

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

MODERNIZATION OF TRIBAL WALL PAINTINGS: A STUDY ON THE SANTHAL COMMUNITY OF DHATKIDIH VILLAGE OF GALUDIH, PURBA- SINGBHUM, JHARKHAND

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Abstract: *Painting has been one of the oldest forms of expression for many different tribal populations. Wall painting is one of the many types of visual art. In recent times, tribal wall paintings have been modernized. The present study aimed to understand the modernization of wall painting among the tribal population of Jharkhand. The observation was done on a Santhal population residing in Dhatkidih village in East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, approximately one and a half kilometers from Galudih railway station. The village consists of seventy-five households with a population of 350, distributed among several Santhal clans and Ho tribal populations. The observation includes the paintings made outside each tribal household's wall, reflecting several artistic styles. It was observed that modernization affected the tools and techniques used in wall paintings. New styles were incorporated into paintings instead of traditional art for wall paintings. Interviews reveal the main reasons for the change were the cost efficiency and durability of modern tools and colours. During the interviews, it was revealed that migration to urban areas for wage earning and the use of modern smartphones have led to changes in traditional paintings. It should be noted that the study's conclusion may be limited due to the unavailability of traditional wall paintings.*

Keywords: Wall-painting, modernization, Santhal, Galudih, Jharkhand

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1. INTRODUCTION

India is known for its cultural and traditional vibrancy through its folk art, which is a unique style and pattern across states and union territories [1- 3]. These ethnic and simple yet vibrant tribal arts express the country's rich heritage and have great potential in the international market due to their traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity. Popular among foreign tourists, Indian folk paintings include *Madhubani*

paintings of Bihar, *Patachitra* paintings from Odisha, *Phad* paintings from Rajasthan, *Kalamkari* from Andhra Pradesh, and more [2, 3].

Among the tribal population, the nature of painting varies widely [3, 4]. Among the Gond tribal population, the paintings are very simple and the use of bright colour, wonderful arrangement of dots and lines make a scenic beauty of the painting [4]. Over the years, tribal culture has undergone significant changes, as modern advancements have been introduced into their traditional ways of life [5, 6]. These changes have led to a mixing of the old and the new, resulting in a hybrid cultural landscape that is both unique and fascinating. The traditional practices of the tribes have been infused with new tools and techniques, such as modern use of tools, and technological advancements like smart phones and computers. These new practices have allowed the tribes to adapt and evolve, thus preventing them from retaining their original cultural identity [5, 6]. This culture has given rise to new art, painting, music, and dance forms that blend traditional elements with modern influences.

As tribal populations continue to undergo various changes in their social, cultural and economic landscapes, it is essential to consider the impact of these changes on their traditional practices like wall painting. The art of tribal wall painting is deeply rooted in their history, traditions and beliefs. It reflects their unique way of life, their values and their connection with nature. However, as these communities experience changes in their lifestyles, their art forms also undergo a transition. Modernization, globalization, and urbanization have contributed to the transformation of traditional tribal wall painting. The themes, colours, and techniques used in contemporary tribal wall paintings may differ from their traditional counterparts. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how these changes have affected the art form and whether they have helped preserve or erase the cultural heritage of these communities. By understanding the evolving nature of tribal wall painting, we can appreciate their rich cultural legacy and ensure its continuity for future generations.

Under these backgrounds, this paper explores the modernization in the contemporary style of wall painting among the Santhal tribe in Galudih, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study area

The present ethnographic observations were conducted among the Santali community of Dhatkidi village under Mahulia Panchayat of East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, which was only one and a half kilometers from the Galudih railway station in Jharkhand (Figure 1). The Subarnarekha River flows backside of this village. No bullock cart, bikes as well as domestic animals were kept on the village roads, resulting in unsanitary and untidy roads which add a scenic beauty of the village have spread in a very advanced way. The painting of the outer wall of every household has given another beauty. All the drawings were seen to be done by the housekeepers (females), men and children with their own hands. The paintings were meticulously crafted with the intention of highlighting and celebrating the aesthetic appeal of the households in the village. Each stroke of the brush was carefully placed to capture the intricacies of the architecture, landscaping, and decor that contributed to the overall beauty of the homes. By showcasing these elements, the paintings aimed to inspire and encourage other residents to take pride

in their homes and play an active role in the beautification of the village. The map of the village presented below (Figure 2).

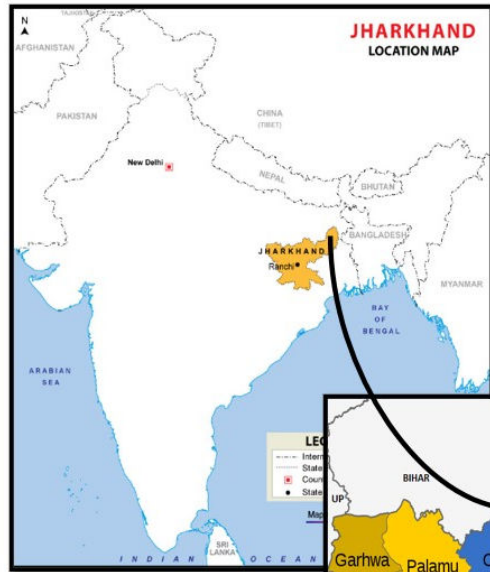


Figure 1: Geographical location of East Singhbhum District of Jharkhand in India

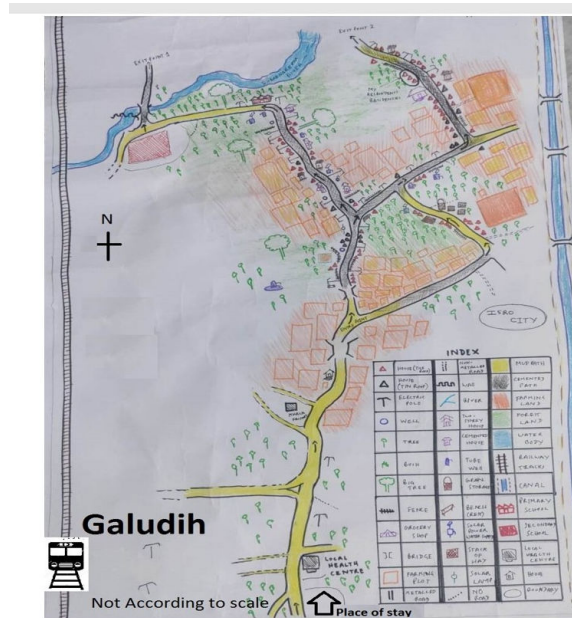
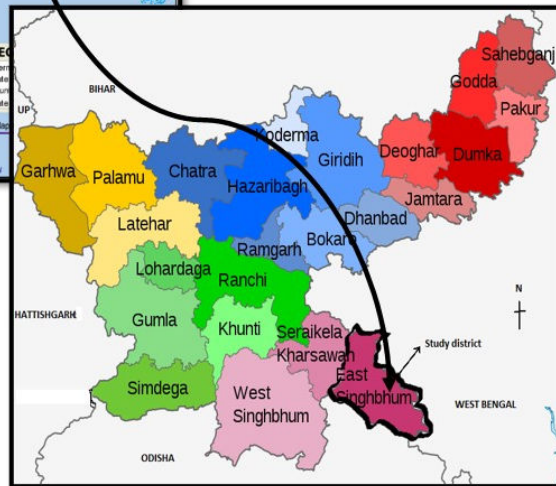


Figure 2: Geographical location of Dhatkidih village of Mahulia panchayat of East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand

The population

The studied population was *Santhal* tribal population consisting of several clan groups such as Hansda, Hembram, Soren, Mardi, Kisku, Murmur, Mardi, Sorai [7], and one other tribal population known as *Ho* (Table 1). these households were distributed in seventy-five villages across the village

Table 1: Distribution of population in the Dathkidih village of Galudih, Jharkhand

Clan Status	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Hasda	31(15.82)	40(20.51)	71(18.16)
Soren	26(13.27)	25(12.82)	51(13.04)
Murmu	85(43.37)	89(45.64)	174(44.05)
Hembram	16(8.16)	11(5.64)	27(6.90)
Mardi	19(9.69)	18(9.23)	37(9.46)
Kisku	3(1.53)	2(1.02)	5(1.28)
Sorai	2(1.02)	1(0.51)	3(0.77)
Ho	14(7.14)	9(4.62)	23(5.88)
Total	196(100.0)	195(100.0)	391(100.0)

Parenthesis indicate percentage

Table 2: Demographic profile of Dhatkidih village of Galudih Jharkhand

Age Group	Number and Percentage		Total
0 – 4	14(7.14)	12(6.15)	26(6.65)
5 – 9	12(6.12)	11(5.64)	23(5.88)
10 – 14	26(13.27)	20(10.26)	46(11.77)
15 – 19	20(10.20)	34(17.45)	54(13.81)
20 – 24	24(12.25)	27(13.85)	51(13.04)
25 – 29	13(6.63)	13(6.67)	26(6.65)
30 – 34	12(6.12)	12(6.15)	24(6.14)
35 – 39	14(7.14)	17(8.72)	31(7.92)
40 – 44	17(8.67)	22(11.28)	39(9.97)
45 – 49	10(5.10)	6(3.08)	16(4.09)
50 – 54	10(5.10)	4(2.05)	14(3.58)
55 – 59	5(2.55)	7(3.59)	12(3.07)
60 – 64	8(4.08)	7(3.59)	15(3.84)
65 – 69	3(1.53)	2(1.03)	5(1.28)
70 – 74	6(3.06)	-	6(1.54)
75 – 79	1(0.51)	1(0.51)	2(0.51)
80 +	1(0.51)	-	1(0.26)
Total	196(100.0)	195(100.0)	391(100.0)

Parenthesis indicate percentage

Demographic profile of the village

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the village Dhatkidih which shows that nearly half of the residents were male and other half of the residents were female.

The sex ration of the village has also been calculated as 995. The sex ration was higher compare to the national average sex ratio among tribe (990) and overall sex ratio (940) (COI, 2011). The sex ratio of the state was 947 according to the census of India (2011). Table also shows that around 25.0% of the residents belong to child group, below the age of 14 years of age. The child sex ration of village was 937. They are the native population of this village consisting of seventy-five household. The demographic status of the village has been mentioned in the following table

The study at hand delves into a captivating subject: the intricate paintings adorning the exterior walls of houses. The author seeks to unravel the stories, traditions, and histories behind these paintings. It is truly fascinating to see how tribal communities have created such visually stunning and modernized artworks purely for decoration. One cannot help but wonder if these paintings hold any cultural significance or if they serve as a marker of some other kind. Each house's outer wall is unique in its display of different paintings, making this subject even more intriguing.

3. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The Santhal community, much like several other tribes in India, faces the persistent challenge of assimilating into wider society [5]. They have to strive hard to find acceptance and recognition, especially in the fields of education and economics. Despite their unique traditions and way of life, the Santhals are often expected to conform to mainstream norms and practices, which can lead to a loss of their cultural identity. This struggle for cultural preservation while simultaneously adapting to modern society is a complex and ongoing issue for the Santhal people.

Currently, the art of painting has evolved to meet the needs and interests of consumers and the market. Artists have embraced the changes brought about by the money economy, globalization, and commercialization and have transformed their art forms accordingly. This progress has allowed them to create works that are not only beautiful but also relevant and meaningful to the contemporary world.

Over time, the traditional art form has evolved to integrate modern elements, allowing artists to infuse their work with a contemporary twist. One notable change is the incorporation of variations in composition, which adds a new layer of complexity to the painting. Additionally, artists have started including '*emojis*', '*Mughal styled pillars*', '*Birds*', '*Plants*' and other objects commonly observed in mobile phones, or knowledge gathered from outside their residence might be due to labour-works which were traditionally absent from their traditional art form. By doing so, they can decontextualize their work and create a unique fusion of traditional and modern art [7].

Contemporary artists have access to a vast array of colours and brushes that are readily available in the market. The product gained popularity among its consumers for its cost-effectiveness and ability to withstand wear and tear for an extended period of time. In contemporary times, state-of-the-art tools have taken the place of the conventional ones which were crafted from the fragile branches of trees. Although the art created by the elders is held sacred and highly respected, the shift towards modernization has had a significant impact on traditional drawing. Unfortunately, this change has put the future of traditional art in peril. The slow disappearance of traditional drawing is a possible outcome due to the changes brought about by modernization.

Example 1:

As the image was studied closely, it portrays an intriguing and complex situation that highlights the impact of modernization on the traditional art form practised by the tribal communities residing in Galudih. The tribal artists have ingeniously incorporated 'emojis' in their wall paintings, which are commonly used to express emotions and reactions on Android mobile phones, which are modern gadgets. The fusion of these two distinct art forms is a testament to the remarkable creativity and adaptability of the tribal artists, who have managed to embrace modernization while still preserving their cultural heritage. This unique combination of traditional and modern art forms is indicative of the changing times, as well as the shift in the preferences of the younger generation towards more contemporary art forms. At the same time, it speaks volumes about the tribal artists' ability to adapt to the changing times and incorporate new trends in their art while preserving their traditional roots. The image presents a fascinating insight into the evolution of art forms and the adaptability of artists, who continue to push the boundaries of traditional art forms while embracing modernization (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Wall painting example 1

Example 2

This exquisite painting is a true masterpiece, embodying the glorious impact of modern art on tribal art. The painter's husband stumbled upon a picture of it on his smartphone and was so impressed that he requested his wife to recreate it. The painting is a true testament to the way different styles of art can merge seamlessly, creating a stunning visual effect that is both captivating and inspiring. The painting is a remarkable example of the beauty that emerges when two cultures come together. It is a perfect blend of different artistic styles that creates a unique visual experience, showcasing the impact of modern art on tribal art. The vibrant colours and intricate patterns are a true reflection of the influence of modern art, while the tribal motifs and designs add a touch of traditionalism and cultural significance. There was neither a dream of painting nor traditional painting to recreate, but there was the use of a modern gadget, a smartphone. The wall painting that has been observed in the wall of the participant caught my attention due to its unconventional use of colours and brushes. It is fascinating to see how modernization has

influenced even the traditional art forms. The painting is a testament to the fact that as we move towards contemporary times, our approach towards art is also evolving.



Figure 4. Wall painting example 2



Figure 5. Wall painting example 3

Example 3

The painting portrays a magnificent pillar-shaped structure that bears a striking resemblance to the grandeur of Mughal architecture. The artist, during their visit to Delhi in search of work, was captivated by the structure's sheer elegance and decided to capture its beauty on their wall through the mesmerizing strokes of their paintbrush. The painting stands as a testament to the artist's keen eye for detail and their passion for art. As soon as he stepped in through the doorway, he could feel the excitement building up inside him. He turned to his wife and asked her to create a beautiful picture before the festive days arrived. He wanted to show the memories of the days with a piece of art that captured the essence of the season. His wife eagerly nodded, already imagining the image she would create, and began to gather her art supplies.



Figure 6. Wall painting example 4

Example 4

The captivating painting of the birds showcases a contemporary approach to drawing. The artist explained that she employed digital sketches to meticulously render the lifelike bird images on the wall. In her dream, she found herself in her courtyard, where a colourful peacock was peacefully pecking at the scattered paddy. The vibrant feathers of the peacock and the serene setting inspired her to capture the moment by drawing a detailed sketch of the scene in the wall. She used modern colour and brush for the drawing. She expressed the opinion that it was quite challenging to depict the bird using their conventional painting tools and techniques.

Example 5

The painting portrays a striking image of a sunflower, which not only serves as a beautiful artistic subject but also holds significant cultural and symbolic importance. The household head who believes sunflowers are associated with positivity, representing the power of optimism and the ability to find light amidst darkness. He said sunflowers are also seen as a symbol of strength, as they stand tall and firm even in adverse conditions, reminding us of the resilience and fortitude that we can cultivate within ourselves. By featuring this flower in the painting, the artist highlights the shared values and traditions that exist across diverse cultures, emphasizing the importance of unity and understanding in a world that is often divided. The painter mentioned that in earlier times, they did not have access to modern tools for drawing and therefore paintings were not as beautiful. However, with the use of modern brushes and colours, the cost of painting decreased and the final result looked more beautiful.



Figure 7. Wall painting example 5

Example 6

This painting depicts was an impressive sight. It was created entirely by hand, and it looked like a three-dimensional structure. What I found most fascinating was that the nonliterate tribal population that created this masterpiece did so using only simple tools. The level of intricacy and detail in the painting was truly astounding, considering the limited resources available to the tribe. Despite their lack of formal education, the tribe members managed to produce a work of art that was both beautiful and technically impressive. As a viewer, everyone will feel privileged to witness such a stunning example of human creativity and ingenuity.



Figure 8. Wall painting example 6

4. CONCLUSION

The impact of modernization tools and techniques on the tribal population across the nation cannot be ignored. A noticeable change has been observed in their traditional art forms, particularly in paintings. This transformation can be attributed to a lack of availability of traditional tools or the durability and convenience of modern ones. Additionally, regular interaction with the nearby urban population may influence the tribal population's artistic expression. In recent times, a large number of tribals have migrated to urban areas in search of work. These individuals have been inspired by the urban paintings and have started painting their ancestral homes in a similar style, bringing a fusion of traditional tribal art with modern urban influences.

5. LIMITATIONS

The study focused on exploring the modernization of painting; however, it is important to note that some limitations may have impacted the results of the research. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the study. The traditional paintings may help in more interpretation of the effect of modernization in a complete way. The wall paintings in the early days were changed annually by the population, likely for decoration during festivals, resulting in the absence of traditional paintings on the walls. The absence of early paintings causes a lack of proper interpretation of the changing styles of the paintings.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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