, along with his toys are also depicted crowds of people who gather to worship the child, Krishna.



Plate 4: JanmashtamiPichwai



1.4 NandMahotsav

NandMahotsav takes place on the day after Janmashtami, and it marks Krishna's arrival at the home of his foster parents Nanda and Yashoda. Krishna devotees celebrate this day with great fervor, usually by re-enacting scenes from his childhood such as his stealing of the curd and butter. Usually, Pichwais depicting NandMahotsav are very grand, depicting a child in a cradle below the main figure of Shrinathji, with Yashoda and Nanda on either side of the cradle.



Plate 5: NandMahotsav

1.5 HoliPichwai

Holi, the color festival, signifies the start of spring. According to legend, it is also the favorite festival of Shrinathji, so it is celebrated in Nathdwara for around 40 days, from the day of VasantPanchami to the day of Holi. A Pichwai depicting Holi would usually have Shrinathji dressed in white, with color spots on him, depicting the play with colors. The Pichwais also often display pots of gulal (colored powder) put in front of Shrinathji.



Plate 6: Holi Pichwai



1.6 Krishna in Kamal Talai Pichwai

Krishna is a very common theme for pichwai paintings in kamaltalai. It shows Krishna enjoying monsoon on blooming lotuses in a pond. Sometimes a lotus is served as an offering to Krishna. Lotus portrays hardship in life as it develops in muddy waters, but as ever it remains pure and fragrant.



Plate 7: Krishna in Kamal Talai Pichwai

1.7 Kamdhenu Cows on a Light background Pichwai

This pichwai is painted as its primary theme with Kamdhenu cows. In Indian mythology, these are holy cows and are believed to bring their owners prosperity.



Plate 8: Kamdhenu Cows on a Light background Pichwai

Phad Painting

Phad painting includes two groups of people, one being Chitera or the Painter and the other being Bhopa or the narrator describing each scene's nuances. Both are interdependent on the preparation of the Phad, as Bhopa provides the subject matter while the Chitera is responsible for the painting's technical aspect with the fixed images, characters, and colors as well (xiv). Bhopas are usually from the Nayak or Bhil tribe who, with the help of his wife -Bhopi, perform the epic, holding a spotlight in her hand. They are unrolling only after sunset when it is dark as it is a production of the whole night (xv). Both the actors and the attendant give ritual offerings to the images of the hero gods before the narration starts.



Phad shows many Rajput warriors' heroic deeds and they are usually of five kinds namely; Pabuji, Devnarayanji, Krishna, Ramdal (Ramayana), and Ramdevji. Among these is 'Pabuji' which is considered as Demi God in Marwar even today, the most legendary and famous. It depicts a whole series of events from birth to death, has crowded scenes and innumerable moving figures. Equally famous is the Devnarayan Phad and has religious appeal. Pabuji's phads are usually about 15 feet in length while Devnarayan's phads are typically about 30 feet long.

Themes

1.1 Story of Pabuji

The Phad of Pabuji is a scroll painting of folk deity, Pabuji – Rathod Rajput ruler of Rajasthan in the 14th century, who is revered as an embodiment of Hindu God, and worshiped by the Rabari tribes of Rajasthan as "the Ascetic Lord of the Sand Desert." Pabuji, is respected as a great hero, and the Bhopas sing adulatory verses in his honor.



Plate 9: Pabuji ki Phad



Plate 10: Pabuji ki Phad

In the performance, the scroll is an important element as it embodies Pabuji's historical and spiritual legacy and depicts his exploits (xvi). The phad showing as a whole series of events from his birth to death has crowded scenes and countless figures full of movement, but most prominent is that of Pabuji, astride the Kesarkalimi, a beautiful black mare.



1.2 Story of Devnarayana

There are two aspects to the story behind Devnarayan Phad. The first relates to the adventures of twenty-four brothers who belonged to the Gurjar cattle herding caste Bagrawat family. Part two tells the story and miracles of the incarnation of



Plate 11: Devnarayanji ki Phad

Lord Vishnu, Devnarayan. Devnarayana was a ninth-century historical figure (born on 911AD) and was worshiped as Lord Vishnu's incarnation.

His legendary epic was written to Pabhuji's, much earlier (xvii)(xviii). As their special deity, he is famous among the Gurjar community. Attending the events are both men and women. However, the group women recognize Devnarayan in the form of Lord Krishna and sing songs on episodes related to baby Krishna outside of the ritual.

Another form of Phad that was abandoned now was Goddess Kali's. As was done in the Batik style and painted for a specific untouchable Bhopa caste, it was noticeably different from the other ones.

Comparison of Both Styles

Lord Shrinathji is the dominant figure that we can typically find in Pichwai Paintings. The picture of Shreenathji is given special features such as a large nose, wide eyes, and a fat belly. The distinct features and gestures of the face of the god radiate the emotions of joy and divinity. The screens display the tales of Krishna's boyhood days with spectacularly colored backgrounds that brought not only rustic scenes of bountiful cows, elusive lotuses, mysterious trees, fascinating stars, and evocative planetary elements to the psyche. It takes long months and enormous skills and experience to make Pichwai paintings. It takes about 1.5 months to create a simple 5 ft x 3 ft size Pichwai. The pictures were drawn in fully organic and natural colors and the ornate portion would be decorated with pure Gold. Using pure gold in the paintings adds meaning and beauty to this. It may take 3-4 days just to prepare color from pure gold for one painting. The borders are filled with other decorative elements and crystals. Rich embroidery or applique work is also used in paintings. Pichwais are full of intricacies that on closer examination are more delightful. The delicately rendered figures, the women's transparent dupattas, the vibrant colors of nature and costumes, and Shrinathji's big eyes and board nose, emphasis on detail, and miniature work. The thread is also woven using different embroidery techniques, and the gems are often studded into the paintings.



The motive behind these paintings is the joy and happiness that was spreading over Vrindavan during Lord Krishna's period. The artists are Shrinathji's devotees, who were delighted to create these paintings. The photos depict the love and happiness symbolized by dancing to the flute tunes. These paintings are also an example of the practice of 'Guru-shishya;' the intricacies of the art have been passed down over centuries. It is a sacred type of art dedicated to the creator.

Phad paintings are a part of Bhopa and Bhopi's elaborate song-and - dance series. With their ravanhatta, a two-string instrument, they travel from village to village and use the Phad paintings as visual aids, perform dramatic renditions of Ramayana stories, HunumanChalisa, and other mythological tales. Phad artists must be highly professional and adhere to ancestral taught techniques. It may take from a few weeks to a couple of months to complete an artwork, depending on the complexity.

With the use of natural fibers and natural paints from stones, flowers, plants, and herbs, the entire process of creating a Phad painting is fully natural. Yellow, orange, green, brown, red, blue, and black are common colors seen in a Phad painting. Every color is used for particular purposes – yellow to create the initial outline and in decorations and clothes, orange for limbs and torso, green for trees and plants, brown for architectural buildings, red for royal clothes and flags as well as a thick border, and blue for water or curtains. In the end, Black is used as outlines. The artist starts the Phad painting with the ritual offering of coconut to Sarasvati on an auspicious day according to the Panchang. Devotees also believe that the painting is a living temple to their deity and once they have performed the ritual offerings, censing and prayers, that Pabuji descends from heaven and is present in the *phad*. The first stroke in the painting is always made by a virgin girl who either belongs to the family of the painter or a higher caste, rendering "Satiya" on the yellow-colored fabric. This form of ritual is called "Chanka".

All the paintings in Phad have some common features. All inch canvas available with figures. The composition is rather formal, as the main image at the middle is drawn larger, and other images are balanced in their ratio. Another interesting feature of this folk art is that all the figures are posed side by side and face each other; rather, they face the audience. They also share the same characteristics as a round face, flat, short and broad nose, large eyes, wide head, double chin, and a thin bent moustache. Although figures in a Phad painting are distributed harmoniously across the canvas, the size of each figure is determined by their social status, and the role they play in the narrated script. The painter completes the painting on a promising day by making the 'Eye Ball' which is the final step and is now ready for worship. In the central part of the scroll, where the largest Devnarayan or Pabuji figure is drawn, the artist sings.

Conclusion

Folk art, primarily functional or utilitarian visual art made by hand to be used by the creator or a small circumscribed group and containing an aspect of preservation-the prolonged traditional survival. Pichwai and Phad paintings are representations of Rajasthani culture and tradition that have evolved for society, through society. This article concentrated on the distinguishing features of Pichwai painting and Phad painting and showed the artistic expression of the human struggle for civilization.

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Being in Jaipur allowed me to learn about the culture of Rajasthan. Since I'm a fine art student I liked this topic very much. That's why I started studying their traditional and folk paintings and chosen Pichwai painting and Phad painting. I have got more details about these paintings from the artists who played a very important role to complete my article.



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