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Transformation and Preservation: The Changing Aesthetics of Indigenous Iddital Painting in Rayagada District, Odisha

(Theme- Tribal Culture, Tribal Art & Tribal Painting)

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Abstract:

This comprehensive study focuses on *Iddital* Art, particularly the Lanjia Soura Iddital (Indigenous Drawing, concept, and Art) of Rayagada district, Odisha, India. *Iddital* painting, a traditional tribal art form deeply rooted in the culture of Rayagada district, Odisha, has witnessed a transformation in aesthetics over the years. This case study delves into the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity within the realm of *Iddital* painting. It seeks to understand how this indigenous art form has evolved, embracing abstract and contemporary elements while preserving its cultural significance.

The research draws upon ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with Soura artists, and an analysis of *Iddital* paintings produced during different time periods. It explores the following key aspects:

Historical Context: The study begins by tracing the historical origins of *Iddital* painting, shedding light on its traditional motifs, techniques, and cultural meanings.

Evolution of Aesthetics: Through a comparative analysis of older and contemporary *Iddital* artworks, the research uncovers the subtle shifts in aesthetics, including the incorporation of abstract elements and new color palettes.

Cultural Significance: It investigates how *Iddital* painting continues to serve as a vital cultural expression, not only in preserving tribal heritage but also in negotiating with external influences and global art trends.



Artistic Adaptation: The case study explores how Soura artists adapt their techniques and subject matter to cater to changing tastes and market demands, thereby shaping the art's contemporary aesthetic.

Impact on the Community: The research examines the impact of changing aesthetics in *Iddital* painting on the local community, including economic aspects, pride in cultural heritage, and the transmission of artistic skills to younger generations.

By shedding light on the evolution of *Iddital* painting in Rayagada district, this case study contributes to a broader understanding of how traditional art forms interact with modernity and adapt to shifting aesthetics. It underscores the resilience and creativity of Soura artists in the face of evolving artistic landscapes, while emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous art forms within a globalized world.

Keywords: Indigenous Art, Aesthetic, Evolution, Cultural heritage & significance, Abstract elements, Artistic adaptation, Ethnographic research, Tradition & contemporary.

INTRODUCTION

"Souls become ancient forms of Rudra and become enlightened in the laps of nature's primitive being, in the peaceful simplicity of nature." At the darkness fell, the primitive man monitors a flying bird flying through the air and occasionally makes a gesture to express empathy for the bird's feelings. Indeed, the people we allude to as the indigenous inhabitants of the jungle are the forerunners of civilized society. Through creative representation in Aryan the society's worship rituals, such as the Mandala, Swastik, Kabach, symbols, and Yantras of numerous deities, their identical lines come to be adored.

A significant means of cultural expression for many indigenous groups worldwide is tribal art. It is frequently distinguished by its distinctive motifs and styles,

Tribal art is an important form of cultural expression for many indigenous communities around the world. It is often characterized by its unique styles and motifs, which are inspired by the natural world, cultural beliefs, and spiritual practices of the community.



Visual art is a creative expression of human beings that has existed for thousands of years, and over time, it has undergone significant changes in style, techniques, materials, and themes. Here are some ways that visual art changes over time:

1. **Style:** The style of visual art has changed over time, from the realism of ancient art to the abstract art of modern times. Each era or movement in art has its own unique style that reflects the cultural, political, and social changes of that time.
2. **Techniques:** Over time, artists have developed new techniques to create art, such as the use of perspective, chiaroscuro, and Impressionist brushstrokes. These new techniques have enabled artists to create new and innovative ways to represent the world around them.
3. **Materials:** As new materials have become available, artists have adapted their techniques to incorporate these materials into their art. For example, the introduction of oil paints in the Renaissance period revolutionized the way artists painted.
4. **Themes:** The themes of visual art have also changed over time, reflecting the cultural, political, and social issues of the time. For example, the religious themes of medieval art gave way to the secular and humanistic themes of the Renaissance.
5. **Influences:** Visual art is also influenced by the artists who came before. Each artist builds on the work of their predecessors and adds their own unique vision to the art world. This creates a chain of influence that stretches back through history.

Visual art changes over time in response to the cultural, social, political, and technological changes that occur. The evolution of visual art reflects the changing perspectives of humanity and provides a window into the past, present, and future.

Location of the Study

Rayagada district in Odisha is home to the Lanjia Saora, an indigenous community known for its unique and vibrant painting tradition. These paintings, often characterized by intricate patterns and depictions of daily life, rituals, and myths, have been an integral part of the community's cultural identity.

Iddital painting is a traditional art form practiced by the Saora tribe of Odisha, India. It is characterized by its intricate designs and motifs that are usually inspired by nature. Saora



paintings are typically created on mud walls or on pieces of cloth, and natural colors are used to create the designs.

The structure of *Iddital* painting usually involves a central figure or motif, surrounded by a series of geometric patterns and designs. The central figure is often an animal or a plant, and it is usually surrounded by a symmetrical arrangement of smaller motifs and patterns.

The function of *Iddital* painting is multifaceted. Historically, *Iddital* painting was used as a form of storytelling and communication, with each design and motif representing a particular story or legend. *Iddital* painting was also used as a form of decoration, with paintings adorning the walls of homes and community spaces during festivals and celebrations.

Tribal art plays an important role in shaping and expressing the identity of indigenous communities. Through their art, indigenous peoples are able to communicate their cultural beliefs, values, and practices to others. Tribal art also helps to reinforce a sense of collective identity and belonging within the community, as it is often created through collective effort and shared traditions.

The relationship between tribal art and identity is complex and multifaceted. While tribal art is an important form of cultural expression and identity for many indigenous communities, it is also subject to external forces such as commercialization and cultural appropriation. As such, it is important to approach tribal art with sensitivity and respect, and to understand the cultural and historical context in which it was created.

Today, Saora painting continues to be an important form of cultural expression for the Saora community. It is also valued as a form of art and has gained recognition in the wider art world. *Iddital* painting is often exhibited in galleries and museums, and many Saora artists have gained recognition for their work both nationally and internationally.

Iddital art is an ancient form of tribal art that originated in the Koraput district of Odisha, India. It is also known as *Iddital* art or Icons of the Saora. The Saora tribe is believed to have settled in the region for over 2,000 years and has a rich cultural heritage.



Traditionally, *Iddital* art was used to decorate the walls and floors of their homes and also used in their religious rituals. The Saora artists used natural pigments made from rocks, plants, and minerals to create their art. The art mainly depicted the natural environment, mythological figures, and abstract designs.

However, in recent years, there has been a transition in *Iddital* art. With the advent of modern technology and market demands, Saora artists have started to use acrylic paints and canvas to create their art. They have also started to create art pieces for commercial purposes, such as selling their art in the local markets and galleries.

The transition in *Iddital* art has brought about a change in the subject matter of the art. While traditional Saora art mainly depicted nature and mythological figures, modern *Iddital* art has expanded its subject matter to include contemporary themes, such as urbanization and globalization. The transition of *Iddital* art from its traditional form to a modern form has brought about a change in its subject matter and materials used. However, the traditional Saora art still holds cultural and religious significance for the Saora people, and efforts are being made to preserve and promote the art form.

Traditionally, *Iddital* art was mainly practiced as a part of religious rituals and ceremonies. The Saora people believed that their art had spiritual significance, and it was used to communicate with their gods and goddesses. The *Iddital* art was primarily created using natural materials such as clay, wood, and natural dyes. *Iddital* art was characterized by its intricate designs and motifs, which were often inspired by nature. Despite the transition, traditional *Iddital* art still holds a special place in the hearts of the Saora people. It continues to be used in their religious rituals and festivals, and efforts are being made to preserve and promote the traditional art form.

Change in IDDTAL from Religious art to commercial art over time

Religious art, which is created to depict religious themes, figures, and stories, has been an integral part of many cultures throughout history. While religious art has primarily been created for devotional or spiritual purposes, it has also been influenced by commercial factors over time.



One reason why religious art may change for commercial purposes is the need to appeal to a wider audience. Commercialization of religious art may involve adapting the style, technique, or subject matter to appeal to a broader market. For example, in the 19th century, Christian art was often simplified and romanticized to appeal to the middle class, who were more interested in decorative art than devotional art.

Another reason why religious art may change for commercial purposes is to cater to the demands of patrons. Patrons of religious art often had specific requirements and preferences, which could include the depiction of specific saints, the use of specific symbols, or the inclusion of particular messages or themes. In some cases, patrons may have commissioned religious art to promote their own interests or to demonstrate their piety.

However, it is important to note that commercialization of religious art has also been a subject of criticism, as it can be seen as a commodification of spiritual beliefs and practices. Some argue that the commercialization of religious art can lead to a loss of authenticity and sacredness, as the art becomes more about making a profit than conveying a spiritual message or expression

With the passage of time, the *Iddital* art has undergone a process of transition. Saora artists have started to experiment with new techniques and materials. The use of modern materials such as canvas and acrylic paints has become common, and many Saora artists have begun to incorporate contemporary themes into their art. These art forms have not only survived but have also evolved with the changing times. The Saora community has also been actively promoting their art and culture through various initiatives, such as cultural festivals, exhibitions, and workshops.

The *Iddital* art has a rich tradition that has been passed down through generations. While the art has undergone a process of transition, the traditional art forms still continue to thrive in some places, and the Saora community has been able to adapt and evolve their art while still preserving their cultural heritage, although not in the traditional sense but to maintain their cultural identity and aesthetics.



Transformation and Preservation:

Iddital painting, a traditional art form of the Lanjia Saora tribe in Rayagada district, Odisha, has undergone significant transformation while simultaneously striving for preservation. Historically, these paintings served as ritualistic art, closely tied to the tribe's spiritual and cultural practices. The aesthetic of Iddital paintings, characterized by simple, linear designs and the use of natural pigments, reflects the Saora community's deep connection with nature and their ancestral heritage.

These traditional paintings are made using natural dyes derived from rice, white stones, and extracts of flowers and leaves, and a home-made tender bamboo paintbrush. Primarily derived from structural styles, these artworks usually have symmetrical geometric shapes like the triangle and circle often in wave-like patterns. Another distinctive feature of this art form is the arrangement of the motifs and characters in a net-like strategy. These paintings are specifically popular for their abundant diversity— sacred and formal themes.

Common subjects of this art comprise of tribal humans, trees, the sun and moon, horses, and elephants, which all hold their own meaning and symbolism. An alluring recurring image of this artwork is 'The Tree of existence'— featuring the arms of the trees extended and providing shelter the animals of the forest, small clay huts and tribal people engaged in their regular household chores like women carrying pots and infants playing around, and men raising livestock or hunting. Every mold and sketch of Soura art describes their social, cultural, and religious ideals.

In recent years, however, external influences and modernization have led to changes in both the techniques and themes of *Iddital* painting. The introduction of synthetic colors, the influence of contemporary art forms, and the commercialization of tribal art have all contributed to this evolving aesthetic. Artists are now experimenting with new styles, blending traditional motifs with modern elements to appeal to a broader audience.

Despite these transformations, efforts are being made to preserve the original essence of *Iddital* painting. Local artists and cultural organizations are working to document and promote



traditional techniques, ensuring that the art form remains a vital part of the Lanjia Saora identity. This delicate balance between transformation and preservation highlights the dynamic nature of indigenous art, where cultural continuity is maintained even as the art adapts to changing times.

The Balance between Transformation and Preservation

- Innovation within Tradition
- Embracing new influences while staying true to cultural roots.
- Encouraging contemporary adaptations that respect traditional aesthetics.

Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Document the historical and cultural significance of traditional Lanjia Saora paintings.
2. Analyze the transformation of these paintings in the digital age.
3. Evaluate the impact of digital mediums on the aesthetic values of the paintings.
4. Explore preservation strategies to maintain the cultural heritage of Lanjia Saora paintings.

Problem Statement

In recent years, there has been a significant shift from traditional painting methods to other mediums. While this transformation offers new opportunities for creativity and dissemination, it also poses challenges to the preservation of the original aesthetic and cultural significance of these artworks.

Impact

Understanding the transformation and preservation of indigenous digital paintings in Rayagada is crucial for maintaining the cultural heritage and identity of the Lanjia Saora community. This research will contribute to the broader discourse on indigenous art, digital transformation, and cultural preservation.



Sustainable Practices

Promoting eco-friendly materials and traditional techniques alongside modern innovations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research on *Iddital* painting in Rayagada district, Odisha, in the context of changing aesthetics offers valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity within the realm of traditional indigenous art.

In sum, the research underscores the importance of traditional indigenous art forms like *Iddital* painting in adapting to a changing world while preserving cultural heritage. It highlights the agency of *Iddital* artists in navigating the tension between tradition and modernity. This study contributes to a broader discourse on the dynamic nature of traditional art forms and their capacity to evolve in response to contemporary influences. It also emphasizes the significance of cultural preservation in an increasingly globalized world.

Traditionally made on the clay walls of the homes of the villagers primarily by the priests during special occasions and festivals like harvest, child-birth, marriage, religious ceremonies, Soura paintings are usually dedicated to the principal deity '*Iddital*' of the tribe.

The delicate balance between transformation and preservation is crucial for the survival of *Iddital* painting. Both internal community efforts and external support are vital in maintaining the cultural integrity of the art form.

The Way Forward- Continued research, education, entrepreneurship and sustainable practices will ensure that *Iddital* paintings remain a living tradition for future generations. Younger generations may lack interest in or access to learning traditional methods.

SCENIC OF
ORIGINAL PRACTICE

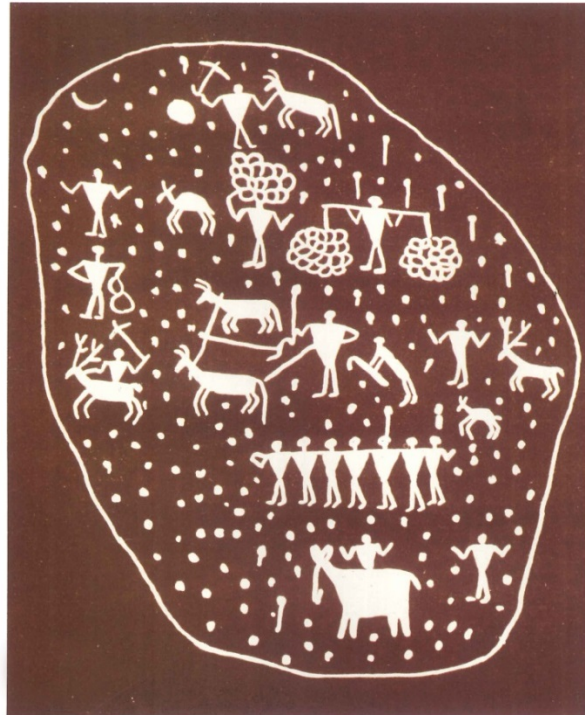


Book - Saura Painting- Essays on Life in Art – Edited By Sitakant Mahapatra



Book - Soura Painting- Essays On Life In Art – Edited By Sitakant Mahapatra, Photo :- Dr. Cornelia Mallebrein





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**Conversation with Rati sabar about Idital Painting, Putasingh village, Rayagada District,
Photo– Gouri Moharana-2024,**



Motifs of Putasingh village, Rayagada District- Deer, Dog with man, Peacock, Hen



Lanjia soara tribe Laxmi sabar with her husband on the front of (Idital) wall painting and wearing their indigenous clothes.



Transformation of Idital painting and Saora tribal womens wearing their indigenous clothes and ornaments



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