

An Analytical Study on Reintegration of the Jhunjhunu Frescoes in the Contemporary era

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Abstract

Jhunjhunu district is renowned for the fresco paintings among the other districts of Shekhawati region. These frescoes are painted on the havelis, cenotaphs, forts and temples, are adorned with the depiction of mythological and historical themes, spiritual animals and daily day life scenes, some places erotica and even imaginary. Within these broad outlines, the subjects were selected randomly. All the fresco paintings are surrounded by the floral colored borders. These are painted by the local artists called chejaras of this region particularly by locally available materials and tools. These numerous painted walls are the attraction point of our rich heritage, which adds everlasting charm to us.

Actually they were made through very long process by using natural pigments which was prepared from locally available material. But from some years, people of this area are applying short cut method by using artificial colors which have no life. I have throws light on the accurate technique of fresco painting tradition as well as the contemporary method applied for reintegration of the fresco paintings of Jhunjhunu district.

Keywords: Frescoes, Jhunjhunu, Havelis, Reintegration, Technique.

Paper

Painting is a form of art which gives people freedom of expressing their thoughts and feelings through the media of line and colour. Among Indians the admiration for the colours and subject matters are so deeply innate that from the earliest times they created paintings.

The journey of Indian paintings on wall has been practiced from the time 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 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 their superiority and were even dismissed as hardly to be classed among the fine arts, because than pictorial. These wall paintings are also known as fresco paintings.

Consequently, Jhunjhunu district is renowned for the fresco paintings among the other districts of Shekhawati region. These frescoes are painted on havelis, cenotaphs; forts are adorned with the depiction of mythological and historical themes, spiritual animals and daily day life scenes, some places 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. These are constructed by the rich merchants of this region particularly Bania families including The Chokhanis, the Sonthaliyas, Saraf and Goenkas, etc. These numerous painted walls are the attraction point of our rich heritage, which adds everlasting charm and shaped in beautiful manner by expressing each era of Indian culture.

These fresco paintings are painted in various subject matters, as time passes subjects of the fresco painting changes. As a result thousands of exalted dominating paintings in various dimensions exist in Jhunjhunu, like, a musician should know the musical versions, a poet should 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.

In Jhunjhunu district, most of the frescoes have been made earlier which are of hundred or two hundred years old. The younger generations of craftsman are no longer familiar with the methods of painting fresco painting of their forefathers; thus, wholly unaware of the spiritual dimensions of the art, they are in many ways alienated from their own tradition and lineage. Earlier fresco paintings were undergoes with a very long process ,that includes Buono as well as secco fresco techniques .These were painted by the local artists called Chejaras and they prepared colour pigments and base of the painting by locally available materials.

During the long span of their life, they have faced many threats from nature and man both. In the path of time after making frescoes, nothing is permanent, it get damaged and deteriorate in several ways. Deterioration that comes about manifests itself in various constituents of frescoes, namely the wall, the surface or plaster, paint. Different types of changes take place in each of these components, and before any discussion on renovation treatment it is necessary to understand different types of damage which one may come across in the fresco paintings.

Plate.1, Retouching of Fresco painting In the buildings, when some areas of plaster fall, the gaps and holes are filled with a putty to produce a uniform surface. However, even after being filled, they present a patchy and broken appearance because the painting scheme remains disturbed. Flaking of paint also present a broken image, sometimes painting becoming totally undecipherable. In order to bring about a harmonious painted surface, the patches of fresh putty or old plaster are retouched with new paint, to match the areas with the surrounding and complete the appearance of the painting .This in short is the retouching or restoring of lost areas. In this way, now days, this process is applied which is known as reintegration of colours.



Plate.1, Retouching of Fresco painting

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Procedure of Reintegration:

(a) Neutral colouring of filling areas:

The lacunae after being filled up by plaster, leveled and smoothened are left as they are painted with neutral colour. In this case, the colour of lost areas is matched with that of the original plaster on which fresco painting was done. In Jhunjhunu district, now days, mostly this procedure is adopted excluding hotels or tourists place.

(b) Complete matching of colours:

This procedure is rarely adopted in the Jhunjhunu district region, we can only view in few *havelis*, hotels and tourists place. In this procedure, the missing areas after filling up and smoothening are completely painted over to merge with the rest of the painting, matching so completely that is difficult to distinguish between the restored area and it's surrounding.



Plate.2, Faded frescoes

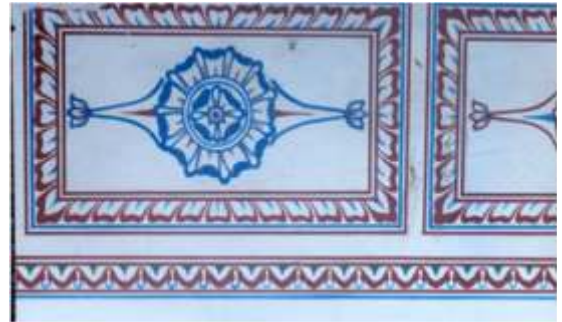


Plate.3, Reintegration of frescoes

We saw the reintegrating of the heritage with similar colour palette on the dwellings, mostly in the Mandawa as here large figure of tourist are come to visit and to see adorned *havelis*, even they stay in hotels like in Mandawa Castle, Hotel Heritage Mandawa, Hotel Chobdar Haveli and many more. As a result, these dwellings were repainted and good in condition. Even in Modi Haveli of Jhunjhunu, frescoes were repainted in same colour palette as previous painted. As we see in the below frescoes, camel rider was repainted in same colour scheme as it painted earlier.



Plate.4, Before retouching



Plate.5, After retouching with same colour palette

Actually these fresco paintings were made through very long process by using natural pigments which was prepared from locally available material. But from some years, people of this area are applying short cut method by using artificial colours which have no charm and life.

Another important thing is that retouching is based only on the nature of the painting otherwise it will damage very fast. In the *haveli* of 'Nadine Le Prince' in Fatehpur, She uses synthetic colours in reintegrating her purchased *haveli* and these colours are peeled out in very short time.



Plate.6, Tibari , Haveli of 'Nadine Le Prince'



Plate.7, Outer wall , Haveli of 'Nadine Le Prince'

Through the visit I analysis these are faded and peeled out in few years only. As outer frescoed walls are faded at some extend, only in the interiors fresco paintings are in good condition particularly of *tibari* (guest room) frescoes are very fresh and alive. No doubt, this *haveli* has been painstakingly renovated but process of painting was not correct. I thought that is the main reason of flaking and peeling of colours from its walls. If she uses pure fresco techniques in making fresco painting, she will not facing any kind of dilemma in future regarding her frescoed walls.

Conclusion

The aim of reintegration is to re-establish or retouch the continuity of the fresco painting. It is not wrong if we say fresco paintings were executed mostly for decorative purposes which can be restored only by complete colour retouching. The idea behind this, they should look new or duration of their existence will rise to some extent.

Water or poster colours are quite often too fugitive and fade out very quickly. There are certain water colours which are permanent type and may be used. Synthetic poster colours change colour tones and shades or fade and must never be used for retouching purpose. Best are mineral pigments of a permanent quality for fresco paintings. In last, for reintegration of frescoes, we should use accurate technique, process and pigments as they painted earlier.

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