

Shadang : An Analytical Study of Fresco Art of Jhunjhunu District of Rajasthan

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Abstract

Rajasthan is known as land of culture and traditional vivacity particularly through its conventional fresco art of Jhunjhunu. Among the other districts of shekhawati region, Jhunjhunu district is renowned for the fresco paintings. These frescoes are painted on *havelis*, cenotaphs; forts are adorned with the depiction of mythological and historical themes, spiritual animals, the daily life scenes and at some places are depicted erotica and even imaginary. Within these broad outlines, the subjects were picked at random. Gods and heroes from completely different texts regularly appear in adjoining tableaux in both *buono* and *secco* techniques. These are constructed by the rich merchants of this region particularly the Marwari families. I have discussed *Shadang* with special reference to the Jhunjhunu frescoes which defines the principles of creation of an artwork. It mirrors the limbs of art, without which an art work is incomplete. This paper gives knowledge about manifestation of frescoes which are directly and indirectly based on the six limbs of Indian art. I have figured out the main characteristics of the frescoes which will help us understand these more in detail.

Keywords : Fresco, Jhunjhunu, Limbs, Manifestation, Shekhawati.

Wall paintings have been practiced from times immemorial. In the beginning, the art form was primitive and the techniques were also very simple, with the paint being applied on the rock surface. Later, more sophisticated designs and paintings were made on walls which were prepared quite often with several layers of plaster. These wall paintings of Ajanta and Bagh caves are famously world well-known. In the past, when the Ajanta paintings were frequently compared with other paintings -Chinese, early Renaissance and so on, according to individual training and inclination, to establish they were dismissed as hardly to be classed among fine arts. These wall paintings are known as fresco paintings.

The rich scenario of wall paintings hitherto gives us a glimpse into the central Indian wall painting particularly through its conventional fresco art of Jhunjhunu. These are painted by the rich merchants of this region particularly *Marwari's* families including The Chokhanis, the *Sonthaliyas*, *Saraf* and *Goenkas*, etc.

The two most prevalent methods of fresco painting dominated in the Jhunjhunu district and are well-known techniques are '*buono*' and '*secco*'. In context to the Jhunjhunu frescoes, a main role was played by the artists and these fresco artists came from different places and invariably from the lower middle class and belonged to different religions and castes. They are also called *Chejaras*, are not only skillful in construction words, but also in painting. The chejara community of artists belong mostly from the Mandawa, Jhunjhunu, Mukungarh

,Bissau ,Parasrampuria . Shankar Das, SadhyanathjiAsharu, ChanchalNathKatel ,AatmaNathji, Arjun Das , Loharghar and many more from the district .When they undertook to paint a *haveli* or a temple, they normally worked in groups under the supervision of the experts. These artists not only developed their technique in preparation of the ground, laying of colours and but also experimented with other techniques of the Mughals, Rajputs and Maratha artists. The first essential is to be familiar with the materials which frescoes of Jhunjhunu are fabricated. There are various painting techniques which have been described in ancient literature.

The artists of Jhunjhunu prepared colours on their own till the eighteenth century .They used their experience to invent new methods of making frescoes from locally available resources. This region now noted for its human and artistic enterprise .Nowhere else in the world there is such a profusion of frescoes, so intricate and finely executed, in hundreds of *havelis*, temples, cenotaphs, walls and forts as in this region.

In Jhunjhunu district, the fresco painters were called Chiteras which belongs to the caste of Kumhars or potters. They were also called *Chejaras* or masons since they worked both as painters and builders. They depicted paintings in two-dimensional forms.

In Jhunjhunu district frescoes ,several kinds of materials like plaster, pigments and binding medium as well as fabrication techniques were adopted and varying from place to place ,according to availability of materials to the artists in that area .Besides materials , the technique with which fresco painting is fabricated is equally important to determine its characteristics, quality ,durability and also appearance .

This glorious tradition was not only adopted by the Rajasthan artists but also existed in the past centuries.As a result thousands of exalted dominating paintings in various dimensions exist,just as, a musician should know the musical versions, a poet should likewise, be aware of the terminology and their uses, artists should be aware of his materials and techniques, which he wants to use in his art work without these they neither can express their feelings nor can generate new thoughts.

The "*Sanskrit literature*", "*LakshyaGranth*" and "*Shilpshastra*" are the main inspirational and sources of the ancient Indian paintings .In the above literature many techniques of painting are elaborated.

Vatsyayan has described 64 types of arts in his Kama sutra which is supposed to be written in 200-300 A.D. Painting occupies eighth place out of sixty four arts in Indian literature.It should be known as '*Aalekhya*'.In the third chapter of the first location of the Kamsutra saint YashodharPandit has described 6 limbs of painting. *Shadang* weaves the language of an art work. It defines the principles of creation of an artwork. It mirrors the limbs of art, without which an art work is incomplete.

*"RoopaBhedaPramananiBhavLavanyaYojnam
SadrashyamVarinka-Bhangaitichitrashadegakan"*

This *Shloka* enumerates the six limbs of Indian Art- *Roopa-bheda* (distinctions of form), *Pramanani*(proportion), *Bhava* (*emotional disposition*), *Lavanya-yojanam* (gracefulness in composition), *Sadrisyam*(‘similitude’)and *Varnika-bhanga*(colour differentiation).

RoopaBheda:

Firstly, a painting must be able to depict those special and peculiar features of the subject that enable an observer to identify it. Whenever we look at any object, we see only its external shape, size, colour and structure. To know the object in deep detail, the other sense organs need also be brought into play. But generally, just by the inputs we gather through our sense of sight alone, we are able to imagine what the object is like and it is this ability of our sense of sight that positively inspects our perception.

Roopa means form and *Bheda* means secrecy. Hence mystery of forms or knowledge of form appearance is *RoopaBheda*. It stresses on the Physical typologies of form. It not only stresses on the knowledge of form (*Rupa*) but also on the subtle and stark differences of forms. In the *shanti parva* of *Mahabhart*a sixteen types of forms have been mentioned as, small, long, thin and angular etc. The form can be seen by eye and soul. First of all, this is our eye which sees the *Roopa* then after it is introduced to the soul. This is knowledge of *RoopaBheda*.

There are so many fresco paintings of different forms made in Jhunjhunu district. The artist paints men in three different forms, one paints a man with weapons, other paints man with elephant face and third one of a man with a stick or flute. Whoever sees them would call each of the fresco painting of a man. But how will it be known that these three are different from each other. Unless the artist has got the proper knowledge of the same, like, in first fresco, man is painted with weapon, looking like a bodyguard; in second a man looks like a Ganesha because of an elephant trunk and man with flute just portrays the character of Krishna.



Fig.1, Three men in different forms

Below another fresco on the ceiling of MohanlalPiramal Haveli in Bagad, portraits of the renowned personalities are painted by an artist, Ram Kumar from Chirawa are portrayed and these belong to different caste, religion and society. Artist Maturam Verma says physical appearance helps to onlookers to justify the form, Only due to their appearance can one analyze them.

Like, in the bottom, from left to right frescoes of BalGopal (Krishna), Krishna with flute, Shiva, then Ganesha is portrayed. Then bottom to top from the right -Veer Durgadas with his Weapons, SivajiVadoda, MaharanaPartap, Hanumanji are shown. Following them from right to left in the top are Durgamata, BhimSain, Arjun, Veer AbhimanuUttra are shown and from top to bottom (left)- Maharaja Shri, Madosigatti, next to him PrithavirajChouhan, Maharaja Mansinghji and in the corner MahatamaJattiji are portrayed. These all dignities are dissimilar from each other but they can only be recognized by their manifestations. All these things are to be understood through our soul or keen perception, only then we can understand the real mystery of the shape or form in a fresco. Spectator can clearly understand what was painted by the artist in the frescoes. In other words, both physical examination of the object and the use of imagination are essential to make a deep sense or realistic painting.



Fig.II, Portraits of the renowned personalities

Pramana:

Pramana means correct knowledge of the proportion of different forms. There should be harmonious division in the composition and measurement of the form drawn. The correct sense of proportion is known as *Pramana*. The sense of perception or perspective is present in every human being in some degree. It is through this sense that we are able to differentiate between shapes sizes, forms, colours and even emotions. However, this sense can be further sharpened through practice and it is an amazing yardstick inbuilt in the human consciousness for measuring both the tangible and intangible. This sense of perspective enables us to gauge not only the quantitative parameters in respect of an object, such as its size and distance, but also qualitative aspects such as the angle at which an object should be displayed to give the best effect. For instance, if we see the figures were made in the frescoes were in almost perfect proportion. A man's body

should be seven and half times of length of his face and the seven times the length of the face of a woman. It can be judged through *pramana*, sense of proportion of the body.

Bhava:

Bhava is the representation of sentimental grace in posture and is the action of feeling of form. When an observer is confronted with a painting, something happens inside him that makes react to the painting in either a favorable or indifferent manner. This initial impetus which makes his consciousness to convey the idea, sentiment, emotion, intention that he set out to do. Expression conveyed through form is *Bhava*.



Fig.III, Fresco on rasa-leela

Like in Jhunjhunu frescoes of *leela-majnu*, *dhola-maru*, *rasa-leela*, etc having modifications of natural feelings under the influence of special circumstances reflect in the facial expressions and facial expressions betray the altered state of body as a whole. For example *rasa-leela* is one of the best known frescoes, is on the domed ceiling. The *rasa-leela* is a round dance in which Krishna divides into many images so that every *gopi* in love with him is able to have him as a companion.



Fig.IV. Krishna meeting with Radha

In above fresco, Krishna and Radha talking with each other and human emotions like love shyness, fear, courage, etc have been successfully depicted. The expression of sentiments has been taken as one of the most important things in the frescoes. Our eyes see the emotions and the same are expressed by graceful distortion of face in these frescoes. But the deepest expressions of the same are felt by heart only, showing of disposition or posture only is not enough.

LavanyaYojna:

To add beauty and grace to the painting is *LavanyaYojna*. The painting will look insipid if beauty or grace is not there. Like in frescoes of Jhunjhunu, ornamentation has been done on the forms like elephant, has fully decorated with his belongings like *houda* (the large open seat) shown in the fresco which was fixed over the caparison or a closed palanquin if anybody were carried. *Bhava* is the expression of inner beauty and *LavanyaYojna* is the making manifest of the outer beauty by adding grace and charm to the painting. *LavanyaYojna* gives gleam to beauty, by adding luster to the *Bhava*.



Fig.V. Ornamentation on the elephant

Sadrashya:

Sadrashya means the determination of real form or resemblance or similarity in the form and ideas. The fresco paintings painted on the walls are very clear and easily understood by any onlooker. Artist Suresh Sharma told me that Seth Padam Singh and Gyan Singh (owner) wanted 'If the Krishna is painted it should be look like Krishna not as Hanuman or Rama'. If we compare Jhunjhunu fresco paintings to other, we find similarities and resemblance in them with other art forms. There are so many frescoes copied from the Indian miniature paintings. Like in *fig. VIII*, was copied from Mughal paintings. Composite images are the one specific element in Mughal art. This is probably one from Mughal performing traditions, the *nava-nari-kunjara*: an elephant made up of the figures of nine women interlocking themselves into that shape.



Fig.VI, Miniature Painting on Nava-nari-kunjara Fig.VII, Fresco on Nava-nari-kunjara

In this fresco, Krishna is riding on the composite elephant but here eight women are seen in the Fresco. In GulabLadiaHaveli, same fresco was painted in which nine women .Krishna and Radha are riding with three accompanying ladies are seen on the right side of the wall of the outer *chowk* of the *haveli* when we enter. In *fig. VIII*, fresco was painted in RamanathPoddar Haveli in Nawalgarh.



Fig.VIII, Fresco on Nava-nari-kunjara ,Nawalgarh



Fig.IX, Fresco on Shakuntala Fig.X, Oleograph on Shakuntala

Secondly, the notable example for this is in the Kedia Haveli one fresco is made as the replica of *ShakuntalaPathralekghan* in which *Shakuntala* is writing letter on a lotus leaf to *Dushyantha* in the *pusp-vatika*, behind her there is a deer facing towards the spectator. It was an oleograph by Raja Ravi Varma. This fresco was made by the artist Mahendra Singhon the leftside of the wall of outer *chowk* in *haveli* from the image of Raja Ravi Verma's oleograph that was given to him by the kedia family.

Behind this may be the reason is, these *havelis* were painted when the merchants of Jhunjhunu district region started to get rich, and build grand *havelis*, and they imitated the styles of the upper class at that time, the Rajput Maharajas, and hired the best artists of their era to decorate their *havelis*.

Varnika-Bhanga



Fig .XI,Flutrist Krishna

Use of colour scheme in the fresco painting in an artistic way is *Varnika-Bhanga*. There should be appropriate colour scheme to express ideas and atmosphere in the painting related to subject matters. Opposite or wrong colour should not be used otherwise sense of painting will change. For this artists should have knowledge about the colour scheme concerning subject matters. Like in the fresco (fig. XI), Artist Achal Singh Shekhawat painted Krishna's body is in blue and yellow with red *dhoti* is shown. Blue represents the sky, a symbol of space (infinite); yellow represents the earth, a symbol of the finite. Together, blue and yellow represent union of infinite (heavenly) and the finite (earthly) realms. Krishna reconciles heaven and earth; a universal symbol of the axis mundi that which binds heaven, earth and man. *Varinka-Bhanga* placed in the last limb of

Indian painting. So that after completion of the paintings the colours may be properly added in proper balanced manner.

Conclusion:

On the basis of the above study it can be concluded, six limbs of paintings have been critically analyzed on the basis of depiction of the Jhunjhunu fresco art. Fresco painting in Jhunjhunu has artistic interpretation, elements like line, form, colour, tone and textures are generally recognized. It is important to make use of these elements, so that its creation becomes balanced, interesting, and systematic. These six canons have a vital place in art and aesthetics because these increase beauty, grace and quality of artifacts which is the basic requirement of an object. They did not need any new perception and canons. Such canons had already been evolved and perfected. All these elements need not to be used at the same time. Artist has to be selected according to his composition.

Analysis of principles and elements, changes and amendments of the paintings take place time to time. Due to action and reaction new possibilities take birth. Development of civilization and culture continue and new art forms continue to come forward and new dimensions were established.

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(b) Fresco on man (man with elephant face on the ceiling of bar area),Padam Singh and Gyan Singh (owner),Mandawa Castle, Mandawa, 2015(Fresco Painted).

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