



DOCUMENTATION OF CHITRAKATHI PAINTINGS OF MAHARASHTRA AND ITS PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Indian art and design of unimaginable antiquity have over the millennia and up till present day, evinced a continuity that has survived every historical, socio-economical, and political development to produce an art that is specifically Indian. Chittrakathi is an ancient tradition of Thakar tribe of Maharashtra. In the time of urbanization and industrialization, Chittrakathi is fighting for its survival. The study was undertaken to understand in detail about origin and history, tools, process, motifs, colors, and present status of the painting. The researcher has made an attempt to create awareness and popularize the Chittrakathi paintings by the product development.

KEYWORDS : Chittrakathi, Pinguli, Thakar tribe, Paithan.

INTRODUCTION:

In India, traditional folk art is considered a way of expressing oneself, the identity of a tribe, and cultural aspects. The main purpose of folk art is education through entertainment. From prehistoric times, India has a well-developed heritage in all forms of arts. The connection between art forms including architecture, literature, sculpture, music, dance, drama, folklore, paintings and the art is subtle yet vibrant. It is intimately linked with religion, literature, and mythology which formed the rich culture and traditional heritage of India making it diverse while still united under one umbrella.

In the earlier era the knowledge and information were written by the great sages in the Vedas, Brahmins, and Upanishads. The Vedas were orally taught with help of mnemonic technique to students for recitation and to meditate on what was taught.

As this knowledge was not able to reach each individual, due to the complex language, many narratives were written as Vedic texts, epics like Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas. Ramayana shows the righteous path to all living creatures, whereas Mahabharata gives guidance for living life the right way. These epics were told in story form to the younger generations. For a better understanding of morals and achieving the holistic development of an individual. Many times use of murals, sculptures, paintings and other art forms were used for better understanding, and to enhance the impact of these stories.

In earlier era, some groups were kept away from the education due to their socio-cultural difference. The Adivasi's were one of these people. The Thakar tribe of Maharashtra was a part of such tribes.

Along with these known folk arts there are many lesser known art forms. One of which is Chittrakathi Paintings of Thakar tribe of Maharashtra. The Chittrakathi is a term which consists of two words i.e. "Chitra" and "Katha" where, Chitra means picture and Katha means story. Chittrakathi is an ancient tradition of presentation to audience of visual material accompanied with narration. The visual material depicts scene from the story which is complemented with dialogues, songs, music, and narration of story. Many a time recent incidents of the village are included in their performances.

Chittrakathi Paintings are painted by the Thakar Adivasis. It was initially performed within the tribe for educational and

entertainment purposes. The paintings were initially painted on handmade paper of size 15"×12". A complete story includes approximately 40 paintings. These pictures are drawn consecutively according to the scenes from the tales. A Pothi is compilation of Chittrakathi Paintings which describes a particular story.

As the tribal people migrated from one place to another to gain protection while traveling they normally performed for the respective king and his courtiers. Following this tradition, when these tribal people came to Maharashtra they performed in front of then King Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja, who was impressed by their art and gave them shelter to settle down in a village named Pinguli. They were asked to perform Chittrakathi in temples during Navaratri and Diwali festival to support their livelihood. In addition to this, considering their travel these tribal people also worked as spies for the king. During the travel, they used to gain critical insights about social, political, and military activities throughout the state.

Purpose Of The Study

The investigator was mesmerized by the indigenous pictorial artistic expression, that is, Chittrakathi painting by the Thakar tribe of Maharashtra. Each art form has its own unique identity which is seen in the form of legacy. The folk art forms are vanishing in this era of modernization. Chittrakathi painting, the folk art of the Thakar tribe of Maharashtra is on the verge of extinction. With the introduction of the newer ways of entertainment, Chittrakathi has not only losing the audience but also disappearing from the memories. The younger generations are taking over other occupations for survival. The researcher felt that there is a need to create awareness about this folk art. The main purpose of the research was documentation and popularization of Chittrakathi paintings by product development.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To study the origin and history of Chittrakathi paintings.
2. To study the tools, implements, color, motifs, and the process of making Chittrakathi paintings.
3. To design and develop innovative products for the promotion of Chittrakathi Paintings
4. To evaluate the developed products in terms of:-
 - i. Suitability of the design
 - ii. Suitability of color
 - iii. Layout
 - iv. Resemblance to the theme
 - v. Suitability of technique

- vi. Acceptability
- vii. Cost

Methodology

A descriptive study was conducted on "Documentation of Chitrakathi Paintings of Maharashtra and its Product Development" to understand the Chitrakathi painting in detail and bring it on textile and non-textile material which can be used as one of the mediums to popularize it, keeping in mind the objectives of the study. The information on Chitrakathi paintings was collected by various secondary sources like books, research papers, articles, thesis and internet. The literature on the Chitrakathi paintings was reviewed by visiting libraries like Clothing and Textiles Department Library, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, Hansa Mehta Library, Central Library, Baroda, Gujarat. R. D. Kelkar museum, Bhausaheb Vartak Granthalay, Nashik. Primary information was collected by field visit to the Museums and TRTI, Pune and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram Nashik and telephonic interview, video conferencing and discussion with artisans and photographic records.

The stepwise details and procedure of the study has been explained under the following heads:

- 3.1 Research Design
- 3.2 Documentation of the Chitrakathi painting
- 3.3 Product Development

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was descriptive exploratory research design. For the product development few selected Chitrakathi paintings were taken to explore the suitable technique and fabric. Acknowledging the selected technique, fabric products were designed. To achieve the objectives of the study the results were categorized into following sub-sections:

- 4.1 Data collection
- 4.2 Documentation of Chitrakathi paintings
- 4.3 Application of Chitrakathi paintings on products developed
- 4.4 Analysis of products developed for customer acceptance

4.1 Data Collection

The information about the Chitrakathi paintings was gathered through preliminary survey. During the survey researcher visited museums and TRTI Pune, in order to endorse the feasibility of the study and the number of artisans involved in this painting. Further the data was collected from the artisans. An interview was arranged to understand history, origin, colors, and process of paintings. The interview schedule was held online through video conferencing method due to the pandemic situation. As the artisans were very cooperative the collection of the data was made easier. Recording was done to support the data collected. The photographic aid was provided by the artisans. The supporting data was archived from the secondary sources.

4.2 Documentation Of Chitrakathi Paintings

According to the information received from the artisans, the tradition of Chitrakathi paintings was 300 – 400 years old. The visual material depicts scene from the story which is complemented with dialogues, songs, music, and narration of story. Chitrakathi paintings is based on Indian mythological stories including Ramayana, Mahabharata, Nandi – Puran, Jalindhara – Vadh, Dangi – Puran, and stories of King Harishchandra, etc.

After the introduction of newer ways of entertainment and the modernization of the society the Chitrakathi started losing its audience.

In earlier times the handmade paper, brushes made from bamboo grass and natural colors were used for the painting.

As the Chitrakathi paintings are based on different mythological stories and are drawn by different artisans the colors used in the paintings are not identical. Although some of the colors are predominantly in red and blue, whereas in others these are combined with a generous amount of yellow and green. While in other sets muted pink and beige tones are predominant. Human motifs are painted in flesh tone to indicate their fair skin. The blue color is used to represent their dark skin. The avatars Krishna and Rama, are invariably shown blue, but many other blue human motifs are used to populate the scene.

The Chitrakathi paintings were analyzed for the color, motif, style and intricacy of the design. Two styles of Chitrakathi paintings were found from the primary and secondary sources, namely the Paithan style and the Pinguli style. The paintings were mostly based on the tales from Ramayana and Mahabharata. The researcher classified these paintings based on the style and theme.

The Chitrakathi paintings collected through photographic documentation were classified into three categories, which include,

- 1. Paithan style – Mahabharata
- 2. Paithan style – Ramayana
- 3. Pinguli style

Category 1- Paithan style – Mahabharata



Fig 1 – Category 1- Selected Paintings

Category 2- Paithan Style – Ramayana



Fig 2 – Category 2- Selected Paintings

Category 3- Pinguli style



Fig 3 – Category 3- Selected Paintings

4.3 Application Of Chitrakathi Paintings On Products Developed

Various surface ornamentation techniques, textile and non-textile material were analyzed considering the intricacy, color and theme of the painting. Product selection was also done considering the religious sentiments of Chitrakathi artisans. Primarily market survey was conducted for selection of products based on home décor and souvenirs. The selection of paintings and the products was done by preference schedule. An exhaustive market survey was conducted and analysis of collected samples was done. For non-textile material MDF board was selected wherein for textile material poplin and heavy weight muslin were selected.

For the surface ornamentation three techniques were explored out of which digital printing and hand painting were able to achieve the intricacy and essence of Chitrakathi paintings. Because the artisans were new to the concept of painting on the textiles and due to pandemic it wasn't feasible to train them. The digital printing technique was selected by the researcher and guide.

Six design layouts including 3 paintings from each category were selected and 6 products of home décor and souvenirs were illustrated with the help of CAD. Selection of three designs from each category were done for development of product through consumer preference and further used for product development.

Selected Products Developed Were As Under:



Fig 4: Developed Products Of Category 1- Paithan Style – Mahabharata

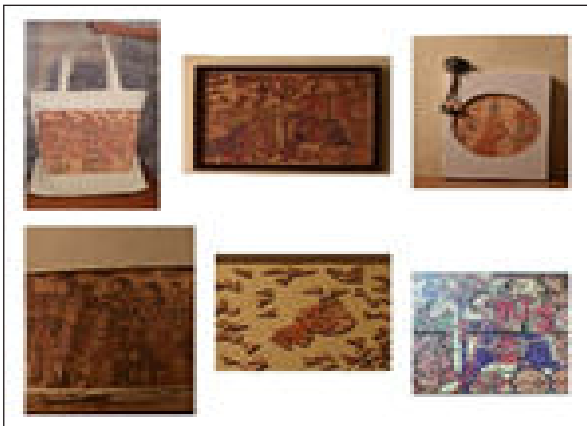


Fig 5: Developed products of Category 2 - Paithan style – Ramayana

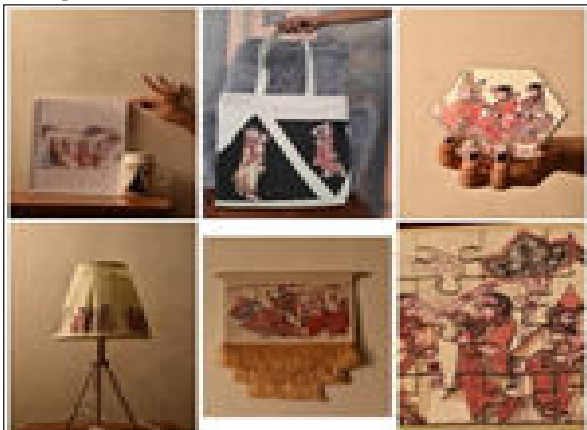


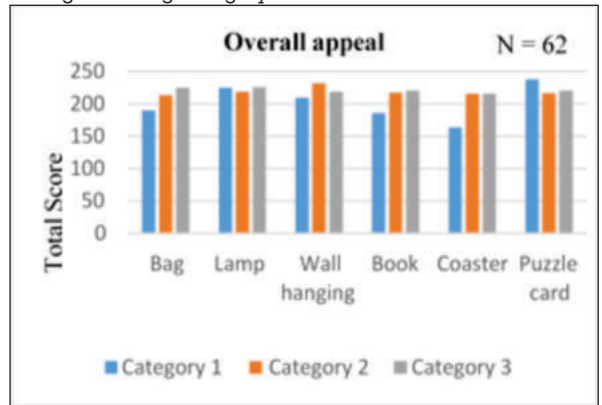
Fig 6: Developed Products Of Category 3 – Pinguli Style

4.4 Analysis Of Products Developed For Customer Acceptance

Thirty-six design layouts and 18 products were developed and their evaluation was done online through questionnaire. Analysis was carried-out by percentage, mean score, Likert scale evaluation. The results are shown in the following graphs:

(i) Opinion of the overall appeal of displayed products developed

The products developed were analyzed for overall appeal by a total of 62 respondents through online preference schedule. The results as depicted in Graph No. 1 revealed that the total frequency score for the bags ranged from 190 – 225, the highest score being for Category 3. Similarly, for the lamp the total score ranged from 219 – 226, the highest score being for Category 3. For the wall hangings the total score being 210 – 232, the highest being Category 2. For the book total score being 186 – 221, the highest score being for Category 3. The score for coaster ranged from 164 – 216, the highest being categories being 2 and 3 as both the categories received similar score. The score for puzzle card ranged from 217 – 238, the highest being Category 1.



Graph no. 1: Responses For Overall Appeal Of The Products Developed.

(ii) Evaluation Of Reason Of Purchase

Selection of the products depends on the different reason of purchase has been depicted in Graph No. 2.



Graph No. 2: Reasons For Purchase Of The Products Developed.

CONCLUSION

The present study has been an effort to revive, preserve, and popularize the Chitrakathi paintings which are almost out of practice. Thus, the researcher has attempted to create awareness about the Chitrakathi paintings of the Thakar tribe by making people aware of the existence of this art form. The purpose of the study was fulfilled. By the developed products. From the study it can be concluded that the inspiration taken from traditional Chitrakathi paintings gave a unique touch to the products. The products were highly appreciated for aesthetic appeal and accepted by the masses.

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