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Social acceptance of Sohrai Graffiti Style and its Simplified Graphical Configuration

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ABSTRACT

Women also have an equal role in the development and prosperity of India; as much as men. The contribution of various traditional and folk art forms, as well as the contribution of various mainstream art forms, to the totality of the unique art heritage of this country, from ancient times to the present time, cannot be underestimated in any way. Generally, the role of self-trained but creative male and female artisans practicing these traditional indigenous art forms in rural areas has been similar to that of pioneers. Similarly, Sohrai art also has its own special place among various traditional Indian art forms. Over the past two decades, this art has been recognized for its unique and original presentation and the efforts being made to preserve it; Not only hitting the national horizon, but also the global art platform. The ancient indigenous Sohrai art reflects the artistic skills, creative abilities and participation in its progressive advancement by the women of various tribal communities of Jharkhand state; whose livelihood has depended on extremely limited natural local resources and agriculture. The ultimate objective of this research work is to protect the creative skills of artistic expression of the creators associated with this art style.

KEY WORDS

Social Acceptance, Woman, Sohrai art.

INTRODUCTION

Jharkhand has an important geographical location and according to data provided by Indian anthropologist Lalita Prasad Vidyarthi available on the official website of the state Government; 32 farmers and artisan workers communities and tribes with very

low economic status like *Munda, Oraon, Ho, Santhal, Birhor, Kharia, Kurmi* live here. As a result of the livelihoods having very limited resource availability, their houses are usually constructed from locally available naturally occurring very basic building materials such as mud, paddy straw, terracotta tiles, etc.

Since ancient times, residents of some territories like Jharkhand have been doing distinctive simple geometric motifs and patterns such as linear and dotted paintings inspired by nature, animal and bird figures; they decorate the inside and outside walls of their residential buildings made of very simple materials using very attractive colour schemes. The imagination, artistic skills of women, their exploration of their past prehistoric art forms and their expansion by assimilating appropriate new interests have always been most remarkable and admirable in the depiction of soulful and captivating pictographs on the walls of their homes.

1. Derivation of the Traditional Style of Sohrai Art

The original term “*Sohrai*” applied to this traditional art focuses on the different communities of its followers with their own religious, ritualistic beliefs and connection with nature. Basically it is derived from couple of word i.e. ‘*Soh*’ and ‘*Rai*’; In these, the word “*Soh*” means ‘beautiful’ and the word “*Rai*” means ‘*show off*’. Therefore, the general meaning of the word ‘*Sohrai*’ is “*Beautiful Presentation*”. In general, most of the tribal communities believe in many superstitions, community beliefs and beliefs like witchcraft till the present era; that is why they are following the tradition of getting freedom from all the obstacles of their life and carving their heart’s feelings in decorative pictorial forms on the walls of their homes.

2. Historical Background and Origin of Sohrai Style of Painting

Ancient “*Isko*” rock shelter graffiti site of about 10,000-4000 BC near ‘*Barkagaon*’ in Satpahar region, about 50 km from Hazaribagh district headquarters of Jharkhand province; Which has received the status of National Monument only last year on 18 April 2023. Like prehistoric cave paintings found at many other places around the world, including India, the site of the Isko Rock Murals holds special significance for its heritage of rare murals of a unique style.

In continuation of the above, as far as the origins of the Sohrai graffiti tradition are concerned, there appears to be a general lack of authentic evidence recorded in texts or other reliable sources regarding this traditional folk art form; Nevertheless, by doing a comparative analysis between the murals of Sohrai painting style and the murals inscribed in these rock shelters, it becomes clear that both these compositional styles are similar in terms of colours combination, arrangement of motifs, geometric patterns and even stylistics. Both of these forms use refined painting materials from local natural resources and there also appears to be a close relationship between their eco-friendly painting materials and painting tools and equipment. It seems that the Sohrai women painters of Jharkhand must have directly or indirectly taken inspiration from the prehistoric rock paintings available in the “*ISCO*” prehistoric rock shelters. Apart from the above facts, if the origin of this art is discussed on the basis of folk myths of the communities following this social expression oriented folk art, then a very interesting belief of their community is that in ancient times, the mountain god ‘*Marang Buru*’, the grain goddess ‘*Jaher Ayo*’ and the ‘*Elder Sister*’ of the Santhals often came from heaven to earth to meet her brothers; And during this period, women of tribal and other communities are following the tradition of decorating the walls of their houses with beautiful symbolic Sohrai murals. Similarly, they paint these pictures enthusiastically while preparing to follow the tradition of celebrating “*Harvest Festival*” every year in the hope of good harvest in their fields. Additionally, there is also a community superstition; that these murals bring good luck to their home and family.

3. Practitioners of Sohrai Graffiti

The Sohrai wall folk painting style is a ‘*women-oriented*’ indigenous art heritage; which has been emulated with grandeur in the past in some states of India like Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh and especially in other communities including the tribes of Jharkhand province; and this skill is being transferred from one generation to the next by women painters.

Review of Literature

Some studies have also been presented in the past with a view to unveil various dimensions oriented towards the unique indigenous typical traditional “*Sohrai Folk Painting Style*” that has existed since a long time. Written evidence is also available on the development of this art style, which is especially practiced in the form of graffiti by some communities living in some rural areas of Jharkhand, its relevance and its specific depiction technique, form-arrangement, colour-combination, etc.; but in general, there is still considerable scope for occasional improvements and inclusion of authentic facts. The following related literature reviews were conducted to confirm the problem statement:

- i. Dallapiccola A.L., (2011) “Indian Painting - The Lesser-Known Traditions”, Published by Niyogi Books, New Delhi; This study was conducted with the aim of understanding the artistic temperament inherent in the Sohrai folk art; Due to which the social, cultural, religious, economic status, community customs, lifestyle of the tribals practicing this art and the role of art in their life; And so as to examine the new changes as well as establish a comparative and historical context.
- ii. Dallapiccola A.L., (2011) “Indian Painting - The Lesser-Known Traditions”, Published by Niyogi Books, New Delhi; The objective of this study was to understand the sources of creation of various materials used in depiction of their respective distinct traditional art forms adopted by different Indian ethnic groups of society and the specific spatial terms used for them and their relevance.
- iii. Huyler, Stephen, (1994), “Painted Emotions: The Art of Women Creators in Rural Areas”, 1st edition, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York; This study seeks to assess the cultural heritage of the communities practicing Sohrai art and specifically how modernist factors influencing their religious beliefs and social values have influenced their artistic expression over time; And to understand the importance of their art in a global perspective.
- iv. Daniel J. Rycroft, (1996) “Born from the Soil: The Indigenous Mural Aesthetic of Murals in Jharkhand, India”, Volume 12, 1996 - Issue 1, South Asian Studies, Journal Homepage; This study was conducted to study various facts related to the tribal communities like Bhumij, Sadan, Oraon, Munda, Santhal etc. who nurture this art.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research paper focuses on the factual documentation of Sohrai folk art form practiced since ancient times. Women of farmers and tribal communities, mostly residents of Jharkhand state of India, paint the walls of their houses in pictorial form according to folk beliefs before the harvest festival. Its primary objective is to evaluate the customs and cultural traditions, artistic specialties and method of creation of painting. Similarly, the importance of this paper is also to reveal; how the cultural-religious customs of various communities of India and mainly the tribal communities as well as the traditional folk arts followed by them for centuries are changing in modernity. Apart from this, one of the objectives of the present study is also to do an in-depth study and complete analysis of the traditional tribal Sohrai art prevalent among various tribal communities, especially the residents of rural areas of Jharkhand state.

Research Methodology

This paper is exploratory and factual in nature and focuses on targeted literature review and comparative analysis on the related topic. Based on secondary data analyzed from authentic records, research articles, contemporary information published in newspapers and magazines and online platforms as well as primary data collected from interviews of traditional artisans; Authentic information has been compiled about the social background, creation methods, environment-adapted materials used and the current status of its form of the original folk art style nurtured and practiced by the native communities of Jharkhand state.

Significance and Its Utility

Mainly in Jharkhand and also in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Odisha; the livelihood of the residents of rural areas is mainly based on agriculture, animal husbandry and natural resources easily available around them. Understanding the importance of those resources, they celebrate 'Faslottsav' with great pomp every year to express their gratitude towards them. This festival has been popular and emulated locally by the name of "Sohrai" for centuries. These villagers decorate the walls of their houses made of very common eco-friendly building materials with very interesting, picturesque and natural motifs to express their inner joy, socio-religious customs and reverence towards their ancestors. For this reason this traditional folk art remains relevant there even today.

Difference between Sohrai and Khovar Frescoes

Various types of Sohrai and Khovar murals are painted for different purposes in the communities living in the Jharkhand province, especially in Hazaribagh district. These murals basically have an unbreakable connection with local social concerns, folklore, religious beliefs and folk beliefs. Two painting methods are used to depict these; which have their own independent relevance but both are also interrelated. The difference between these two unique traditional art forms lies only in their utility at different times and the subject matter depicted; whereas there is complete uniformity in chromatography, painting materials and painting methods.

'Sohrai' murals are directly related to the 'Sohrai festival' of the locals. In order to express gratitude towards nature and pet animals and birds, they are depicted on the outer walls of the houses in the autumn after the Diwali festival. Whereas, 'Khovar' frescoes related to the 'Marriage Ceremony' are painted on the inner walls of the bedroom of the newly married bride and groom; Manglik symbolic motifs related to various specific local social beliefs, ritual practices and religious beliefs are inscribed with preferred divine symbolic images.

Pictographs Used in Pithora Graffitis

This graffiti tradition combines various motifs that express not only the eternal coexistence between humans, nature, animals and birds. In these murals, motifs and patterns are repeated again and again and the colours used also have their own special significance. All such relevant elements have been classified in the following table No. 01:

Table 01: Classification of Typical Pictographs & Lines used in Sohrai Graffitis

Sl.	Motifs	Relevance and Social Acceptability
1.	<i>Peacock</i>	According to tribal social beliefs, the attractive figure of 'pregnant peacock' depicted in Khovar paintings painted in the wedding room of a newly married couple is considered a symbol of good luck; Because it represents fertility.
2.	<i>RedLines</i>	In the Sohrai murals, the creators symbolically depict the valour of their ancestors, and fertility and reproduction through lines of this colour.
3.	<i>Outer Lines</i>	In all Sohrai frescoes the outer edges of the depicted motifs are demarcated by thick border lines; These ubiquitous outer lines are considered indicative of their traditional values of loyalty, purity and protection.
4.	<i>White Lines</i>	The painters of this art style symbolically express the importance of food grains in their lives by drawing lines with the white coloured liquid prepared by grating approximately one year old cooked rice in milk.
5.	<i>Mythological Characters</i>	Under this, the lord of animals 'Pashupati', the mythical tree of life 'Kamalaban', the rainbow symbolic snake 'Lorbang' and simplified

		figures of divine forms from some community religious beliefs, etc. are depicted.
6.	<i>Everyday Characters</i>	In this category can be placed decorative pictographs of various types of nature, wild, domesticated animals, birds and reptiles with practicality, utility and interrelationship in the lives of people of communities following Sohrai pictorial tradition.
7.	<i>Pictorial Element</i>	Various types of decorative figurative geometric patterns can be placed in this category.

Categorization of Creation Techniques of Sohrai Graffitis

The creators of Sohrai frescoes combine such symbolic motifs in them; which presents a clear narrative glimpse of importance and closeness in their daily life. The entire script of these paintings is a clear reflection of the close relationship between the depicted motifs, figures and humans; also, the story of the charming colours used in them gives them a heart touching look. Thus, on the basis of subject matter, these can be categorized into three categories as per the following table No. 02:

Sl	Category	Description and Its Practicality
1.	Sohrai Style	Under this category, those frescoes can be delimited, which often make symbolic presentations of the interrelationships of humans, animals and nature on the outside walls of houses; And at the time of harvest festival, they express their heartfelt feelings in anticipation of getting a good harvest.
2.	Khovar Style	These paintings are in sharp contrast to the Sohrai frescoes with fertility-oriented symbolic motifs, lotus flower motifs, etc. on the interior walls of the boarding-room of the newly-married bride in the houses; The images are created using only black and white colours and drawing methods like comb-cut and scraping.
3.	Commercial Style	These paintings were made without any regard to the Sohrai and Khovar painting traditions that had been going on for centuries; Instead of home murals, they are painted on various surfaces such as paper, cloth or various commercially created art objects using innovative painting techniques and with uniform morphological representation.

Pictorial Themes of Graffitis

The paintings of this folk painting style are simplistic and captivating in their unique creativity and emotional presentation. Heart-touching, charming and full of purity of lyrical lines; These artworks are basically painted for the purpose of paying reverence to Lord “Pashupati” the lord of animals and the second practicality of these paintings is also to beautify the walls of the house. Its entire illustrative material can be classified into the following categories:

i. Nature Oriented Pictographs

Another notable aspect of the Sohrai murals is that very simple, locally available and eco-friendly painting materials are used to paint them; Like, seeds of local Bhelwa tree, charcoal and clay of different colours. Apart from this, it is common to depict nature-oriented motifs and figures in abundance such as trees, flowers, birds and animals etc.

ii. Animals Oriented Pictographs

In the indigenous traditional Sohrai graffitis, along with nature-oriented motifs, a picturesque coordination of animal-oriented motifs like hens, chicks, buffaloes, rhinos, calving cows, tigers, wild boars and nilgai, etc. is also seen everywhere.

iii. Modernity Oriented Pictographs

In sharp contrast to the original form of this style, a new stylistic form based on modernism-oriented

pictographs has recently emerged in the 21st century. The credit for this can be given to the innovative and enterprising artists of today, who have adapted the geometric patterns and motifs prevalent in this typical native of Sohrai wall painting to suit the current taste of the people; And apart from commercial products like apparel, pillow covers, cushion covers, sarees, bed seats, purses, tea coasters etc., it is also being adopted in many decorative art objects.

Materials Used in Sohrai Graffitis

These wall paintings are usually made by tribals or some very limited communities using natural clay colours. Their colour scheme often seems to be limited to black, red, yellow and white. Like most Indian traditional folk art forms; only eco-friendly painting materials have been used in their manufacturing; but according to the present circumstances, the practicality of modern painting materials and equipment has increased rapidly. A variety of locally available natural clays and minerals are used as colours used in these paintings and the painting equipment is made using resources available in the surrounding area; whose details are as per the following table No. 03:

Sl	Tiers	Utility
A.	Consumable Materials	
1.	Black Pigment	This pigment is obtained from manganese-rich soil, collected from fields adjacent to forests. It is especially noteworthy here that the dark black soil used in Khovar frescoes is called ' <i>Civil Soil</i> ' in the local dialect and for this, black manganese i.e. black soil is used. In contrast, black ink is used in the depictions of Sohrai frescoes; Which is prepared by grinding the seeds of the local <i>Bhelwa</i> tree. 
2.	White Pigment	The creamy white pigment is essentially " <i>Kaolin</i> "; And it is called " <i>Dudhimatti or Charkamati</i> " (white clay/chalk) in the local colloquial dialect. It is locally found in <i>Salgah</i> of <i>Keridari</i> block and <i>Kharati</i> near Sati mountain. 
3.	Red Pigment	This color is found naturally in ochre or iron oxide, which is called gerua or hematite in local dialect and is usually found in the shape of ore mineral. It is crushed in <i>Silbatta</i> (Grinding Stone) or <i>Imamdasta</i> (Mortar & Pastel) and then ground on Silbatta and prepared like pigment powder. This red soil is often found in the hills and the light coloured red soil is called saffron soil.
4.	Yellow Pigment	This pigment is also refined from yellow clay (yellow ochre). Generally two varieties of yellow clay are used; One of them is a little brighter and the other is a little darker. 
5.	Seeds	Seeds of locally available Bhelwa tree; These are ground well and used to refine the black ink used in traditional Sohrai graffitis. 
6.	Water	Traditional women painters would often mix different pigment substances with water in separate containers until the desired consistency for painting was achieved. 

B.		<i>Non-consumable Materials</i>	
7.	Water Pot	These pots are used to store different shades of colours prepared from various locally available minerals and clays; which can be added to the graffiti as per requirement.	
8.	Brushes & Cloth Swab	Women artists of Sohrai art style often crush one end of the soft branches of the 'Sal' tree with a hammer or stone, give it a tooth-like shape and use them as paintbrushes to fill the colours in the combined figures in the frescoes. Typically, cloth swabs are used to apply various clay colors to the surface of frescoes.	
9.	Combs	Pieces of combs of various sizes and shapes are used to scratch the surface of the frescoes to create motifs and decorative geometric designs.	

Importance & Symbolic Effects of Colours in Traditional Sohrai Graffiti

The motifs commonly used in these frescoes are highly figurative inspired by nature, animals and birds. The use of bold and pleasing rhythmic lines adorned with a minimum number of flat colours makes them extremely heart-touching. The colour palette of their originating women artists is very limited and limited to vegetable colours like earthy-black, ochre-red, brownish yellow, milky white, etc., although sometimes they also use green and blue colours; The details of the symbolic effects of these colours are given in the following table No. 04:

Sl	Colour	Sense	Source of Inspiration & Expression of Feelings
1.	Black	Fertility	Sohrai painters have been extensively using black and white colors in their frescoes since ancient times to express fertility, peace and prosperity respectively; So that they can represent the " <i>Supreme Father</i> " (Creator of the Universe) in white and black. Kala color also symbolically represents " <i>Shiva</i> ", the god of death; While traditionally the buttery white color (kaolin) has been collected from river channels or springs; Which is an indicator of peace and prosperity.
	White	Energy & Happiness & Prosperity	
2.	Red	Energy & Sacrifice	The women creators of these murals use this colour to express the emotional and symbolic expression of the blood of their ancestors, peace, prosperity and maturity.
3.	Yellow Ochre	Hope	They use this muddy yellow colour to symbolize the emergence of a new ray of light of hope in their lives, i.e. to show the frequency of repetition of peace, happiness, prosperity and fertility.

Creation Techniques of Traditional Sohrai Graffiti

Basically, in rural areas of Jharkhand and some of its other border states, folk beliefs, fertility and prosperity oriented Sohrai murals on house walls are considered symbols of auspiciousness; And to paint these frescoes the local women painters widely follow the six painting techniques mentioned in the following table No. 05:

Typical Native Painting Methods used by Sohrai Creators		
<i>Sl</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Utility in Painting of Sohrai Graffiti</i>
1.	Scraping Method	To create line oriented parallel geometric patterns and ornamental designs by scraping, women painters often follow this technique by using four fingers of their hand or as many fingers as required for the form to be created.
2.	Engraving Method	Sohrai painter using broken pieces of comb of appropriate size, shape and texture; This technique is used to engrave various types of forms and shapes, including straight, angular, curved, wavy, confluence, cross hatching, criss-cross or parallel, etc., graphically oriented decorative design patterns.
3.	Colour Imposition Technique	Traditional Sohrai creators convert one end of a soft branch of locally available sal tree of reasonable thickness and length into the shape of paintbrushes by repeatedly crushing them with a hammer or stone; Then they use them to represent the desired colours in the frescoes. However, now the use of commercially produced paintbrushes has increased.
4.	Glyptic Technique	When in a graffiti, a flat surface of one colour is superimposed on the surface of the other and then the upper surface of the colour is cut with any sharp tool and then two contrasting colour patterns oriented designs or forms and shapes are inscribed; Then this technique is used there. The relevance of this method has been more practical in Kohwar painting than in Sohrai painting style.
5.	Swab Stencil Technique	To do illustration work using this technique, a painter made a broom from dry cotton swabs and transformed them into a specific pattern; Using this self-made typical native tool, different types of patterns or designs or different types of textures are created on the surface of Sohrai or Kohwar murals.
6.	Cotton Swab Technique	For this, traditional Sohrai painters prepare a self-made native device in the shape of Sawab by wrapping cotton tightly on one end of a sal tree, cotton or any available hard stick of suitable length and thickness and sticking it with a substance like glue; and using it, they inscribe various line-oriented forms and patterns in the graffiti.

Creation Process of Traditional Sohrai Graffiti

Basically, there is a slight difference in the painting technique of 'Sohrai' and 'Khowar' murals in terms of pictorial configuration, practical importance and places of depiction, otherwise they are similar. To create these frescoes, traditional painters of this painting style follow the following sequential painting processes; whose details are as per the following table No. 06:

Traditional Sohrai Graffiti Painting Process		
<i>Sl</i>	<i>Steps</i>	<i>Description of its Application</i>
1.	Painting Surface Binding	Firstly, knead the locally available ' Ponder Mitti ' and ' Fresh Cow Dung ' thoroughly with desired amount of water to get the desired consistency; It is then applied evenly over the wall panel designated for the mural. Then, it is left to dry thoroughly for a few days until it is completely dry and ready for painting.
2.	Pigment Purification Method	These murals use eco-friendly pigments refined from traditional local clay; Which they prepare by dissolving it in appropriate amount of water and filtering it through cotton cloth or a sieve with fine holes to the desired consistency. Sometimes, painters use black clay for black colour; Alternatively, charcoal powder or liquid collected from the trunk of the local Bhelwa tree is also used to make black colour. Some painters have also started using some vegetable based colors to make the colour-harmony of the frescoes more rich and picturesque, like blue, green and yellow colors etc. made by dissolving turmeric powder in water. However, in the present times,

	1	chemical colours which are easily available commercially in the market are also being used extensively.
3.	Primer Coating Prozesse	After the first step above, it is completely dried and ready; The painting surface is prepared by applying a layer of chalk or milky white clay solution of suitable consistency to the painting surface or by methodically plastering it repeatedly until a suitable result is obtained.
4.	Composition Method	The creators of this graffiti style do not follow a pre-planned outline of composition; rather, drawing various forms, motifs, shapes and decorative geometric patterns freehand according to the immediate feeling-oriented drawing plan of one's mind is what gives them their uniqueness; colours are often applied flatly and the various forms, designs, etc. employed are transformed into a more attractive form by equipping them with dots of contrasting colour.
5.	Suitable Place for Graffiti	Traditionally, Sohrai murals are created to beautifully decorate the exterior walls of houses; Whereas in contrast, Khohwar frescoes have a tradition of being painted only on the interior wall of the bedroom of the newly married couple and these paintings are done only in white and black colours.
6.	Stylistic & Pictorial Distinctiveness	Sohrai graffiti style paintings, often inspired by animals, birds, reptiles, local flora and fauna, etc., the multiplicity of forms, patterns and geometric designs demarcated by highly simplified, decorative, symbolism, abstraction and thick dynamic lines show interesting repetitions. Apart from this, in some paintings, everyday activities are also depicted with simplicity and as far as the subject matter of Khohwar frescoes is concerned; so divine figures, peacocks and decorative lotus flowers are prominently depicted in them.
7.	Colouring Process	Instead of copying the forms and references of living beings and surrounding nature, artists paint in graffiti in the traditional manner; often they synthesize those forms in pictographical image in our mind and store their self-transformed images in our memory. Without caring about the classical rules and without planning the layout of wall painting, the painter outlines the shapes, forms and patterns on the wall surface prepared from similar images those are stored in his mind for a long time. Subsequently, various pieces of cloth are usually dipped in colours to fill in different parts of the paintings; and a cloth dipped in colour is patted on the part of the picture, where colour is to be applied. However, now instead of cloth pieces, paintbrushes easily available in the market are being used.

Main Centers of Stylistic Configuration and Morphological Diversity

The stylistic variations in the murals of this style from one creator to another, from one place to another, from one state to another or even from different ethnic communities make all the artefacts completely distinguishable from each other. These graffiti are mainly prevalent in some villages of Hazaribagh district under Jharkhand province like *Isko, Bhelwara, Saheda, Oriya Bhelwara, Lukaiya, Purninano, Ango, Oriya, Kharanti, Purnapani, Jarwadhi, Jorakath*, etc. Where differences are clearly visible in the frescoes painted by each artist based on the motifs used, structural presentation and their design, colour scheme, subject matter, geometric decoration and the painter's own creative skills. According to the morphological presentation, the villages famous for Sohrai painting style should be listed with their unique identity; so if we focus on the inspiration and repetition of elements of nature, fertility-oriented pictographs, terracotta civilization period elements and simplified linear abstract shapes, some common trends are visible in the frescoes of almost all the places.

But many specific motifs are prominently used in the graffiti of some villages, such as motifs related to ancient Indian civilization giving prominent shape to the paintings are the identity of '*Bhelwara*' village. Similarly;

'Saheda' and 'Isko' villages are famous for their animal paintings and depictions of lotus, forests, tree motifs and some distinctive figures respectively.

Fundamental Identity of Sohrai Painting Style

The presentation of combined figures in these Sohrai frescoes is extremely simple, decorative geometric patterns, harmony of contrasting bright colours, captivating beauty and emotional depiction; Give them a distinct identity from other art forms. Another fundamental identity of these is that they show a unique coordination of close relationships between humans, nature, animals and birds. The various motifs combined in a dotted manner in these murals also highlight their unique identity. Depictions of wild creatures like buffalo, wild cow, tiger, wild pig, nilgai, rhinoceros etc. are often seen in frescoes. Another fundamental feature of the composition of these frescoes is that they often depict pregnant animals and their babies, reflecting the uninterrupted cycle of creation and the relationship between them is often matriarchal in nature.



Similarities between Sohrai and Isco Rock Shelter Graffiti

"Isko Rock-shelter Murals" dating back to 10,000 BCE, adjacent to Kharati and Badhuli villages of Barkagaon block, about 50 km south-west of Hazaribagh district headquarters of Jharkhand state; The work of collecting its various authentic facts was done by 'Bulu Imam' (the then convenor of INTEC Hazaribagh Chapter) in 1991.

Similarly, on the interior walls of the bedroom of the newly married couple during the marriage ceremony in any family of Prajapati (potters), Kurmi (farmers) and tribal communities resident of Kharati, Badhuli Pipradhi and Jorkath villages; The ancient tradition of creating murals including fertility symbols, community deity figures, peacocks and decorative lotus flowers is still followed in accordance with marital rituals. This type of graffiti is called *Khowar* in local colloquial language. 'Jason Imam' not only sheds deep factual light on the tradition of creation of the "*Khowar Pictorial Style*" over the next two decades from 1990; Rather, reasonable possible efforts were also made to create public awareness at national and international platforms to promote and save the technique of this native painting style.

Based on the evidence obtained from the above two influential meaningful works and other available historical evidence, a comparative review of the structural features, painting method, used painting material and motifs, etc., of Sohrai and Khowar murals reveals; That they have a deep connection with the prehistoric paintings of 'Isko Rock-Shelters' and there seems to be considerable similarity among themselves.

Notable Centers of Sohrai Art in Rural Areas of Jharkhand State

To revive, preserve and maintain this folk art form of Jharkhand province, which is recognized on the national and global art scene for its unique folk heritage of traditional Sohrai and Khowar styles of murals; Under the joint auspices of the Government of Jharkhand and domestic and foreign voluntary organizations, tribal women artists living in more than a dozen villages geographically covered within the geographical boundaries of 6 blocks under Hazaribagh district in the northern bit of the province have been identified. Many schemes are being implemented with the aim of training and encouraging those women artists for technical upgradation in order to nurture this ancient folk painting style by infusing a new life into it. The details of the basic characteristics of Sohrai wall painting styles of some major villages are as per the following table No. 07:

Sl	Place	Quirk	Morphological Specificity
1.	Oriya & Ango (Churchu Block)	Glyptic Painting Method	Women artists from these two villages; 'Kaolin' creamy white colour collected from the natural water streams and water bodies of the nearby forest, <i>Hematite redox iron</i> ore obtained from the soil of various places and <i>Manganese black soil</i> colour found in the hilly places are used in abundance. They are particularly notable for creating frescoes on the walls of their homes using the "Glyptic Painting Method". 
2.	Bhelwara (Bishungarh Block)	Line Oriented Pictographs	The artists here are famous for following the 'Line Oriented Painting Technique'. They depict their ancestors and the god of life and death "Pashupati" using white, red, black colours; And by expressing the symbolic rhythmic lines in a wonderful way, Sohrai creates frescoes in a very captivating manner. Representations of such frescoes also include a combination of the animal god 'Pashupati' often seated on the back of a bull and a "Kamalaban" decorated with lotus flowers of specific configuration as a sign of the "Tree of Life"; The style of painting frescoes here is different from other places. 
3.	Lukiya, Jarwadi (Tanti, Jarwadi)	Geometric Pictographs	In Puranapani villages, including Lukia and Jarwadi, dominated by the Santhal tribal community, during the 'Faslotsav' season, residents paint Sohrai murals on the walls of their houses to express the festive fervor and emotional sentiments; The motifs of zig-zag, triangular and bold pictographic patterns are their most popular and original identity. 
4.	Daujinaragar & Jihu (Padma Block)	Cloth Swab and Patting Method	In both these places, people of the Agaria tribal community often live in small-sized houses with mud tile roofs and mud walls. The creative women here basically use three mineral pigments like Kaolin Creamy White, Manganese Black and Hematite Red; And they are also known to repeatedly practice the "Cloth Swab and Patting Technique" to add colours to the graffiti in the process of painting on the walls of their homes. 
5.	Saheda (Barkagaon Block)	Wild Pictographic Configuration	The lifestyle of the tribals living in this village is very diverse and interesting. They build their houses with wood and bamboo instead of the traditional mud walls and they call them 'Ganju' in their community dialect. The walls of such unique houses are decorated with murals depicting figures of specific type of birds-animals like peacock, elephant, tiger, crocodile, snake, jackal, various other birds, etc. and specific wild plants. Such a unique style is rare anywhere else. 
6.	Kharati and others (Barkagaon Block)	Comb Embossing & Scraped Methods	The notable feature of the Sohrai and Khovar murals made by women artists of the community mainly dependent on agriculture in the eight villages of Kharati, Barwadi Pankri, Bhadul-Piparadih, Nayatand, Napo and Barhamania of Barkagaon Block located in the hilly valley region is this; that here "Comb Embossing and Scraped Techniques" are used extensively to replicate line-oriented images, and the size of the frescoes here is often larger than in other places. 
7.	Isko (Barkagaon Block)	Fingers Impression & Marking Method	Here, women artisans from the Munda tribal community create murals with motifs and geometric designs inspired by prehistoric paintings, which reflect the coexistence between man, nature and animals. Their stylistic characteristic is to depict images of "Lorbang" (symbolic rainbow snake) and community-recognized deities, often transformed into imaginary plant forms; Here a specific abstract painting technique of 'scratching or forcefully making marks with the fingers' of the hand on a soft painting surface is practiced. The most unique thing is that they usually present the combined shapes in frescoes in a very attractive spotted form by decorating them with circular and oval vermillion and white dots. 

8.	Jorakath (Barkagaon Block)	Comb-Impression & Cloth-Patting	It is a small village of farmers adjacent to forests and hills. Here too, frescoes using the techniques of “ <i>Comb-Impression & Cloth-Patting Method</i> ” often depict decorative figures of wild and domesticated cattle, birds, fish, plants, flowers and various symbols. A remarkable fact about the painting here is that the residents here not only make Sohrai paintings on the walls; Rather they also build on the ceiling and ground.	
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Resurgence of Ceremonial Style of Sohrai Style of Painting

Beyond local relevance, this traditional community portrait style has attracted many Government and voluntary organizations since the 20th century due to its unique simplified representation; As a result, with a view to making it more relevant to modern interests and linking it with professionalism, various schemes have also been implemented and details of some of such efforts are as follows:

- The High Commission of Australia, New Delhi under its DAP Grant in 1993 used the glue-paper drawing technique developed by rock art expert Dr. Erwin Neumeyer of Vienna, Austria enabled the Khovar and Sohrai graffiti styles to be painted on paper and provided funding. Over two years from 1993 to 1995, using the INTACH Hazaribagh Chapter; it trained approximately 6 dozen traditional women artists from four villages in the state of Jharkhand to successfully transfer Sohrai and Khovar art onto handmade paper by scraping method (comb cut). This resulted in the emergence of the ‘*Tribal Women Artists Cooperative Society*’ (TWAC), which soon attracted the attention of art collectors from some countries, who not only visited Hazaribagh; In fact, since 1995 he has also taken artworks of this painting style to his home country to hold exhibitions in major cities of Australia.
- Over a period of a decade after 2001, several exhibitions of Khovar and Sohrai artefacts were organized in European countries such as Britain, Germany and France as well as Canada; Due to which the art lovers there also realized its relevance.
- In 2008, three traditional female artists from TWAC were invited by Italy’s National Museum Pigorini, Rome, to create large-sized murals on canvas and display them in an exhibition held over several months.
- “*Virasat Trust*” founded in 2008 by *Justin* and *Alka Imam* to nurture, encourage and mentor women painters practicing this indigenously typical Khovar and Sohrai art with regional social relevance; And a campaign was started to organize many exhibitions to make the art of these artisans reach the masses.
- Three traditional women artists from TWAC were invited by a Canadian art gallery in 2019 to create large 8 x 20 feet murals on canvas for the ‘*Akakhona Indigenous Art Exhibition*’; and the exhibition of those wall paintings continued for a year.
- It was the result of the above efforts of the Virasat Trust that rural women artists started getting a golden opportunity to come out of their homes and go to cities to paint murals; First and foremost, in 2008, these rural painters showed their creative skills by painting murals over an area of 17,500 square meters on the surface sections of buildings and boundary walls of the Bhagwan Birsa Biological Park in Ormanjhi, Ranchi.
- In the year 2008 itself, traditional Sohrai women artists started getting many opportunities like murals of New Alipore Calcutta Army War Memorial, Durga Puja Pandal in Ranchi etc. Along with this, those traditional women artists are also being invited to participate in various regional programs and national art camps.
- In 2016, during the renovation work of Hazaribagh Railway Station, traditional women artists decorated the entire walls of the reception area with Khovar and Sohrai paintings. During the reopening of the railway station after this beautification, the murals painted there attracted the attention of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi; and later, in his talk on his popular “*Mann Ki Baat*” program broadcast on media, he also praised this traditional art.

- Authenticating the quality and uniqueness of this art in 2020; The “*Sohrai-Khovar Painting Technique*” received Geographical Indication status with a view to preserve and protect it in its original form.

In the present times, this indigenous folk art form has not only gained popularity on the national and international horizon; rather, now it does not need any kind of introduction.

Present Scenario of Sohrai Painting Tradition

The Sohrai graffiti tradition has been practiced since ancient times in some communities, mainly by women artists, in states such as Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, especially in the rural areas of Jharkhand province. The nature-oriented iconographic style combining the vibrant bright colour scheme, simplified decorative geometric patterns and abstract images used in these frescoes has been deeply influenced by the global cultural changes induced by modernism; As a result, their dependence on limited subsistence natural resources and specific drawing materials available around them is rapidly decreasing.

The effect of this was that whereas earlier people in villages used to use common building materials like mud and clay tiles to build houses, now they started building houses with modern alternative building materials like easily available cement, concrete and iron rods. Have given; similarly, large scale mining activities in coal mines have also badly affected this art; because due to this the villages are being displaced rapidly. Due to which it is now becoming difficult to find suitable painting surfaces to create traditional Sohrai murals. Similarly, another big reason is that now people are more inclined towards mainstream modern and contemporary art forms rather than indigenous traditional and folk art forms.

This traditional art of social relevance was originally limited to certain rural areas; the campaigns run by the Government and voluntary organizations for its promotion, innovation and conservation have also been adversely affected. Because this art is being replicated by such non-traditional Sohrai artists on the wall surfaces of buildings in urban areas across the state rather than in villages; People who are not even familiar with the basic spirit of this art, rather they paint using painting methods developed by themselves and do this work only for financial gain.

CONCLUSION

Social values, spiritual thinking, cultural diversity, religious customs, national and region-to-region changing linguistic forms, national and regional dialects, local life styles, food habits, different types of costumes, typical indigenous The wealth of Indian heritage thousands of years old is not only vast in terms of art forms, etc.; In fact, hardly any country in the entire world has had such an identity. Similarly, a number of traditional art forms of social concern have sprouted across India in different time periods and remain relevant even today, having deep roots in the global art horizon; and which has been attracting people globally for centuries. Parallel to this, there are many socially accepted distinct indigenous traditional art forms in rural areas of all the states of India based on social, ritualistic, community folk beliefs and oriented towards mutual harmony between humans, animals and nature; which have been passed down from generation to generation since ancient times and have also remained exemplary for generations in different communities.

Among the countless indigenous traditional folk art forms, Sohrai graffiti style also has its own remarkable relevance; and even in the present times, especially in Jharkhand province, it is a pictorial expression of public sentiments, a symbol of artistic skill and an exemplary art. The fog of current modernist culture is clearing; Due to the many efforts made by Government and non-Government organizations over the last two decades to preserve and commercialize this distinctive indigenous painting style, a new approach has been created with a view to reviving it, keeping it relevant and expanding it according to modern taste. Getting life. In this way, it would be a commendable effort to save it from being lost to time.

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