

Impact of Modernization on *Mandana*: Folk Art of Rajasthan in the Present Scenario

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Abstract

Art is the language of our emotions, feeling, soul. It translates our expressions to the public in various ways. There are variety of art forms in Indian art through which people are able to express themselves. *Mandana* art is one such art form generated by the Meena tribe. Making *Mandana* full of motifs of animals, birds, different patterns by its artisans is not just a time utility thing but a beautiful picture writing of nature onto the walls and floors. The paper explores the impact of modernization on the *Mandana* art of Rajasthan and throughs light on, how the rapid urbanization has affected the beautiful culture of making *Mandana* which has lost its importance in the modern world, also suggesting a few frameworks and methods which can bring back the value and ethics of the art form and tell us ways to develop and rejuvenate it.

Keywords: Folk Art; *Mandana*; Modernization; Urbanization.

Without art a human has no value. Art is a way to express our vision, thought, feelings and ideas to the people. It helps us to express ourselves freely. Establishment of any civilization brings along a form of art with it, which is followed by its people being a method of their expression. This has been naturally adopted by every civilization; where we find dance, drama, paintings, depiction of their feelings on rocks, trunks of trees, ceilings, floors etc. Hence Art has been started by the grouping of people where they live together and create their art together. This results in the formation of an art form popularly known by its community of people.

Folk Art is an art created by the native people for them only to make the celebration more live and beautiful. Its creators don't work to get any reward from it. They make the art for their pleasure, happiness, culture and to celebrate festival etc. for the people around to see their creation. Cele-

bration of festivals is a huge reason; they paint for decorating their place like on Diwali, Holi, marriage, birth etc. Establishment of any civilization brings along a form of art with it, which is followed by its people being a method of their expression. This is how different folk arts came into place. *Mandana* is one such form of folk art.

The term *Mandana* has been derived from the word '*Mandan*' which means for decorative purpose is one such beautiful art form Which is extensively made on floors and walls in the villages to decorate and beautify every corner of the house. The origin of *Mandana* paintings dates to the Vedic age, 1500 to 500 BCE (Rajasthan Studio). This practise is going on for thousands of years and is still prevalent in some places. Celebrations is a part of life and people in the villages like Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Jhalawar, Jaipur etc. of Rajasthan use their art of *Mandana*, to decorate walls and floors and celebrate every occasion and festival be it marriage ceremony, Holi, Diwali, birth, etc. Made by the ladies of the houses, this tradition is passed on from mothers to daughters. According to these tribal families this activity of togetherness helps to build a strong bond amongst the family members. People make this art on their walls and floors even on their stoves, borders of their gates etc very beautifully with the patterns of birds, animals, plants, trees, ritualistic and geometrical motifs.

Traditional Method and Material of *Mandana*

Mandana is a term which is defined by its traditional art forms, their beauty and its unique way of creating it. One striking feature is that there is no boundary of rules followed when a *Mandana* design is created. Its beauty lies in the free flow of hand and colour onto the wall.

Preparation of Surface

The traditional technique of preparing the wall or floor is unique, prepared by applying the paste of cow dung, husk and *peeli mitti* together onto the surface. This make the wall/floor more attractive when motifs are made using white Kali on it. We call it traditional *Mandana* as it does not have any impact of contemporary style of painting, like using artificial colours on paper, cloth, cemented walls etc. rather is made on the surface prepared well with the base layer of cow dung. This surface plays an important role in *Mandana* making which has the capacity to absorb the naturally prepared paints like *kali* and *geru*. Once it gets dry, women of the houses start covering the floors and walls with beautiful designs of *Mandana*. Its originality lies in its creation of surface which is rough enough to

hold the colour intact when applied on it. Women pick the thick paste of cow dung in their hands and gently rub that to the wall so that it gets stick to it, making sure that the layer is not too thick to come off easily but must be thin which accepts the ground below, this process of applying the paste is called *leepan*. When the surface is best prepared with the traditional process it gives the best result of gracefully looking *Mandana* designs on it.



Photo 1: Preparation of Surface using Cow-dung, Husk and *peeli mitti**

Preparation of Colours

There are two colours used in *Mandana kali* also called as *khadiya* is the white colour using which beautiful designs and pattern are made against the red colour background made by using *geru/ hirmich* colour. Both the colours are generated out of stones. Women in the villages create their own colours from the limestone rocks.



Photo 2: Colours of *Mandana**

Preparation of Tools

Mostly people make use of the cotton, piece of cloth, stem of the tree to make their designs on the wall. Sometimes tug of hair also comes in use by the women of the villages which acts as a tool for them to make beautiful designs onto the walls/floors etc. The art of making *Mandana* is based on its original way of making material, using the surface and even the motifs related to the native celebrations. It's a free hand drawing where there is no pre-set of lay outing is made prior, rather the women make the designs directly onto the floors and walls with their handmade tools. The designs we find on the walls composes birds, peacocks, tigers, mice, goats, trees, leaves and many more. Women pick the liquid colour and craft their vision on the surface with the unbound hand, they don't take charge of symmetrical depictions but allow themselves to completely drown into the freedom to paint. *Mandana* is believed to bring peace and happiness. It also has scientific meaning as after the rainy season insects come out of their hidden spaces and people clean their houses and create new surfaces using *Leepan* process to make new *Mandana* all over again.



Photo 3: Tree Stem, Cotton and Cloth (tools used in Mandana)*

After all transitional period women make *Mandana* covering floors and walls of their houses and take it as a part of their routine. This makes them happy about their new surroundings which becomes more beautiful, pure, pious, clean from all the dust, insects etc. Indian red and white are the main colours used in the painting. Each festival brings new pattern along with it. Like during Diwali they make Lakshmi cart, lotus, toys, *paglya* etc.



Photo 4: Mandana at the Entrance of the House



Photo 5: Mandana on every surface of the House

(Photo Credits: Website)

During Holi spring season blooms and to show the arrival of *vasant* they make their surroundings and nature into the art by depicting insects, animals like mice, cats, dogs, goats etc. birds like peacock, hen and cock trees, bushes etc. covering all the spaces of their house, other festivals also have

different designs and patterns which are made during the particular festival and get changed with the coming of the next one. This maintains the charm and excitement to paint new subjects in every new season. The painting doesn't stay on the wall for a long period of time as they celebrate their every occasion or ceremony with a fresh and newly hand drawn *Mandana*.

Impact of Modernization on Traditional art *Mandana*

Our traditional folk art *Mandana* has gained its position internationally what most people don't even know yet. But is quietly getting disappear and losing its value which was prevalent before. The main reason, we are adapting the modernity so deeply that we have no idea when and how our culturally rooted art got vanished. There is no mark of beautiful large scale *Mandana* like they were before in the places like Sawai Madhapur popularly known for *Mandana*. Due to urbanization, development of houses from *kacche* to *pakke ghar*, all we could get to see is small size *Mandana* barely decorated on the floors or stove unlike the ones we could only relish by seeing on the internet now.

The art has lost its beauty as well as value with the coming change in the surface and medium. Anthropologist Madan Meena, who has studied the mud paintings by the community, said that with the rapid urbanization of the community, mud wall paintings is the only mode which displays the primitive characteristics of the Meena tribe. In the last decade, with the economic prosperity, people have started constructing cemented households where the role of women has become limited in decorating walls (Kulshrestha, "Rajasthan: Art of Mud Wall Painting Dying a Slow Death").



Photo 6: Traditional *Mandana* made on *kaccha* surface used to be done before on *pakka* surface on *kaccha* (Photo Credits: Website)

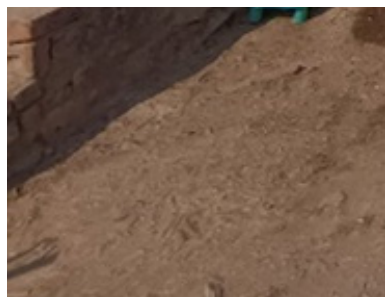
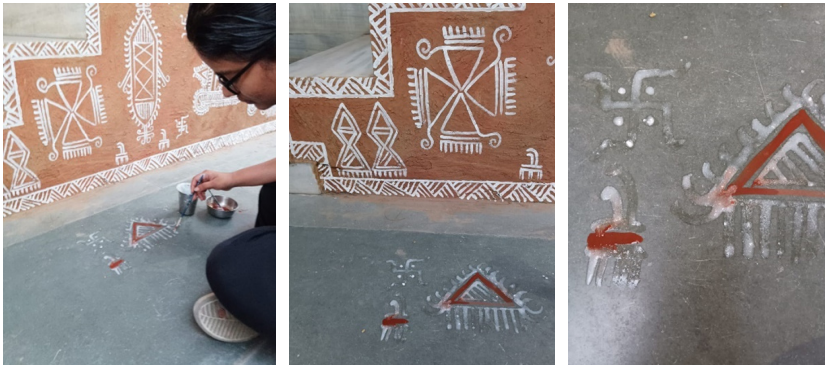


Photo 7: Bare Walls and no *Mandana* design*

Since cemented houses cannot absorb the liquid colour of *kali* and *hirmich* people have started using artificial colours on the walls. The artificial colours are durable and stay for more time on it. But here we lose the traditional track / process of making *Mandana* in its pure form. By following this method in the coming years, we will be left with just some designs and patterns of *Mandana*. What we have left behind will be our great loss. More to this on the verge of modernisation we have transformed our life so deeply that *Mandana* art has been converted in the forms of stickers like *paglya* which was very popular to be considered as footprints of goddess Laxmi entering our homes when made using *geru* colour and now a new way has been generated by using stickers. Do stickers leave the same impact as the handmade *paglyas*? Can it illustrate its religious inclinations?

For me it is just the marketing which is impacting the root of the art. Moreover, now a day the women don't have much time to sit and make *Mandana* in their houses for hours and just make one or two *Mandana* to complete their ritual. Besides they also don't have much bigger spaces of *kacche makaan* left as half portion of their houses has been covered in cemented house. Maybe having a *Pakke Ghar* has weekend their thought of continuing the *Mandana* as now the cement doesn't allow to absorb their handmade colours. *Mandana* designs are mainly drawn on mud smeared walls with white lime liquid called *khadiya* by rural women on auspicious occasions like Diwali, Holi, birth and wedding ceremonies. The designs include pointed stars, six-petal flowers, lotus, peacocks, and swastika etc.



Photos 8, 9 & 10: Difference between *Mandana* on *kaccha* and *pakka* surface*

On being asked about the reason they have stopped making *Mandana*, they projected their problem in front of the researcher as now their children don't allow them to paint in their new houses rather, they love putting up wall hangings and modern paintings on walls for their decorating purpose. Now they don't even make use of *kacche chulhe* when they can make use of electric stove. Their children who find themselves more knowledgeable than their elders and have come across new ways and methods of decoration and ornamentation which please their eyes. They have been so inspired by the urbanised cities and its culture, that they have started copying the same lifestyle and routine. With which they themselves offend their *Mandana* art without realising its value.

Meena women cannot perform the ritualistic activity of preparing the wall and making *Mandana* against the will of their children who have now become literate to justify between right and wrong. Creation of *Mandana* on marble flooring does not provide justice to the traditional art and affects the originality of *Mandana*. With the development of *pakke ghar* in the villages the idea of following the same tradition has also been demolished due to the unavailability of the older surface which possess the ability to retain the art of *Mandana* as well as make it look more aesthetically pleasing. Using contemporary materials and creating the same on stone, marble etc. may give pleasure to the eyes of the viewer but this is going beyond the originality of *Mandana* art and doing injustice with it.



Photo 11: Creating a Wall of *Mandana* at Home using the Traditional Method of *leepan**



Photo 12: Completing the Wall with *Mandana* designs, using *kali* against a red background*

To understand the traditional *Mandana* the researcher has created a wall in the traditional way / method using the same colours and surface which

the villagers used to create a wall for *Mandana*, and later when the wall dried, the researcher created some designs of traditional *Mandana* on the surface of the created wall. She also put the same design using the same material on the *pakka* floor, which could differentiate the difference between the wall created by the villagers for *Mandana* and now due to urbanization we want to create the designs on the given surface which is inappropriate for traditional way of *Mandana*.

This gave her a completely new experience of exploring the materials of the art form and getting in touch with its beautiful designs, knowing about auspicious meaning behind its motifs etc. Creating a portion of *Mandana* at home on a much bigger surface than just making it in a small corner of the house was a beneficial happening. It attracted most of her neighbours and resulted in a good talk with them on *Mandana* and its creation. Working with her grandmother together gave her tremendous joy while she told her on how she used to love making it at her home with her mother. The wall got completely transformed from how it looked before. This effort helped her to understand the core importance surface plays in making *Mandana* and its value, which she can pass on to the coming generation easily.

Efforts to Retain the Folk art Mandana

It has become essential that we as an artist must take initiatives to maintain our traditional art intact which is quickly disappearing not only from our houses but also from our intellect.

For this each house must create such kind of wall in their houses so it can be preserved, developed and rejuvenated. A small area made by following the original technique of *Mandana* would bring back our attachment, love and respect for our art and its value which is slowly drowning into the ocean of modernity.

We must make the urban architecture eco-friendly not only houses but the flats of each building can have *Mandana* walls. Inspiring examples are like Chokhi Dhani, Aapno Rajasthan, Shilpgram etc., all these have beautiful *Mandana* walls covering their whole architecture. Another one is Mandawa resort which has traditional *Mandana* wrapping all around the place.

*Photo Credits : Sakshi Agarwal

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