International Journal of Applied Home Science *RESEARCH PAPER*
Volume 4 (3&4), March & April (2017) : 118-127 ISSN : 2394-1413 (Print)
Received : 25.02.2017; Revised : 05.03.2017; Accepted : 11.03.2017

Documentation of Pithora painting of Gujarat

ANJALI KAROLIA*, RAJNI YADAV AND KAMALDEEP KAUR
Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences,
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara (Gujarat) India

ABSTRACT

The present paper enumerates the result of the study undertaken with an objective to document the traditional art of Pithora painting, which is facing the threat of extinction in this era of modernization and industrialization. Purposive sampling method qualified 10 artisans to be selected from the Rathwa community of Chhota Udepur of Vadodara district. Interview schedule through a structured questionnaire and photographs were the tools to record data. Results revealed that art of Pithora painting has its origin through a prayer, ritual to thank god for bestowing a desired blessing or achievement of a certain goal. Hence it is difficult to trace the origin to an exact date, but most artisans assumed the origin to be approximately 300 years age.

Key Words : Pithora painting, Rathwa community

INTRODUCTION

India is a country having diverse culture and traditions. It has treasure of traditional textiles and good craftsmanship. Each region in India has developed a distinct style of its own local tradition. In western part of India lies the state of Gujarat which is famous for its handicrafts especially textiles since ancient times all over the world.

Painting was an integral part of the people religious and domestic life as they depicted the stipulation and thoughts of their times thus, imparting information about their life and a Pithora painting of Gujarat was a distinct style of painting having a peculiar characteristics of its own.

The Pithora painting of Chhota Udepur is a traditional wall painting art where tribal Gods known as Baba Dev / Baba Pithora / Pithora Dev are painted and worshipped as a form of thanksgiving. This is especially popular with the Rathwa community of that region. The ceremony of worshipping God Pithoro is referred to as '*Dev Badha'* and the procedure is called *Panagu*. Pithoro God is painted bright colours on the walls of the house and is then worshipped to please the God. The presence of their god – *Pithora Baba*, is extremely important and the Rathwa's spend generously to portray him on painting.

Legends and myths of god and man find expression in their individualistic style. The marriage of *Pithora* is the most important legend. Long necked horses, kings, farmers,

Cite this Article: Karolia, Anjali, Yadav, Rajni and Kaur, Kamaldeep (2017). Documentation of Pithora painting of Gujarat. *Internat. J. Appl. Home Sci.,* **4** (3 & 4) : 118-127.

cows, bulls and creatures of the forest resonate with the vibrant colours of yellow, indigo, orange, green, red, black and silver. The painting finds its sacred place at the threshold or the front room of the house on walls prepared with cow- dung and chalk paste.

The artists known as *Lakhara* painter, the priest or (*Badwa/Bhuva*) accompanies them with singing and chanting. The painting culminates with a sacrifice performed at night and the celebration continues into wee hours, with singing, dancing and feasting as all gathered rejoice.

Only males from the tribe are allowed to learn the art, women have not yet been welcomed into this secure fold.

The younger generation is moving to cities to work in the industries to earn a living as their material needs cannot be fulfilled on the basis of small amount earned by painting Pithora. No doubt, they are also carrying their art, finer values of life with them and also, everything that marks their distinction and character but in most of the cases, their ritual decorative art has been reduced to mere daubing. The skilled hand of Indian craftsman is one of our most important invisible resources. It is to be perceived with concern and with a precise understanding of its value. Once lost it can't be replaced.

The present study is an effort to reinfuse life into the traditional art of *Pithora* painting through documentation and product diversification which has otherwise reached the threshold of extinction.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for the study is as follow:

Documentation of the craft

⬇

Rathwa Tribe (Chotta Udepur of Vadodara district, Gujarat)

⬇

Purposive sampling - 10 Artisans

- 6 from Lakhara (Painter)
- 4 from Badwa (Priest)

⬇

Tools used for data collection

- Case study
- Structured interview (Closed and open ended questions)
- Observation (Minute details)
- Photography (Digital camera)

⬇

- ✓ Profile of the artisan's
- ✓ Technical details of painting in terms of
  - History and Origin
  - Painting Process
  - Colour and Motifs

⬇

Analysis and presentation of data

⬇

Documentation of data

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results have been discussed under the following sub-heads:

Origin and history of *Pithora* painting :

The findings regarding the history and origin of *Pithora* painting the artisans stated that this unique and beautiful style of painting originated around 3000 years ago. One of the oldest and most experienced respondent Shri Mansingh Dhanji Rathwa stated that *Pithora* is ritual painting done by Rathwas, Bhills, Nayaks of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. But Rathwas believed that they basically hailed from Chhota Udepur Taluka, Vadodara and this district was the original place of *Pithora* painters. They stated that the Nayak, Bhill tribes moved to Madhya Pradesh. God *Pithora* is revered as a deity mainly by the 'Rathwa' community. The curse of God *Pithora* is considered as a bad omen and the ritual to pacify him is known as '*Panagu*'. To please him, the colorful pictures of his marriage procession are painted on the walls inside the home. These pictures are called, '*Pithora*'. The motifs used also speak about their history and everyday life in terms of the natural elements with whom they are intimately attached.

General background information of the respondents related to Demo-graphic :

For the case study, ten artisans from Chhota Udepur Taluka, Vadoadra district were purposively selected based on certain criteria: Traditional style of *Pithora* painting practiced with traditional method and willingness to respond. The demographic details are given in Table 1.

Table 1 : Demographic data of the craftsmen

Sample	Age (years)	Educational qualifications	No. of family members	No. of earning member	Initiation in he art	Annual income	Approx.
Artisan 1	65	Illiterate	23	5	57	3,50,000	1,50,000
Artisan 2	30	Primary	17	3	20	2,60,000	60,000
Artisan 3	47	Illiterate	23	4	25	2,40,000	40,000
Artisan 4	26	Primary	9	2	16	1,50,000	60,000
Artisan 5	55	Illiterate	17	4	45	2,00,000	50,000
Artisan 6	35	Illiterate	6	1	15	1,00,000	30,000
Artisan 7	60	Illiterate	2	1	45	50,000	20,000
Artisan 8	40	Illiterate	7	1	8	20,000	30,000
Artisan 9	45	Primary	10	3	25	2,00,000	40,000
Artisan 10	45	Illiterate	6	2	23	1,50,000	30,000

Table 1 indicated that all generation had to pursue and continue the traditional art practiced by them, although the younger generation is not very keen on practicing.

With regards to education, only two respondents had primary education and rests of the respondents were illiterate. Most of the respondents and their children in the family were initiated to this craft at the age of 10-15 by the parents to pursue this craft as well as study further so as to get any other kind of job or involved in existing craft. However, it was

compulsory for their children to know this craft.

It was also observed by the researcher that all the craftsmen were Hindu and with 10 to 23 members in the family with at least three to four members who were supporting their family and this art of painting did not served as a source of income for all the craftsmen because this crafts was done only during January to April after that they were involved with farming.

All the ten respondents had a sole proprietorship type of business. The women of the household were only involved in farming because this craft is a male dominant craft.

It was observed that though the *Pithora* painters lived in different villages, there was no difference in their work. All of them painted exactly the same style. It was however, not impossible to distinguish the paintings of one *Pithora* painter from that of another.

Tools used in tribal painting:

The tools and equipment used for the art of *Pithora* painting were traditionally either handmade or sourced from the local. A wall painting the locally made brush is used. The brush is prepared by either chewing or by beating the ends of a bamboo stick or a twig. Again modern brushes have replaced the traditional one. Stencils are used for the body of the horses and elephants. They drew and filled the colour on wall with a bamboo stick which they made themselves

Ingredients used for the preparation of *Pithora* painting:

Pithora paintings are much more than the colorful images that decorated their walls once upon a time. A number of ingredients were used during the entire process of painting and these were as follows:

Cow dung / White mitti:

The wall to be painted are first plastered with mud and cow dung by the unmarried girls of the household, and then coated with chalk powder this process is called *lipna*. And then the painters proceed to their work

Alcohol:

Mahuda liquor (prepared from the divine mahuda tree) by mixing rangoli powder. The flowers are fermented to distill alcohol and its seeds are used for extracting edible oil.

Kesura leaf:

They used this leaf as bowl and in which they mixed the colour.

Bamboo stick:

The brush is prepared by either chewing or by beating the ends of a bamboo stick or a twig.

Colour used in *Pithora* painting:

As stated by the respondents, during earlier period, the painters used to paint with

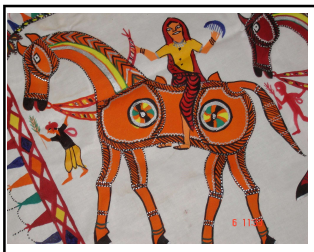
vegetable colours but now all of them were using mineral colours. The colour is prepared by mixing rangoli colour- powder with milk and mahuda liquor (prepared from the divine mahuda tree). For painting, instead of traditional colours, they used readymade colours called rangoli powder. They purchased these colours from the local market of Chhota Udepur. The main colours are yellow, indigo, orange, green, vermilion, red, ultramarine, black and silver.

Motifs and designs:

On inquiring about the motifs and significance, it was stated by all the artisans that motifs were known only by the name. The craftsmen were not so much aware about their significance. It was revealed that all the motifs were inspired from environment and each motif was having its own importance and they all assisted in completion of the wall. The investigator found that the place of each and every motif was fixed.

Plate 1: Pithora painting

When a *Lakhara* (Painter) starts the painting work in the morning, a border is first drawn on the wall; the sun and the moon are painted near the top border with other pictures of Gods, last is *Raja Bhoj's* (elephant) at the bottom border. *Baba Pithora* and *Pithori* figure at the center- top. There are many pictures in the painting: elephants, *abho kanbi*, *phatri*, wells, vaw, farmers, security guards, toddy tappers, *Walan* (the rain god), *Ganeh*, *Rani Kajal*, *Kali Koyal*, dancing men and women making butter milk, *Gamdev* (Gods of the village), *Chorasi Dev's* horse, *Pithori* and *Pithora's* horse, camels, hunting men, wild animals, birds, reptiles, *Kadyo Cunbi*, tress, overall there can be more the 60 drawings.



Rani Pithori Pithora's bride and its depicted carrying hand fan and wearing many ornaments

Pithora main deity of the Rathwas is connected with the welfare of the house hold and cattle.
He is often seen with the parrot or flower in its hand.

Rani Kajal is Pithora foster mother. She is found Pithora and brought him up after he was abandoned by his unmarried mother Kali Koyal. Both Kali Koyal and Rani Kajal are set to be sister of the Baba Indra. They are represented by a single horse, though some time Kali Koyal is also depicted literally as black cuckoos.

Baba Indra is in maternal uncle of pithora, he is worshiped to ensure the fertility and health

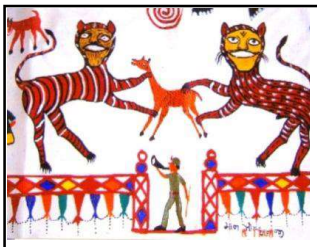
Ganesh, the deity is depicted riding a horse, and smoking hukka or hubble-bubble. He is set to protect the people from attack by the wild animals. He is different from the Hindu god Ganesh

The figure of **Rajya Ravan** has the multiple head like the demon king of Ramayana. There is no connection between them except that he is often shown with multiple sword hangings from his arms and shoulders.

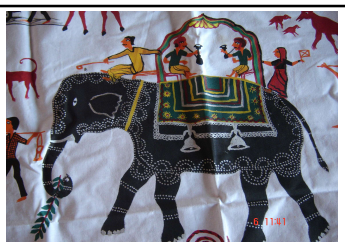
Ravlo- Govli is deity related to the camel. He tends to the cattle of the village according to the legend of Pithora. Ravlo-Govli gives directions to find secret teak tree and which must be used to make musical instrument for Baba Indra

Walan is the protector of the earth and sister of Baba Indra. She is depicted as the rider of green horses. Walan is also installed at the village tribe and her oath is taken to obtain a child. A second green horse may be painted to represent the Raja or Baba Indra

The border depicts a mountain range

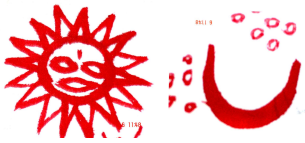


A **couple of tigers** are drawn as guards to indicate the point of entrance of the painting composition. Deer are shown in the clutches of tigers.



The **Raja Bhoj** is the ordinary title given by the Rathwa to their king. He is depicted as seated on an elephant smoking hukka. He is said to survey the land and divide the people in a village at the time of the creation.

The **lakhari and chokhari** are two female deities who records and conveys all the activities on the earth and notes the destiny of each person. They are shown seated on chair and with note books in hand.



The **sun** is painted in the upper most left corner and the moon in the upper-most right corner

The **chameleon or halhon** is always painted in green. It is believed that he climbed the cucumber tree to enter the fields and his appearance in green is to predict rich fields of the farm

Rifles are replacing the bow and arrow in Rathwa culture, as this image of a police station from the central panel shows. A huge lock shelters its contents from all but the birds, while a "weighing man" named Tolaro sits outside the door, a balance in his hand

A row of four musicians, men and women who play drum, flute, and other instruments. This is the shaman's team. Below them is a row of dancing figures, one also drumming as they kick and squat in what looks like a Rathwa mazurka

Tintiyo Joshi, a man climbing a palm tree

Women and man making butter milk

Cow with calf

Hen and rooster with chicken

Camel

Crow

Pig and Boar with their Piglet

Scorpio

Process of a traditional Pithora painting:

There are various reasons for these painting. When children, women, men are sick for a prolonged time, when crops fail or other difficulties at home, they associate them with God's wrath. In such situations, people believe that *Badwa/Bhuva* (priest) can provide the necessary protection and security from the God wrath. They consulted him by bringing *urad dal* (*poddy*). After looking in to the *poddy*, the *Bhuva* understands and predicts the problem in the house and advices precaution and to have faith in *Pithora*. If this prediction comes true after a few months, the family holds a *Pithora* ceremony. The *Pithora* painter (*lakhara*) is called to the house and a *pooja* (prayer worship) starts with the painting.

Plate 2: A house wall painted after completion of rituals

Celebration of this art is very expensive and the costing around thirty to forty thousand rupees to them. The main wall of the verandah that divides it from the kitchen is considered sacred to the *Pithoro*. The wall paintings related to the legends of creation and *Pithoro*, are done on this wall. The two sidewalls of the veranda are also painted with figures of minor deities, ghosts and ancestors.

People who write the *Pithora* are skilled painters called '*Lakhara*' (writers) and belong to their community only. *Lakhara* take twelve to thirteen days to paint this art. During the celebration, *Badva* offers homage to *Pithora*. *Pithora* is celebrated in the season of the winter. The process begins one week prior to actual painting. First, they call *badva*. Then, they invite their relatives. During the painting days, they eat *khokari* (a special type of food) and oil throughout the week. Unmarried girls wipe the walls for painting.

In the morning, two unmarried girls go to bring the *pandu* (white clay). *Dholi* (drummer) plays *dhol* (drum).Girls sing songs and carry khokari in one sieve and *urad* in another. In addition to it, they carry a chicken and a coconut. Wherever the procession passes, they throw *urad* on earth. After sacrificing the chicken, it is offered to *Dholi* (Drummer). They bring the *pandu* with celebration. First Day there is lot of rush in the house. At noon guests called '*Bhethia*', arrive. They bring goat and chicken with them for offering it to *Pithora*. House owner welcomes all. After washing these chickens and goat with wine, house owner sacrifices them. The atmosphere is joyful.

Afterwards, *Lakhara* with his team arrives at the home. In the evening *lakhara* worships the *Pandu* (clay). Then it is mixed with lime and umber. *Lakhara* washes the wall with the help of clean cloth. During these days, *lakhara* takes bath with heated water and the *Badva* takes bath with rubbing curd on his head. While painting, firstly, *lakhara* prepares the format for the art called a cok or a *dhartini hadh*, or a sacred enclosure, which is a rectangular space. The sacred enclosure contains the pictorial depiction of the mythology of the Rathwas. Popularly the painted enclosure is described as *Pithora bapjinu aykhu*, or the life of *Pithora*. Normally these drawings are of size '10 X 5'feet. There are 70 different types of motifs in the painting. When the *Lakharas* paint, the *Badva*, with his colleagues, sings and chants. In the evening before the sacrifice, the priest goes into a trance and finds out what has been forgotten in the painting. That too is drawn and painted in. Most of the work is done by hand.

Where this art is performed, people sing the song related to *Pithora*. Painting of the *Pithora* is done in the daytime. The ritual starts at night with sacrificing, singing, dancing and feasting. The *Pithora* witnesses all these activities all the time. Wherever one sees a *Pithora*, one will mark very clearly that more than half the hut has given over to Him. After the painters have worked a day painting and singing, people come in, even from great distances to witness the ritual and by night, the entire house becomes jubilant.

Conclusion :

It was concluded from the study that the art of Pithora painting is a traditional art forms originated about 300 years ago. During the investigation the researcher came to know that only Rathwas community was practicing Pithora painting in traditional way to greater or lesser extent. *Pithora* paintings are more of a ritual than an art form. These rituals are

performed either to thank God or for a wish or a boon to be granted. The painting itself flood three walls of the house and contains over two hundred different characters. These are mix of deity's ancestors and god smith. Today, to meet the demands of the market they have started using painting on canvass and muslin. It has given a distinct identity to rich Indian culture and heritage the preservation hence requires a detailed documentation of the art that would include the information on its history, process, motifs, colour and products used.

REFERENCES

Jayadev, K. (2001). "An experimental study to Create Hand Crafted Soft Furnishings Depicting Indian Miniature Paintings, Master's Dissertation (Home), The Maharaja Sayajirao. University of Baroda, Vadodara.

Karolia, A. and Buch, H. (2008). Ajarkh the resist printed fabric of Gujarat. *Indian J. Traditional Knowledge*, **7** (1) : 93-97.

Khator, R. (2010). Documentation and product diversification of Phad painting of Rajasthan. Unpublished Masters' Dissertation, (Home), The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara.

Thoudam, J. (2008). Documentation of the hand woven textiles of Manipur and its diversification for home furnishings products depicting traditional motifs. Master's Dissertation (Home), The Maharaja Sayajirao. University of Baroda, Vadodara.

Vishwakarma, A. (2008). Documentation of Rogan painting of Gujarat and Designing accessories exploring various motifs using Rogan technique. Master's Dissertation (Home), The Maharaja Sayajirao. University of Baroda, Vadodara.

****