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Comprehensive Exploration of Tattoo Practices in Melghat

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Abstract:

Melghat is a region in India known for its rich cultural heritage, and tattoos have been an integral part of its traditional practices. The indigenous communities in Melghat, such as the Korku and Gond tribes, have a long history of tattooing, which is an essential aspect of their identity, culture, and beliefs.

Here are some interesting aspects of tattoo practices in Melghat:

- Traditional tattoo artists: Tattooing is a skill passed down through generations, and traditional artists use handmade tools and natural dyes to create intricate designs.
- Symbolism: Tattoos in Melghat are not just decorative; they hold deep symbolic meanings, representing spiritual beliefs, ancestral connections, and life experiences.
- Rites of passage: Tattoos are an essential part of initiation ceremonies, marking important life transitions, such as coming of age or marriage.
- Tribal identity: Tattoos are a proud display of tribal affiliation and cultural heritage, distinguishing one tribe from another.

Spiritual significance: Tattoos are believed to possess spiritual power, offering protection, strength, and good fortune.

- Endangered art form: Modernization and urbanization have led to a decline in traditional tattooing practices, making preservation efforts essential to safeguard this unique cultural heritage.



By creating individual identities through these traditional motifs, we celebrate the diverse aspects of Melghat art, ensuring that each motif stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and artistic expression of the region. This approach not only preserves and promotes the traditional art forms but also adapts them for contemporary relevance, fostering a deeper appreciation and connection to Melghat's unique cultural landscape.

The tattoo traditions in Melghat are deeply intertwined with the tribal identities, serving as symbols of cultural heritage, rites of passage, and social status. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motifs, techniques, and meanings behind these tattoos, highlighting their role in preserving the unique cultural fabric of Melghat's tribal communities.

INTRODUCTION:-

India has a rich heritage. It was saved by peoples living in village or near the nature. According to records India rural population for 2022 was 908,804,812. The things that bond rural commutes together is their festival, with arts, carts, agriculture and home cooked food. Festivals have been a way to celebrate heritage, traditions and the culture of specific symbol of rice culture in rural area is tattoos (Godon).

In India tattoos have a long history spanning several centuries Tattoos, inspired by traditional Indian art, encompass symbols and meaning that have withstood, the test of time for centuries. In India especially amongst the Hindu community's tattoos were believed to possess remarkable power.

A tattoo on a woman's forehead was through to promote the safe delivery of children and every married woman was expected to have a SITE KI RASOI tattoo. Which was a charm to manage a household.

In the past a tattoo symbolized a religious purpose and was followed by occupation social hierarchy and casts.

- Popular tattoo for young women involved five dots in a cross representing five Pandavas brothers from the Mahabharata which served as a reminder for birders to live amicably with their brothers -in- law.



- In Gujarat green sap from a local plant mixed with soot is used to create tattoos.
- In M.P tattoos were rub with cow dung and a paste of turmeric and vegetable oil to make designs darker.
- Traditional artists use black and work with cruel homemade machines.
- Malar or wandering Dhokar women were the tattoo artists, and they used a three-pronged iron instrument to produce the tattoo markings.
- The tattooing was performed outside of the house, and after the operation the tattooed girls were not permitted to enter the home unit she had been anointed with turmeric and oil.
- Propose: -

Melghat is a picturesque region located in the Satpura Range in the state of Maharashtra, India. It is predominantly inhabited by indigenous tribes, mainly the Korku and Gond. These tribes have a rich cultural heritage, with tattooing being a significant aspect of their identity and traditions.



- Cultural Context and Importance of Tattoos

Tattoos in Melghat are more than just body art; they are an integral part of the cultural fabric and serve various functions:

1. Rites of Passage: Tattoos mark significant life events and transitions, such as puberty, marriage, and motherhood.



2. **Spiritual Protection:** Tattoos are believed to protect individuals from evil spirits and misfortune.

3. **Social Identity:** Tattoos help in identifying tribal affiliations, social status, and familial lineage.

4. **Aesthetic Expression:** Beyond their cultural and social significance, tattoos are a form of personal adornment and artistic expression.

Embracing Melghat Art: Individual Identities Through Traditional Motifs:-

We have adopted traditional motifs from Melghat to create distinct identities for various aspects of Melghat art. Each motif serves as a unique representation, encapsulating the rich cultural heritage and artistic expression of the region.

- Individual Identities Through Motifs

1. Geometric Patterns:

Identity of Continuity and Strength: Geometric patterns such as lines, dots, grids, and lattices form the core identity of stability and resilience in Melghat art. These motifs symbolize the interconnectedness and protective nature of the community.

2. Animal Motifs:

Identity of Power and Beauty:

- **Tigers:** Representing power and bravery, the tiger motif is used to create an identity focused on strength and protection. This can be used in artworks that emphasize the community's resilience and courage.

- **Peacocks:** Symbolizing beauty and grace, peacock motifs create an identity centered on aesthetics and fertility, perfect for artworks that celebrate the cultural richness and elegance of Melghat.

3. Plant Motifs:

Identity of Growth and Longevity:



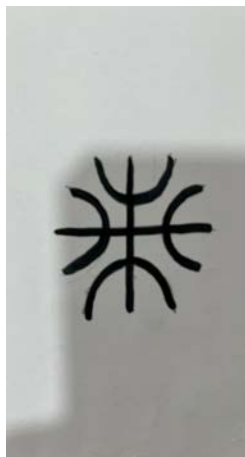
- **Mango Leaves:** Mango leaves symbolize fertility, prosperity, and happiness, forming an identity that celebrates growth and abundance. Artworks using this motif highlight the thriving nature of the community.

- **Banyan Tree:** The banyan tree motif represents longevity and endurance, creating an identity that emphasizes stability and strength. This is ideal for artworks that focus on the enduring spirit of Melghat.

4. Spiritual Symbols:

Identity of Balance and Harmony:

- **Sun and Moon:** These celestial symbols represent life, energy, masculinity (sun), and femininity, calmness, and the cyclical nature of life (moon). Artworks using these motifs create an identity that highlights balance and harmony within the community.



- Scientific reason for this tattoo in melghat —

The tattoo practices in Melghat, while primarily cultural, have scientific underpinnings that can be understood through various lenses such as anthropology, medicine, and psychology. Here are some scientific reasons that could explain why these tattoo practices might have developed and persisted in the Melghat

Psychological Resilience: Tattoos are often applied during significant life events, such as puberty, marriage, or childbirth. These rites of passage help individuals psychologically transition to new social roles within their community. The permanence of tattoos can also serve



as a constant reminder of these transitions, reinforcing an individual's identity and role within the tribe.

Stress Relief and Healing: The process of tattooing, especially when done in a ritualistic context, can have a cathartic effect, helping individuals cope with stress, grief, or other emotional challenges. The act of tattooing can be seen as a form of controlled stress that ultimately leads to psychological healing and empowerment.

Ethnobotany

Ink Composition: The natural inks used in Melghat's traditional tattoos are often derived from local plants and other natural resources. Ethnobotanists study these plants to understand their properties, including any antiseptic or pain-relieving qualities. This research can contribute to the broader knowledge of medicinal plants and their uses in traditional practices.

. By understanding the scientific reasons behind these practices, we gain insight into how they have persisted and evolved, serving both practical and symbolic purposes in the lives of the Melghat tribes.

- Traditional Tattooing Techniques and Tools

1. Preparation:

Selection of Dyes: Natural dyes are made from plant extracts such as turmeric, henna, and indigo. Charcoal and soot are also used to create black ink.

Tool Making: Traditional tools include needles made from bones, thorns, or metal. These are sharpened and sanitized using herbal solutions.

2. Application:

Rituals: The tattooing process often begins with a prayer or ritual to seek blessings from ancestors and deities. Offerings might be made to ensure the success and safety of the procedure.

Techniques: The tattooist pricks the skin to create the design, using a combination of puncturing and rubbing the dye into the wounds. This requires precision and skill to ensure the design remains clear and permanent.



3. Aftercare and Healing:

Herbal Pastes: After tattooing, herbal pastes made from neem leaves, turmeric, and other antiseptic herbs are applied to promote healing and prevent infection.

Caring for the Tattoo: The tattoo is kept clean and dry. The community often provides support to the individual, ensuring proper care during the healing process.

- Cultural and Social Functions

1. Marking Life Stages:

Childhood: Simple tattoos might be given to children to mark their belonging to the tribe and to protect them from harm.

Adulthood: More elaborate tattoos are given during puberty, marking the transition to adulthood. These tattoos signify readiness for marriage and adult responsibilities.

Elders: Elders might receive tattoos to signify wisdom and leadership within the tribe. These tattoos often include symbols of respect and reverence.

2. Gender Roles:

Women: Tattoos on women often signify fertility, beauty, and their role in the family. Designs are placed on the arms, legs, and face.

Men: Men receive tattoos that symbolize strength, bravery, and their role as protectors. These are typically placed on the chest, back, and arms.

3. Spiritual and Religious Functions:

Protection: Tattoos are believed to offer protection against evil spirits and misfortune. Certain designs are chosen specifically for their protective properties.

Blessings: Tattoos invoking deities or spiritual symbols are meant to bring blessings and positive energy to the individual.

- Application and Usage :-

1. Geometric Patterns:



Usage: These patterns can be used in textiles, pottery, and architectural designs to reinforce the identity of continuity and protection. They can also be incorporated into modern art pieces to create a bridge between traditional and contemporary art forms.

2. Animal Motifs:

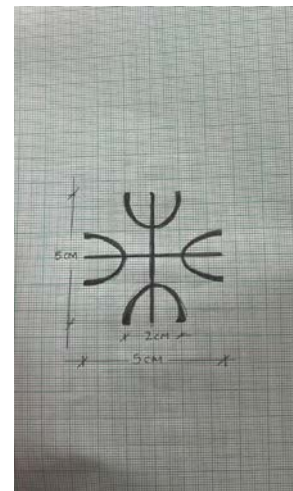
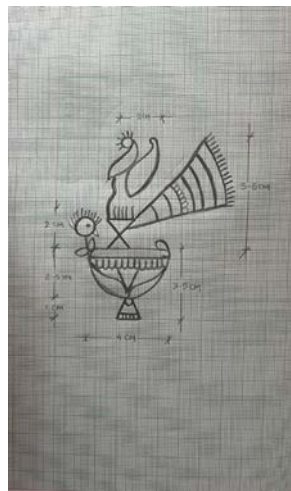
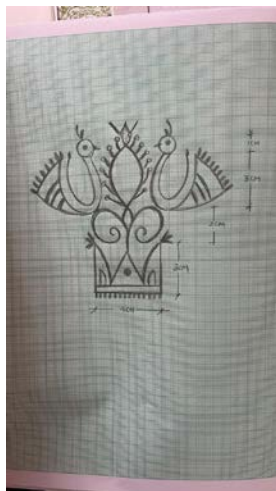
Usage: Animal motifs like tigers and peacocks can be prominently featured in paintings, sculptures, and murals. They emphasize the cultural significance and symbolic meanings, making each artwork a storytelling piece.

3. Plant Motifs:

Usage: Plant motifs can be used in a variety of crafts, such as weaving, embroidery, and jewelry making. These designs celebrate the natural environment and the agricultural roots of Melghat, creating a connection to nature and growth.

4. Spiritual Symbols:

Usage: Spiritual symbols can be used in ritualistic artifacts, religious paintings, and sacred spaces. These motifs emphasize the spiritual beliefs and practices of the community, fostering a sense of unity and reverence.





not only enriches the academic understanding of Melghat's cultural heritage but also highlights the broader implications of traditional practices in the context of modern science.

By creating individual identities through these traditional motifs, we celebrate the diverse aspects of Melghat art, ensuring that each motif stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and artistic expression of the region. This approach not only preserves and promotes the traditional art forms but also adapts them for contemporary relevance, fostering a deeper appreciation and connection to Melghat's unique cultural landscape.

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4. "Customary Laws of Scheduled Tribes in Central India" by A.N. Sharma

Research Papers and Articles

1. "Tattooing in Central Indian Tribes: Cultural Significance and Survival" by Arvind Choudhary
2. "Tattooing Practices Among the Korku Tribe of Melghat" by Meenal Patil
3. "Ethnographic Study of Tribal Art in Melghat" by Rajesh Kulkarni

Online Resources:

1. ResearchGate - Search for papers on tribal tattoo practices in Melghat.
2. Maharashtra Tribal Development Department - This government site might have some reports or documents on the cultural practices of Melghat's tribes, including tattooing.