



The Significance Of Black Colour In Indian Art And Architecture: A Brief Picture Of Black From The Indian Knowledge System

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Abstract: The rich heritage of India defined with its art and architecture. Indian art and architecture is divided into various categories. One special factor about the art and architecture is colours. Colours play a very important role to describe the rich heritage of India. This paper defines the role of black colour in Indian art and architecture. This is the exploration of the multiple roles of black colour with the support of Indian knowledge system. In this paper there are some of examples from the old traditional philosophies. There are so many spiritual meaning of black which are deeply associated with Indian philosophies. This paper is an investigation of the practical use of black from prehistoric art to architecture. In different regions of India, black is used for so many auspicious and spiritual purposes. This small research also highlights the technological aspects of black pigments. In Indian art the organic pigments are chiefly used from prehistoric times. Different forms of organic substances were used in that period of time. Iron oxide and lamp soot were used in so many ways. The application of the mineral colours provides an idea about the craftsmanship of Indian artists. By merging all references, this paper is the visual representation of black colour in Indian art and architecture. This abstract paper sets a platform for the exploration of black colour in Indian art and architecture. It is also a brief study of multifaceted role of black from Indian aesthetics and symbolism.

Index Terms: Heritage, prehistory, pigments, organic.

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of Indian art and architecture showcase the rich colourful heritage of nation. Art and architecture mirrors the religious, social and political transformations. The roots of Indian art and architecture spanned from the prehistoric caves and ancient temples (Balasubramanian, 2018). The evidences of art and architecture can be traced from Indus Valley Civilization. It is one the earliest civilization of the world. The famous cities of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa showcased the finest examples of craftsmanship and advanced urban planning. Great baths of Mohenjodaro and drainage systems revealed their advanced technologies. They were fine artists also, as lot of artefacts founded from the excavations. Some famous sculptures were founded from the sites such as Dancing girl, priest king, toys etc. The people of Indus people decorate their utensils with intricate patterns and motifs. Art is displayed by them on so many things. They carved their seals with the animal and deities figures. Vedic period also encompassed with art and architecture. The scriptures and texts from that era influenced the Indian art and culture. After that the Maurya and Gupta Empire established with the development in art and architecture. Ashoka played a significant role in art and architecture (Mishra, 2005). Numerous pillars, stupas and rock cut caves built during the time. The Sanchi Stupa is one of the biggest examples of art and architecture in India. Gupta

Empire also known as a Golden Period of nation (Kumar, 2012). It is due to the factor of advancement in art and science together. The rock cut caves of Ajanta and Ellora also tells the stories of Art and Architecture in India. Moreover, South Indian Temples also predicted the art and architecture of India. Large number of temples in South is the examples of the finest carvings and massive courtyards. Dravidian style of Chola dynasty contributed towards architecture and bronze sculpture. Shiv Nataraja sculpture is one of the sculpture from Chola period. North Indian architecture is based on the Nagara style. The Khajuraho temples in India are famous for intricate carvings and erotic sculptures. These temples built by Chandela dynasty. New architectural styles emerged in India when Islamic rulers crossed the borders. They introduced domes, arches, minars to elaborate the structures. The Taj Mahal, the Qutub Minar and the Alai Darwaza are the iconic examples of Indo Islamic art and architecture. In addition to this the colonial period also happened in India with the arrival of Britishers. Old styles replaced with the European architectural styles. It includes the railway station, educational institutions etc. There is a significance of Colours in Indian Culture and traditions. Each colour carries its own meaning and linked with emotions and metaphors. This paper is about the role of black colour in Indian art and architecture. Black is associated with fear and fascination both. It is used for the protection from evil eyes. Sometimes the negative connotations also attached with black. Black used to wear in mourning. In weddings it is avoided due to its negative powers. The nature of black colour in Indian culture is mysterious and profound. This research is about the interpretation of black colour in Indian art and architecture both. There are so many meanings associated with the black colour in Indian culture. In different art forms it is used in so many ways such as ink drawings, stone carvings, temple decorations, textiles etc. The beauty of black represents the grandeur and sacredness of temple architecture. With this brief study, I try to uncover the symbolic meanings and practical purposes of black from the sources of Indian Knowledge System. The symbolic meaning of black in Indian Knowledge system is associated with the concept of cosmic energy. Most of the deities in India also represented in Black such as Kali. It represents the cycle of life and death with destruction and transformation. In this way black reflects the Indian spirituality and philosophy.

II. ROLE OF BLACK IN INDIAN ART

2.1 Black in Paintings of India

Black colour plays a crucial role in miniature art of India. The history of miniature painting dated from 16th and 19th century. There are different style of paintings falls under the miniature paintings of India such as Mughal, Pahari, Deccan and Rajput. Black is used in mostly all of painting styles for the outlining purposes. The visual impact of black highlights its significance in Indian art (Sariri Talebibidhendi ,2014) .

Ajanta cave art is known for its murals and frescoes. Caves are decorated with the life story of Buddha. Black is used in symbolic representations. Bright colours used in paintings with outlining in black. For creating depth in paintings bright colours accompanied with black. Emotive expressions also adorned with black. There are so many ancient and contemporary techniques to obtain black. Charcoal and lampblack are the earliest black pigments used in Indian art. Later on synthetic dyes are used for painting purpose. Therefore black is used in traditional paintings and caves both. Black is used as a medium for enriching the Indian art (Palit 2017) .

2.2 Black Sculptures of India

Black stones are used in many ways to form sculptures in Indian art. The artistic sensibilities of black are seen in Indian art. Multifaceted nature of black can be predicted from the temple sculptures in India, which are the true definition of symbolism. Chola sculptures are known for bronze statues(Baby,2022). Bronze is primary material but the black stone is utilized to form the iconic figures. Shiv Nataraja is remarkable figure of grace and expressions. These sculptures of chola period are the masterpieces of artistic achievement. Another significant use of Black stone can be seen in the Khajuraho Temples built in Madhya Pradesh. Black stone is used to form erotic statues with intricate details. Black also represents the deities in temples. In south India temples the Black stone is used to carve the divine images. Kali and Shiva mostly seen in black and it symbolize the enigmatic nature of Gods. In this way we can say that the black colour has symbolic depths in Indian art.

2.3 Black is also Linked With Textiles and Folk Art in India

Indian textiles denote the cultural identity of artistic excellence. Black becomes the integral part of Indian textiles and folk art. Two best examples are Madhubani art form and Kalamkari hand painted textiles. Madhubani is also known as Mithila art. it is one of the oldest folk art from Bihar. Black plays a significant role for the bold outlines in these folk paintings. Intricate designs and patterns created with black. Black colour in Mdhubani folk paintings enhances the aesthetic vibrancy. The themes of this art are based on the mythological and religious stories. Black highlights the intricate nature of Madhubani folk art (Joshi Tapasvi, 2015). Likewise the importance of black is also interconnected with Kalamkari block prints. Black outlines drawn with bamboo stick and then designs filled with natural colours. Black act as a primary colour and sets a contrast between other colours. These are the famous block prints originated in Andhra Pradesh. Natural black colour obtained from the jiggery, iron, and water. All these elements boiled and then ready for fermentation for many days.

There is cultural significance associated with black dyed textiles. Various regions in India believe in deep symbolic meanings of black dyed textiles. Black is used for the spiritual and protection purposes. For a protection against evil spirits and negativity black is used in many ways. In India people used to wear black threads for removing negativity. Hence black dyed textiles are used for spirituality. There are so many reasons which are quite relevant for black textiles. Indian attires are famous for its elegancy. Black is all time favourite for everyone. It is considered as sophisticated and auspicious both. Intricate designs on black textiles exude an aesthetic sense. Black defines luxury and grace.

Various textile techniques describe a rich colourful history of India. The profound artistic traditions of India are multifaceted. The utility of black in Indian art highlights its versatility.

Cultural identity of India is deeply connected with its rich art and architecture

2.4 Relevance of Black in Indian Architecture

Historically and symbolically black holds a great place in Indian architecture. Black has its own aesthetic sense which is reflecting in different periods and regions. There are so many cultural meaning associated with black. In ancient times black stone was utilized for the architecture (Guha Roonwal,2014). Black granite used for making temples during Chola dynasty. The majestic appearance of black stone added durability of structures. Basalt rock was used in Elephanta caves which are almost black hue. These caves are world famous for their unique rock cut art. Black was also used during in Mughal Period. One finest example is the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah in Agra. Black marble is used to make the intricate patterns on white marble. This is the mark of high level of craftsmanship. In contemporary architecture the black is very helpful for creating the bold and minimal designs. The elegant nature of black combined with other materials. In urban cities the architecture is a combination of black designs with contemporary style. The chic appearance of black can be seen in offices and buildings. Black is the symbol of elegance and sophistication. There are certain philosophical meanings of black associated in India. Black symbolizes the mystery, power and divinity. In India black stone is used to personify God. Several idols of deities are represented in black colour. Shani temples always made with black stones. Black also denotes the infinite cosmic energy.

2.5 Black Stone Used in Temples

Indian architecture is a tapestry of different styles. Black stone is used in so many temples because of its symbolic significance. The Hoysala Empire which is Karnataka today is known for its intricate carvings. It is made up of black soapstone. Black stone is a striking feature of the temple. Black stone was also used to construct the temples of Vijayanagara Empire. It is known for the grandeur and intricate patterns with black stone. Black added an aesthetic appeal in the architecture. Symbolic interpretations are linked with art and architecture. The chief element of temples is Shikhara and Garbhagriha. Black stone often used in making the shikhara symbolizes the vast cosmos. This part of temple denotes the link between earth and heaven. Second part is garbhagriha, it is the innermost part of the temple. Grbhagriha is for the mystery and contemplation. This area of the temple is the spiritual heart of the whole structure. Black stone represents the core of the universe. Black marble and stone also used in the buildings built by Mughals. Notable examples are Taj Mahal and Red Fort. These two buildings reflect the use of black stone accompanied white marble. The primary material of Taj Mahal is white marble, but black stone is used for the intricate patterns and designs. On the other side, Red Fort in Delhi is another example of Mughal architecture. It is constructed with red sandstone. Black is used with different textures and techniques in the building. The

decorative elements of the building are the true example of delicate craftsmanship. Mughal architecture is a blend of various colours and materials. The visual impact of black stones is very appealing and contrasting. Black sets a contrast with other colours to enhance the aesthetic quality of the buildings. There is a symbolic significance of black stone used in architecture in India, as it provides a prestige and nobility. Black also denotes the enduring legacy of Indian architecture. Modern buildings are based on its functionality and visual representations. The black stones are always used to create a sense of sophistication.

2.6 The Symbolic Interpretation of Black in Modern Architecture

Ancient architecture is very rich and sets an example for the modern art and architecture in India. There is an influence of old patterns in new structures. Black stones used in new architecture in various ways. The rich heritage of our India is the backbone for the new contemporary artists. Black stone has so many meanings such as mystery, protection and power. The black stone is known for its divinity. The contemporary designs derive its meanings from the old pattern. There is a connection between old and new architecture. Architects try to blend the tradition and aesthetics together. Black stone is also used to make the memorials and statues in public places. The black stone is the perfect example of the strength and endurance. Artists and architects integrate the traditional patterns with the new modern principles. This idea of fusion between old and new is the inspiration for the new generations.

2.7 Philosophy Linked with Black Colour

Black has been used because of its power to represent the dual nature. It helps to permeate the existence when combined with white. The symbolic configuration of black and white represents the light and dark. Knowledge and ignorance also connected with the duality of black and white. Black is very important to understand the foundation of philosophical system and religious purposes. In Christianity black and white is the symbol of sin and purity. Black denotes the devil and white represents the God. Similarly the Advaita Vedanta a school of Hindu philosophy deals with the ultimate reality. Black and white represents the good and evil both. Apart from the philosophical significance the colour black also holds metaphysical meanings. It is the symbolic representation of infinity. In many cultures it is said that black symbolizes the creation of the universe. Black also linked with the concepts of Maya and nirvana. It is due to its metaphysical interpretations. Black is also the symbol of illusion of unknown mystery. It represents the absence of darkness and the quest for truth of self realization.

III. CONCLUSION

There are multifaceted meanings of black in Indian art and architecture. The practical application of black in sculptures and paintings has its own resonance. Black is the colour of deep cultural meanings. It is the colour of Indian philosophy. Importance of black enriches the Indian Knowledge System. In Indian old texts black symbolizes the mystery and unknown cosmic energies of the universe. Most of the deities in India visually represented with black. There are certain philosophies connected with black colour. Practical uses of black in Indian art and architecture underscore its importance in the rich heritage of India. Black contrasts with white to highlight the architectural details of the structures. It adds the aesthetic sense to the buildings. Several temples and monuments in India built with black stone. Therefore the in Indian art and architecture the relevance of black has a great significance. Due to its symbolic meanings and practical purpose black is very important part of the cultural history. The black colour sets a stage in Indian Knowledge System.

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