



MUD MEMORY AND THE MOTHER GODDESS: SANJHI ART AND THE LIVING HERITAGE OF HARYANA'S DIVINE FEMININE TRADITION

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Abstract

The focus of this research paper is on the latent source of Sanjhi Art in the local folklore and traditionism of Haryana. Sanjhi art One such ephemeral art form is the eclectic devotion personified form of Sanjhi -a worship of mother Goddess also widely revered as Sanjhi in Haryana which The incomparable symbolizes oneness of all mutual cooperation manifestations. Based on a detailed investigation of the history of development, the processes of artistic work and ritual uses of this art form, it unfolds how Sanjhi functions as a religious impulse but also as a push in culture. The paper explores the history of the tradition from ancient to modern times, focusing on its ongoing social significance in present-day Haryana and addressing urbanization and changing community life.

Keywords: Sanjhi art, Haryana folklore, Worship of Goddesses, Contemporary crafts and Cultural legacy.

1. Introduction

Sanjhi art is perhaps one of the most profound patterns in deep set conduits across an unbroken history coloured by devotional arts and community. This archaic form of art, originated from the mother Goddess Sanjhi is not only a matter of temporary sculpture and embellishment but personifies transient decoration that has nourished them spiritually and culturally for centuries.

Sanjhi, the early child celebrating fiesta exhibits an amazing goddess story in the form of motherly god who protects and she is one figure around whom intricate arts are based which get unravelled during the nine days period Navratri or Durga Puja when she incarnates into a regional avatar. These works of art, which could be anything from bricks and clay carvings that line up beside the fossils to images of stars or gods of the heavens themselves are not just aesthetics—they make a complex system by which a way of life has been handed down, community needs have been addressed, spiritual maintenance has taken place – one that has survived violent social upheavals over hundreds if not thousands of years.

Of Sanjhi art tradition and the larger cultural tapestry representing community solidarity, feminine divinity worship and peaceful coexistence with agriculture in Haryana. The Haryanvi Sanjhi is unlike paper-cut Sanjhi of UP, or carpet patterns made in other parts where matter remained confined between two dimensions and the three-dimensional sculptures were nowhere to be seen.” The article further says that local materials like clay and cow dung are used for creating these models which are decorated with bright colours and traditional accessories.

This research based book has underlined various dimensions of Sanjhi art within the cultural spectrum of Haryana such as its historical development, ritualistic significance, artistic subtleties and contemporary transformations. Through a careful reading of the traditional cultural practices, juxtaposed with other regional manifestations of this craft and against its survival in multivalent contemporary cultures, here I propose to critically take stock of what makes Sanjhi an enduring value both as an instrumentality for articulating cultural memory and as a live art form. Moreover, the significance of this study is not just academic; the rapid process of urbanisation in Haryana and its changing social structures have led to entirely new situations with which classical art forms must grapple.

2. Methodology

The current endeavour will use a qualitative-historical research approach to study the tradition of Sanjhi art of Haryana. This is an acceptable manner to research about the origin and culture of Sanjhi art through honouring its own history, materials including crafting process. It also involves study of its connection with religion, agricultural cycle and tradition. Primary and secondary data source: In order to gain a complete picture of this specific artistic technique, documentary collections will be applied.

2.1. Objectives

The research will focus on documenting the historical origins and cultural significance, of Sanjhi art.

To document the traditional materials and techniques used in Sanjhi art creation.

To understand the cultural and religious significance of Sanjhi art, particularly its association with the mother goddess.

To identify the role of Sanjhi art within Haryana's cultural landscape.

2.2. Analysis Plan

The study will try to unveil the historical development, type of material and techniques involved, cultural signification and initiatives of Sanjhi art in Haryana.

This study will use interpretive strategy to explore the cultural, social and contextual dimensions that have supported the Sanjhi art in Haryana.

3. Cultural Significance of Sanjhi Art in Haryana

Sanjhi art done in different regions of India is actually a large family related artistic practices that share motifs for devotional purposes, made as part-time activities and done by community. The word "Sanjhi" is from Sandhya (twilight in Sanskrit), and the term is used to describe any drawing made on the ground during evening part of evening involved women's performing puja with these drawings as well as household articles.

The diversity of local Sanjhi stylistics in various Indian regions, associated aesthetics and religious connections have developed under the influence of its multiple geo cultural impacts. Each regional variation has incorporated unique characteristics along with the core concepts of temporary construction, devotional intent and community involvement.

3.1 Goddess Sanjhi: Theological and Cultural Foundations

In Haryanvi folk religion, the goddess Sanjhi is considered to be most central in the all-female pantheon due to her nurturing and preservative aspects. Like many Hindu goddesses, she is not part of a broad pan-Indian textual

tradition, but is mostly an oral, living cultural practice - which means the worship of Sanjhi runs deep in the local communities and, consequently also resists standardisation from outside.

Sanjhi literally mean, the mother of the cosmos who rules over fertility, prosperity and family wellbeing according to local traditions. Her cult is widely traced to the agricultural way of life prevalent in rural Haryana, festival timings happens during the most important agricultural (and life) cycle period. The goddess is thought to have special powers for weddings and childbirth, so her worship is especially significant for young women and families that hope she will help them with marriage matters.

Sanjhi's Theological Perspective Understood from a theological perspective, the theology of Sanjhi has its emphasis placed on her accessibility, and is all about whether or not she can respond to requests from benevolent followers. In contrast to a distant ruler who requires a number of complex rituals and releases them only after making offerings to the appropriate gods, O Sanjhi just lives in the homes of people who feel like dedicating their spiritual life--their family space is her portrait frame; they may even chant mantras but do not need any other equipment such as firewood or an oil lamp. This kind of democratic spirituality is also another example of how our general predilection toward cultural democracy shapes worship and spiritual experience.

3.2 Navratri Festival: Community Celebration and Spiritual Practice

The main cultural base for Sanjhi paintings are created is the nine-days festival of Navratri which mainly in Haryana intricate activity of individual devotion becomes a collective one. In this logic of the festival, which already on Day 1 when cow dung is applied to shape a goddess on the Wall of Houses has conditioned artistic production and community action.

Each day of the festival begins with established local traditions to be followed for aarti (morning and evening) By village old women having classical knowledge about what exactly are bhajans / rituals to performed. They serve a range of other purposes as well: for cultural reproduction, social cohesion and incremental problem solving at the local level.



Fig.1: Local female making Sanjhi at Virasat Heritage Village, Masana, Kurukshetra. | Fig.2: Females performing Sanjhi rituals during a community gathering at Sankhol Village.

Young girls' participation in Sanjhi worship contributes valuable socialisation processes that familiarize them with adult religious duties and also with culturally accepted outlets for voicing hopes, anxieties, desires and wishes on future marriage prospects. The goddess is known for her ability to bestow upon her followers ideal husbands, so worship of her finds natural resonance among young girls fighting to find their preferred life partner despite family pressure about matrimony.

The community as a whole is involved throughout the nine days, which witnesses a revolving schedule of worship activities that are performed and then refreshed every day with families hosting the different veneration

ceremonies for all to attend in respective homes with refreshments being given by each family daily. That way, everyone keeps it fair and spreads out the financial holiday-haul.

3.3 Social Functions and Community Bonding

Among Haryanvi communities, the Sanjhi puja serves to bring together lines and sub-lines in inter-generational meetings as an act of community solidarity. The making and adorning of images doubles up with the practice of worship in that groups of women from differing households come together across age and social categories to work and act together.

The practice of inviting local women to participate in daily aarti generates networks of obligation and support that last beyond the duration of the festival. The women who participate in the Sanjhi of others can rely on a facilitation when hosting their own religious rituals, making possible "networked systems of mutual aid that spread throughout (the community)."

The organizational status of elder women as responsible for doing worship and teaching the traditional bhajans members who comply with this organize (at least potentially) a certain amount of accumulated cultural knowledge around respectful categories into which it could be recognized and transmitted. This is to ensure that cultural continuity is maintained; it also offers some rewarding opportunities for the older villagers.

The peculiarly male trajectory of joining the evening prayer after their day's work mirrors the gender inclusive characteristic of Sanjhi cults which, though associated with women's religiosity in popular imagination. This involvement permits the family to remain together during their ritual with the acknowledgement of traditional gender divisional roles.

3.4 Agricultural Connections and Seasonal Significance

Importance of agriculture for economy in Haryana has significant bearing on Sanjhi veneration and timings of this festivals is generally set, taking cue from key events during cropping season. Navratri comes during or after harvest time of the year and farming families have enough energy and resources to celebrate two festivals.

The use of agricultural products, particularly cow dung and clay, in Sanjhi Low relief folk Installation makes the connection between art and farming unique. Such things are common, found in rural homes, yet revered in their religious belief – thus indicating how closely bound are the act of farming and practical life to their religious practices.

The prayers recited for Sanjhi puja often express wishes for agricultural wealth, plentiful crop and protectiveness of animals. The fertility that the goddess embodies has also access to agricultural fertility, so her worship is very much pertinent to farming households which are dependent on fertile agricultural period.

The date of immersion thus coincides with the onset of the winter sowing season, symbolizing that after dams and river-inflow canals are full, water remains for irrigation in field channels where crops have been planted. This synchronises with the religious and agricultural calendars in rural Haryana."

3.5 Economic and Material Dimensions

Economic aspects of Sanjhi observance mirror various patterns of resource distribution within Haryanvi households; levels of Sanjhi wall decoration are on par with a family's ability to pay. Rich families can get costly jewellery, dresses and ornaments for goddesses and in the case of poor families they prepare simple but devotionally efficient arrangements.

Local potters have important occupation as they are economically significant in Sanjhi traditions, and specialise in the production of goddess limbs, faces, and body parts which families buy to assemble sculptures. This

specialized volume allows for the sustainability of local crafts and the quality and proper iconography in Dema Sculptures.

This ritual of “mannat” — specificity in their begging, openness to a quid pro quo relationship with the gods — leaves them beholden even during times of national jubilation. The families that gets a yes to their requests tend to have huge parties down the road, spiralling even more up on hiked cost, and more social prestige.



Fig.3 Virasat Heritage Village Masana, Kurukshetra; Women are busy making the ornaments of Sanjhi Mata

Market transactions for Sanjhi preparations --purchase of decorative items, music by the kirtan troupe and refreshments serve for community support, put back substantial funds in local economy during festival :hat support the traditional craft's sectors and small scale service-providers.

4. Themes and Motifs of Sanjhi Art in Haryana

4.1 Iconographic Traditions and Symbolic Representations

Jadoogariyon ki Nakkashi [The Witches' Designs] The idiom of Haryanvi Santhi: Interplay of Hindu goddess and indigenous folk ethos; farming traditions. Central figures of the goddess usually have highly stylized and symbolic rather than resembling a specific person realistic appearance. The Sanjhi goddess is usually shown in front-on position, with her arms outstretched indicating a blessing pose and being reminiscent of ritual presence rather than physical realism. Facial expression is calm; exhibits serene and formidable qualities of the Hindu goddess. The eyes are prominent and large, indicating divine consciousness. The nose is represented with a straight, protuberant line and the mouth is small with an air of tranquillity to portray peace and purity. Other motifs, including flowers, circles (suns), animals and plants are used around the central figure. Free symbol nature, farmer's life, time circle of the year and harmony with nature. Symmetry promotes balance and rituals.



Fig.4: Image of Sanjhi at Virasat Heritage Village, Kurukshetra. | Fig.5: Depiction of Radha and Krishna with a cow at the side of the main Sanjhi Figure.

Technique Sanjhi is created directly on walls with the help of burnt clay, mud, cow dung, natural colour. The effect is in low relief when shapes made of clay are applied over freshly spread cow dung. It is a combination of a low-relief and installation type of wall art.

Sanjhi depictions are often cosmic in nature, symbolising the theological concept of the goddess as universal mother ruling over all celestial and terrestrial appearances. Use of the sun and moon, stars, natural forces suggest a sophisticated symbolic thought linking immediate devotional use with cosmic understanding.

Jewelry and ornament styles are regional in contrast to map features which generally shared common decorative material sources. Traditional Haryanvi jewellery motifs, especially Nath (nose rings), Jhumka/Kundal (earrings), Borla (forehead ornament), Tagdi (waist chain), Ramjhol (anklet), Ponche/ hand Bangles and Khanthi/Galsari (necklace pattern) are generally seen in goddess depictions forging visual paradox among the human jewellery adornment and divine jewel attire.

4.2 Agricultural and Pastoral Imagery

Haryanvi Sanjhi motifs are predominantly based on agriculture; these patterns depict the local culture of Haryana, its economy and rural dominance. Wheat bundles and ploughs, oxen and harvest scenes are found around the goddess on all decorative compositions.

Pastoral themes of cows, buffalo, shepherds and rural landscapes celebrate the agrarian lifestyle by calling forth divine protection for livestock and agricultural pursuits. In aesthetic and functional terms these representations beautify the places of worship so as to signify certain prayer petitions concerning agricultural prosperity.

Images of the seasons come from the agricultural year as it affects religious practice. Monsoon clouds, blooming trees and seasonal festivals feature in images produced at the right time (season) of year as manifestations of an understanding of symbolism as temporal and appropriate, not to say a sense of seasonality.

Water {rivers, ponds and wells} Water features Images of water; rivers, puddles and wells symbolise the vital importance of water sources in agricultural villages as well as symbolising renewal, fertility and nourishing powers. These symbols frequently circle goddess forms, focusing on her responsibility for the rule of nature and resources, upon which the community depends.

4.3 Floral and Geometric Patterns

The floral themes in Haryanvi Sanjhi along with other local floral images, including lotus leaves/flowers, marigold and rose are often depicted on decorative borders and the background compositions. These flowers have different symbolic meanings—the lotus is a symbol of spiritual purity, marigolds symbolize auspiciousness and roses represent divine beauty.

They give structural organization to complex compositions, and simultaneously have ornamental value on their own. Circles, squares and equilateral triangles are used to structure the layout of mandalas, squares and grids respectively but symbolism is layered with meaning from cosmic order and divine mandate.



Fig.6: Floral forms in the skirt of Sanjhi Mata.

Patterns are often border designs with repeating geometric motifs that encompass larger goddess images and serve to visually separate sacred material from secular space. These designs frequently employ archetypical patterns of weaving that are recognizable from local textile traditions, thus establishing visual links between disparate artisan's practices.

Symmetrical compositions mirror aesthetic notions that privilege symmetry and order which corresponded to practical exigencies of decorating and constructing Sanjhi. The correlation of symmetric and asymmetric constituents reflects a refined artistic concept that is successfully characterized to the available materials and technology.

4.4 Contemporary Adaptations and Modern Influences

Modern Sanjhi art in Haryana indicates the presence of a greater assimilation of modern images and motifs while continuing to draw upon the traditional iconographic conventions. Television scenes, highways and urban architecture also feature in latter-day compositions as artists adapt to new social realities.



Fig. 7: Girl child with Synthetics Colours at Virasat Heritage Village, Kurukshetra.

Any choice of colours is acceptable if not even possible with synthetic pigments and commercial decorative materials, which also offer attractive effects that were previously impossible to obtain by using traditional natural ones. It has helped making the visual appearance look attractive and at the same time raised questions of authenticity and traditional aesthetics.

Plastic jewellery, fake flowers, and commercial ornaments carry on the theme even further, as if joining traditional ornaments in enabling costly decoration by all sections of society and are thus changing experiences such as those here of aesthesis.

Modern Orthodoxy Russian-Ukrainian philosophy of the city was also reflected in modern music through architectural symbolism, the latest types of communication and images public life. These adaptations are therefore testimony of a continuous vitality of the art form and its relevance in current society, while being open to questions about cultural authenticity and tradition retention.

5. Process, Techniques, and Materials Used in Haryana's Sanjhi Art

5.1 Traditional Material Preparation and Selection

Sanjhi making in Haryana: The craft of making Sanjhi starts with 'pouchana' where fine materials are procured, processed and powdered as per some religious, ritualistic time. Medium In the Hindu tradition, fresh cow dung is also a ritual purifier and used as such on holy ground to welcome gods and goddesses. It has disinfecting properties itself The binding material of straw or hay combines with gobar to give you this bathroom showpiece. Freshness, texture and source are important considerations of the cow dung to be utilised: dung from a healthy, well-fed cow (kept for religious purposes) in clean domestic natural household conditions is regarded to be the best.

Most varieties of the clay are heard with in and around the agricultural areas (the so-called real ones which the property becomes good for moulding & binding cow dungs). The clay is washed thoroughly to remove stones, organic matter and other contaminants that affect structural integrity or visual performance.

If it is for religious purpose, the water used to prepare it must be pure and in some family they will only use ganges water or well water from a temple located close by. The metaphorical sense of the clarity and purity of water is only "[metaphorically], for a status on this plane..., but an ideal at a higher level of spiritual purity and cleanness for the acceptable offerings to be made to the gods".

Indigenous by using locally sourced natural pigments—turmeric for yellow, vermilion for red, charcoal for black, and rice flour with lime for white which serve as traditional colouring agents that bear symbolic significance; also to avoid the corruption of organic bases. Contemporary practitioners are increasingly adding

commercial colours to the form of natural pigments, although in traditional families the preference is still for naturally-made material.

5.2 Construction Techniques of Sanjhi Art

The method and construction of Sanjhi art is based on set patterns that have been handed down by its practitioners over generations. The early stages of the framework include forming very rough body proportions in a cow dung and clay mixture focusing on proportional relationships that will accommodate decorative veneer later.



Fig. 8: Plastering of the wall with cow dung.

Specialised techniques for creating limbs, arms, legs and even faces then support decorative sections of the body whilst retaining structural integrity all throughout the 9 days of festival. Frequently local potters pre-fabricate standard limbs, faces and body parts that families can purchase for assembly, both maintaining quality control and the correct iconographic representation. Surface Preparation This step consists of levelling the roughness, making uniform texture and setting foundation surfaces to paintable and decorative bend.

Attachment methods for decoratives and jingly ornaments should keep the items firmly in place, while being removable when it's time to finally end your festival. Conventional attachment systems use natural adhesives and mechanical fastening processes that allow for the permanent removing of decorative elements.

5.3 Decorative Application and Ornamentation

The decoration stage is arguably the most visually appealing part of creating Sanjhi, where simple forms are turned into intricate divine depictions. The application of the colour tends to be approached in a traditional method, with ground colours laid down first and detail pattern working and fine decoration being subsequent layers.

Grip and wear Tight - Jewellery should be worn just the Right- Golden swan's jewellery pattern of wear Transiting and festively inspired – Securely fixed And then at festive duration to secure Slip-on, push-up Using Golden swan –Fine jewellery transiting itself from product to sensitive ornament! The correct size and placement of traditional jewellery elements including nose-rings, earrings, necklaces and bangles following iconographic norms to suit the structural capabilities of sculpture that is made from layers of mud or cow dung.

5.4 Contemporary Tool Innovations and Technical Adaptations

Contemporary practice Modern Sanjhi artists have used traditional techniques in adapting to new tools and materials, though keeping artistic and spiritual elements. Plastic pails and mixing drums largely have replaced the older clay vessels for making up material, which reduces time and labour.

Commercial brush and painting media apply traditional fingerpainting techniques with added applications to augment the effects of natural bristle brushes for specific strokes, accuracy in colour, variations in detail and patterns. That being said, even nowadays some traditionalists still swear by rubbing material between their fingers and feeling the touch of holy materials on them believing it shows a deeper connection to spirituality and gives more of a “real” artist look.

The use of artificial adhesives and the like, as well as up-to-date fasteners contribute to the stability of decorative attachments and reduction in period of carrying through those tricky decorations. Developing a new form of closure is one such practical accommodation to altering life-cycle conditions that nevertheless retain traditional stylistic ideals.

6. Conclusion

Sanjhi art has an anthropological import in the local folklore and traditions of Haryana beyond its religious and artistic value – It is a nodal point in terms of several systems of community organisation, cultural transmission, spiritual observance and social perception- these are the complex variables around which regional development orbits. Through an in-depth examination of its history, regional variations and mutations, cultural status and art form as well as the latest transformations taking place in a modern context, the volume presents a multilayered understanding of Sanjhi art – both as a technology that disseminates traditional knowledge, and also serves as an articulated response to various challenges brought about by socio-economic change.

The significance of the Sanjhi goddess in Haryanvi folk religion is related to the ongoing appeal of locally based religious practices that enable one to "connect with" a deity personally and participate in communal rituals. Unlike professed religious obligatory practices which are codified, formal and universals in nature, Sanjhi white worship requirements is immediately accessible instead if you follow his or her conjugal/ matrimonial considerations and gets to learn to learn for itself. That is pretty much what makes the culture universally accessible, i.e: migrates across all social and economic confinements, but yet with manners of its own engineering for gradient evolution.

The discrepancies noted in this study clearly show how local materials, culture bias, and historical background have shaped the aesthetic expression are groomed within the textural features of common moral and aesthetic concerns. Millions still embrace these traditions, which both serve as elegant art forms that can be used for spiritual evolution and an expression of a cultural identity; though they started break loose from them by the 20th century as confirmed in appreciation through values other than its own.

The main philosophy of impermanence of this art form provides insights into Hindu spiritual belief systems, and serves as a tool for social cohesion, cultural transmission and artistic innovation. The art and material craft of Sanjhi making itself may be interpreted as a fine-tuned understanding of ecology, aesthetics, spiritual symbolism and insight that binds human expression with the cosmological system. The impermanence of Sanjhi art also, the material world and all that we are made up cannot grant –what paradoxically ensures—the fact that it is ever living. Every production which loses itself leaves room for new ones, and in this way art still lives on, as it yet retains a supreme character as exultation of the divine grace and spiritual truth.

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