

Rajasthan Folk Art : Priceless Treasure in Indian Art

Dr.Sonia Rani

(Assistant Professor)

DAV College,

Sriganganagar (Rajasthan)

India is the hub of art and culture as it is one of the oldest civilizations and with all the time it contributed heavily to the world of art. If you enjoy folk art, you must visit Rajasthan because it is the epitome of art in India. Royal palaces to common households in rural areas, there's some form of folk art beautifying the world a little at a time.

There's so much culture and history in Rajasthan, it amazes me every time and if you look at the details, the patterns, just the aesthetics of it all you might be in awe of it all too. Rajasthan hosts gorgeous architecture, breathtaking dance forms and just the most beautiful art forms available anywhere.

Everything is perfect but folk art, all the different types of folk art just makes it worth being there, but there are so many of them. I will be further discussing the most common folk arts of Rajasthan, introducing you to the basics so you can appreciate the effort behind their beauty a little more next time when you witness it.

Mandana Art

One of the most common and important art forms is Mandana which translates into "draw". Its history dates back to Aryans and Vedic times and even exists now in a lot of rural areas. Mandana is beautiful and symmetric patterns on walls and floors but it is also much more than that.

You might have heard of the Celtic runes in Western civilization history, well Mandana has almost the same purpose. It supposedly wards off evil and negative energies while making the ambience a little more positive and welcoming for Gods.

The walls and floors are layered with a mixture, commonly known as "Gara", which contains cow dung, clay etc and then patterns and beautiful drawings are made on them to beautify them. The colours are mostly red and white and the women of the house draw them on.

It can be simple designs or a little more complex paintings of nature, peacocks, Gods etc. the Meena women are especially gifted in making perfectly symmetrical Mandana designs. So the next time you see a Mandana art, do remember to appreciate the significance and history of the art form.

Thape Art

Thape is another meaningful form of art, also a part of the long-running tradition in most parts of Rajasthan. If you have visited Rajasthan, you might have noticed handprints on the side of doors with beautiful designs around them, well they are known as Thape art.

It is a very common and so very underrated art form too. It brings fortune and prosperity in the house welcoming Gods. Instead of paints, various holy materials are used like henna, turmeric etc. handprints are made on both sides of walls and sometimes "Shubh-Labh" is written with them welcoming luck.

It is also a common ritual in weddings in Rajasthan, for the bride and groom to put Thape on one of the walls in the house while other family members decorate it. It is a very meaningful and serene art form that must be appreciated for the unique beauty and traditional values it holds.

Phad Art

Well, Phad is one of the most gorgeous and vibrant art forms in Rajasthan. Even though its history dates back a long time, it recently started to get its status as folk art and people from our generation started adopting it and learning it.

Before recently, it was a legacy of just one family passing through generations. Phad art is paintings of local deities, mythologies depicted on a huge scroll. Priests used them as a form of temples while singing the tales of the deities all around.

The art form is much more complex than it seems. The cloth for the painting is specially prepared by a lot of work, even all the colours have

their definite work assigned to them but even with all the technicalities and rules involved in making it, Phad art has a certain natural lure to it.

If you are to visit the Bhilwara region in Rajasthan, you might just be lucky enough to witness this prominent art form which is a delight for the eyes. Phad is a form of folk art very much full of life and just starting to get the recognition it deserves.

Badaley Art

Jodhpur region of Rajasthan is famous for the architectural wonders it stands for and also for the most delicious of foods. It also is famous for a unique form of folk art in the most basic of things and Badaley art is one of them.

People there like to wrap their utensils in a cloth of leather for some purpose and that cloth or leather is known as Badaley and it contains exquisite drawings and designs. There's not much to know about this form of art just that it must be witnessed and appreciated because it rightly earns its place among the different forms of folk art in Rajasthan.

Thewa Art

You might have noticed by now how different areas of Rajasthan have their famous forms of Folk art and if you are fond of pretty jewellery, you are going to like this form of ravishing folk art.

Thewa art is a form of art used to making magnificent jewellery by making designs from gold on glass. A special form of tinted glass is used to make it and the tint of colours in it just makes it that much more marvellous.

Although it's mostly limited to the Pratapgarh area, the new age interest in traditional jewellery is helping it claim its importance in the world. The history of Thewa art dates back to medieval times.

Pichhwai Art

Pichhwai is a beautiful folk art form that sadly isn't appreciated half as well as it should be. Just the details in the painting are so well done that they are breathtakingly gorgeous.

The topics of Pichhwai art revolves around Krishna and his stories. Their original purpose was to decorate temples with tales of Krishna and to educate illiterate people about Krishna and his miracles. The paintings are very vibrant with the choice of colours and intricate designs.

Sadly they have been declining in fame and the art form is dying. The paintings are just beautiful to look at and also quite calming. The form and style of painting are very delicate and requires a lot of work to master.

Miniature Art

Dating back to the medieval period, this form of art became quite famous because of its regal-looking beauty. Even the colours used in it are so precious making it very famous among the royal families of Rajputana, 16th century onwards.

The topics mostly revolved around Hindu mythology and the royals in their daily lives. It isn't just your everyday art but has a very unique form to it. The colours are very vibrant and sometimes even precious metals and jewels are used.

It takes a long time to make them because of the ornate details of it and the long and tedious process of preparing everything. It's the most famous among the Rajasthani folk arts and righteously so.

Conclusion

So now after reading this you must have a basic idea of what Rajasthani folk art is. It isn't just visually pleasing which it is, but much more than that. It's educative, useful, godly and what not. Rajasthan's cultural heritage is just exquisite. There are so many different forms of folk art in Rajasthan and everyone is unique in their way. Folk art needs to be appreciated and I hope from now on when you come in contact with some form of folk art, you will appreciate just how wonderful it is in all its glory and tradition.

References :

1. Saksena, Jogender ; 2008, Art of Rajasthan:Henna And Floor, Sundeep Publisher, The University of Michigan.
2. Vasishtha, Radhakrishna ; 1995, Art and Artists of Rajasthan. Abhinav Publications.
3. Rowland, Benjamin ; 1967, The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, (3rd edn.), Pelican History of Art, Penguin.