

Madhubani Painting as a Medium of Communication

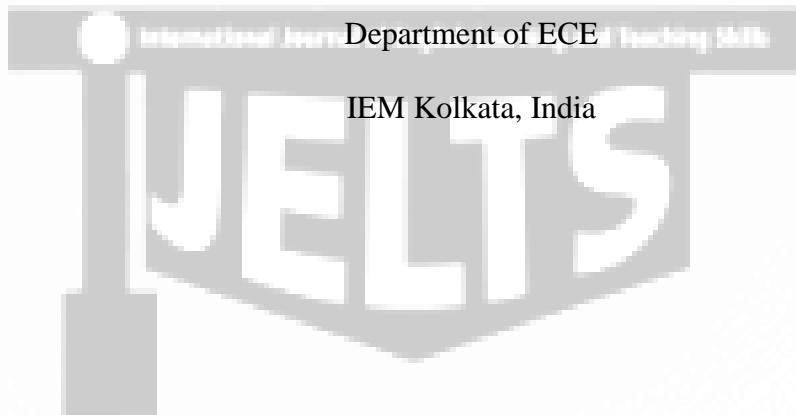
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MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

2

Abstract

Communication is an act of conveying thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions from one entity or group to another through use of mutually understood signs and symbols. It is a medium which binds a family, society, nation, and world as a whole. There are different modes of communication which are categorized under verbal and non-verbal communication. “A picture’s worth a thousand words” is an old saying, stresses that conveying ideas and thoughts through an art is another most efficient way to communicate. Throughout history, people have used art to communicate. It can express religious thoughts, personal feelings, and political ideas through symbols or allegories in which each figure stands for an abstract idea. This study is an investigation of Madhubani painting as a mode of communication where it tells how each element of painting defines a message.

Keywords: Art, Communication, Language, Madhubani Painting

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

3

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Each nation has its own culture, tradition, heritage, and has its own way of expression. Painting is one of the way of expression of thoughts, emotions and believes. Madhubani painting or Mithila painting is one of traditional painting of Bihar which is known for its bright color, distinct style, symbolism and simple beauty[6]. It was originated from Madhubani district of Mithila region of Bihar and was practiced widely as a form of wall art.. Its origin are often traced back to the age of *Ramayan* (a Hindu mythological epic), when the ruler named Raja Janaka commissioned an artist to make the paintings of his daughter named Sita. The painting is expression of day to day experiences, belief, love of nature, spiritual concept and knowledge of epic.

The painting is done in three ways, wall painting, canvas painting, and floor painting. Among these wall and floor painting are very ancient tradition in Mithila region. The symbols used in the painting have their specific meaning. In Madhubani, art and craft have reached its stage of fineness and have made the life more colorful[2].

Methodology

Artists symbolize the intended message and codify them and then allow the viewer to interpret the hidden message[7]. There are many basic emotions which are universal and painting is the external manifestation of those emotions, that's why it appeals to all beings of any time or place. Therefore, painting is one of the most direct and effective form of communication.

What does one communicate through paintings

- **Story Telling:** The very first impression of any painting is to tell a story, idea or incident. The careful arrangement of colors, shades and scenes gives immediate appeal to the eyes and soul.
- **Revealing the Rhythm:** Just as music is poetry of sound, the painting is poetry of sight. A piece of painting fills the eyes and heart in rhythmic delight[1].
- **Depicting Human civilization:** Shymala Gupta in her work “The Beautiful in Indian Art” points out two functioning of painting. It represents formal excellence of nature and depict the mark of human civilization and culture[7].
- **Bhava – Actual expression:** Bhava i.e Expression is one of the communicative aspect of painting and is represented through facial expression, posture, scene, or action.

Symbols and their meaning

- **Mythological Figure:** Figures of Goddess Durga, Kali, Sita, Radha, and God Ram and Krishna are depicted in the painting. Birth of lord krishna, Ram-Sita marriage, Krishna ras leela, Ram’s departure to forest, are finely drawn in the form of Madhubani Painting.
- **Sun:** Sun in all civilizations has had an important place in the legions of God and nature worship. Madhubani villagers are dependent on the sun for a good harvest. The sun painted with large eyes and in vivid color represent noon day while mellow eyes indicate either dawn or dusk.

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

5

- **Lotus:** The empty space in the painting is filled by drawing leaves, flowers, animals and birds. Leaves are designed in a very interesting ways. Flowers like Lotus is the most commonly used flower in painting which symbolizes female.
- **Bamboo Tree:** Bamboo tree is symbol of male figure.
- **Fish:** Fish is symbol of very auspicious theme of Madhubani painting. It symbolizes good luck and holiness and fertility. Artists use curve line, straight line and zigzag line in the entire body of fish to give beautiful finish[3].
- **Swastika:** It is very auspicious symbol in Indian cultural. It signifies happiness, pleasure and good luck. The four sides of swastika represents four arm of lord Vishnu of Hindu Mythology.
- **Birds:** In Madhubani painting birds appear in very colorful and stylish manner. Birds like parrot, peacock, swan are usually depicted in the painting. Parrot is symbol of love and is drawn with trees meaning life full of love and happiness.
- **Snake:** Snakes in Indian culture are worshipped as deity. This belief is expressed in the painting by drawing snakes. Snakes also symbolize fertility.

Examples of some communication through Madhubani Paintings

Madhubani painting reflects aesthetic taste, love for natural phenomenon, panoramic view of the day to day life of people. Here are some examples of realistic communication through some beautiful Madhubani painting.

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

6

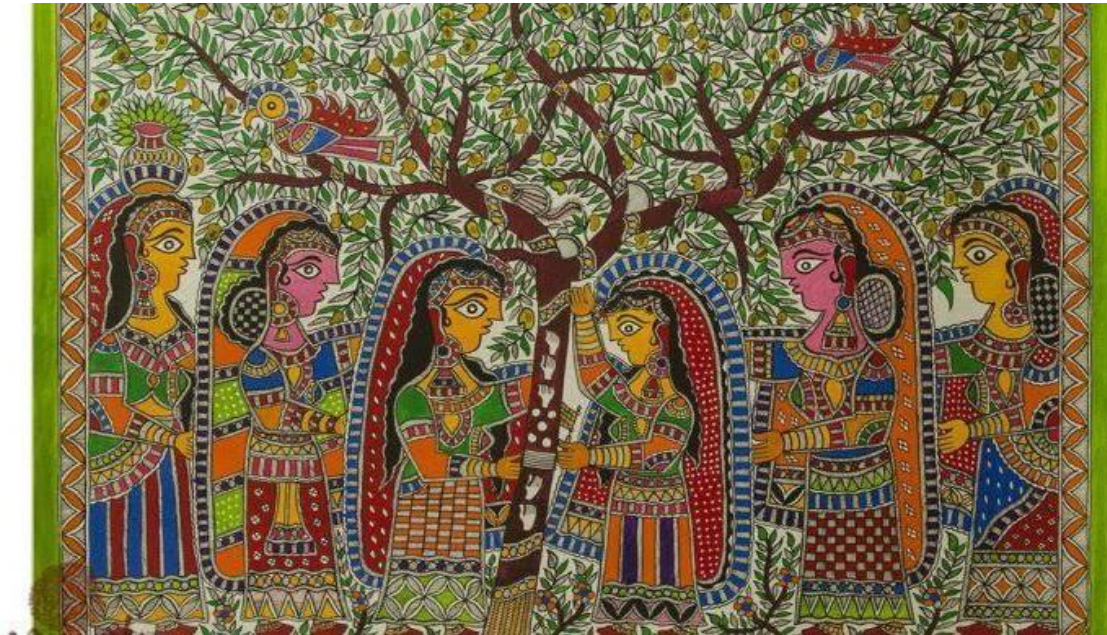


Fig. 1 Chipko Movement by women[4]

Madhubani painters often depict nature as their theme for painting, where animals, plants and environments are delineated with artistic magnificence. Above painting is based on the theme of Chipko movement. Here it is clearly seen that how women have hugged the tree from being deforested. Some paintings depict a man with an axe approaching the tree to cut it but a woman is portrayed hugging it to protect the same. This beautiful painting shows very fine coordination between nature and human beings. Indian culture depicts nature as deity. Each and every elements of nature are being worshipped and this has made our ecosystem run in efficient way. The above painting has been succeeded in conveying the awareness towards nature to the masses.

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

7

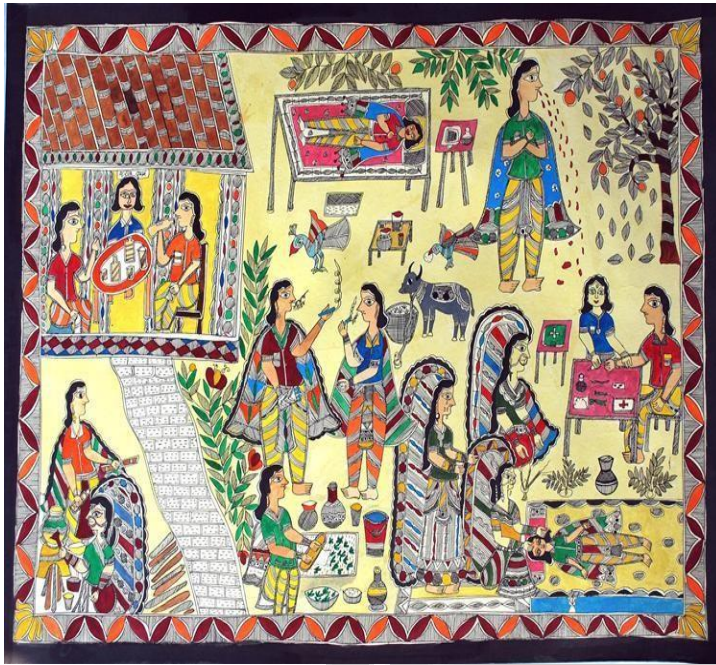


Fig 2. Drug abuse[4]



Fig 3. Clean India[4]

Today artists try to aware the masses towards some social issues like drug abuse, alcoholism, child marriage, woman empowerment and natural calamities. Fig. 2 depicts the scene of a village where people are smoking and drinking. Going into detail, one can find that women are busy in making food on chulah(stove) and trying to run their family's livelihood while male members are suffering from diseases. This painting spreads the message of "Smoking kills". Fig. 3 depicts a woman cleaning the street and using dustbins for dusts. This painting promotes cleanness and motivate others to practice. In some paintings one may find the theme of child sex abuse, girl child education and many more.

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

8



The story of Ram-Sita marriage has been used as motif of Madhubani painting for long time.

This painting depicts the same. Sun, fish, elephant are all depicted in marriage painting followed by the saying that just as the sun gives light, a marriage must bring light to the family, just as a fish and elephant get big in size so should the marriage result in larger family with greater prosperity[5].

Conclusion

Painting is one of the important part of visual art, is a communication itself and the ingredients of this communication are color, lighting, size, depth, rhythm and textual gradients speak in a very artistic manner. This paper has successfully established Madhubani painting as a mode of communication between the artists and the masses. The paper showed how with different symbols used in the painting, artist conveys his ideas and feelings. More one goes deep into the painting, more he/she decodes the message. Madhubani paintings are now capable of conveying messages that are socially and environmentally more concerned. The further research in this field can make the communication much more efficient, reliable and entertaining.

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

9

These Madhubani style paintings are made by the author 1



Madhubani painting has made a great impact on Author's mind. Using the elements used in Madhubani painting, he has made some of the paintings. He has tried to make his paintings attractive and communicative. The first painting has 22 beautiful fishes arranged in a systematic

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

10

manner. Four of these fishes are at the corners of the painting, 17 of them are in the middle surrounding a big fish. The author has tried to depict the scene of kingdom of the fishes where the big fish is the queen of the kingdom, 17 fishes are her ministers and 4 fishes at the corner are the gatekeepers(dwarpal). Fishes Are attractive and adorned with jewellery Symbolizing the prosperity of kingdom.

The second painting is of a beautiful bird sitting on a branch of a tree. In this style of painting birds are usually very colorful and attractive to symbolize love and happiness.

In the third painting, the author has depicted a mythological figure of lord Krishna and goddess Radha. The author has beautifully created their image in the mirror decorated with beautiful and auspicious fishes. Here the lord Krishna and goddess Radha is the symbol of romance and the highest form of love, "the divine love". . Radha and Krishna represent eternally young divine entities in love with each Other. In order to demonstrate to people Krishna who is 'Parmatma'- 'Purush' himself came in a human form. 'Prakriti' took the form of Radha symbolizing all that is there in the creation. Radha and Krishna with each other simply means that Parmatma (Krishna) and Prakriti (Radha) are inseparable from each other. This is like a silver spoon. Silver and spoon although different but still are inseparable.[8]

The fourth painting is the depiction of lord Buddha. This style of painting is known as kalamkari in Madhubani where shadings are made with horizontal, vertical and slanting lines. The border of painting is decorated with Betel leaves. A beautiful Lotus flower is also drawn which symbolizes purity of body, mind and speech in Buddhism.

MADHUBANI PAINTING AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

11

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