

# Changing Scenario of Socio - Visuals in the Art and Culture of Uttarakhand, India

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## ABSTRACT

Uttarakhand, the 27th state of the Indian Union came into existence on 9th November, 2000 as Uttaranchal. The state was renamed as Uttarakhand in 2006. It has two distinct regions; the Garhwal in the West and Kumaun in the East. In the major categories these comprises with the fine art, decorative art including all types of means of communication. Uttarakhand has a rich artistic and cultural heritage. Hurkiyabol, Jagar and Jhore etc. are the major source of storytelling.

Nevertheless, tribal communities - Bhotia (Shauka /Ran /Marchha/ Taulchha / Jad), Banraut (Van Rawat / Raji), Tharu, Buxa and Jaunsari are residing in the state. They have their own culture with in across hills and planes of both the regions a tribal socio- periphery depicting vivid art and craft.

Present paper will be helpful in responding to, interpreting meaning, and making critical judgments about Changing Scenario of Socio - Visuals in the Art and Culture of Uttarakhand, India. These could be the best way finding out for a current story of socio-artistic aspect related to the subject highlighting to the present scenario comparing from the past.

## 1. Changing Scenario of Socio - Visuals in the Art and Culture of Uttarakhand, India

The Ramlila of Laxmi Bhandar (Hukka Club) Almora in Kuman and Jagar/Dhol Dance of Garhwal are currently very famous. Nanda Jat, held after every twelve years, is a peculiar tradition of performing and visual arts both. In the major categories these comprises with the fine art, decorative art including all types of means of communication.

## 2. Visual art and Culture

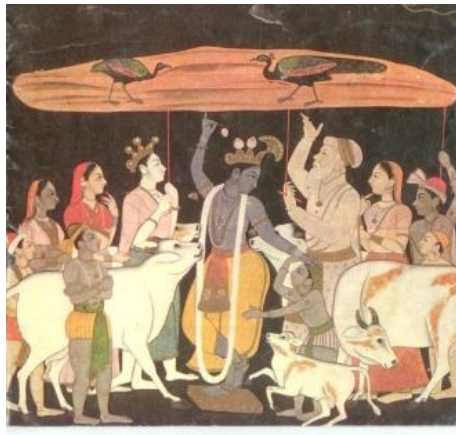
The state also has a rich collection of Buddhist art. Influence of Buddhist art is seen in the region based on Tibetan influence of Buddhism establishing the Nyingma School and so on. Doon Valley, Dehradun and Happy Valley, Mussoorie are the major places of Buddhist and Tibetan Art of Uttarakhand. It is believed that the Buddhist Temple at Harsil Uttarkashi is the oldest temple of the state. Mindroling Monastery called also Tibetan Monastery at Dehradun has grand art and architecture in Uttarakhand. Kagyu College, an artistic centre for Higher Buddhist Studies and Research; Gelug Monastic Institute; Lhodak Thik-chi Monastery; Sakya, an oldest monastery in Uttarakhand and others are exploring to promote the art and society.

Blue for sky (Asman), White for air (Yayu), red for fire (Agni), green for water and hariyali (Jal), and yellow for earth (Prithavi) are the symbols used by Buddhist/Jad in their flags. The wood sticks of Changba and Mu are used by them during the Hawan. They prepare beautiful garland, hanging and buckeye from the fruits of Choumanga. Inside leaf of the Choumanga fruit in white colour is the best and used for making flowers and its garland.

## 3. School of Garhwal Painting

Uttarakhand has pride to have an evidence of prehistoric rock paintings in the state. On the bank of the Suyal River near Barechina in Almora, two painted rock shelters reveal paintings of animals, humans and also drawn with fingers in black, red and white colours. Painting including the folk arts has an important place in Indian art. Garhwal School of Painting of Uttarakhand has played an important role in Indian art. Maularam, Jwalaram, Tejram, Brijnath were the great masters of the Garhwal School. A rich collection of Maularams contributions are displayed in the H.N.B. Garhwal University Museum at Srinagar and Maularam Art Gallery, Srinagar. No one is carrying strongly to this tradition of working in this style for the future.

The main theme of the Garhwal paintings is based on religious background along with the depiction of the natural beauty of the people and region. Delicate eye brows and thin nose with definite nose bridge on soft oval shaped face, sandal on forehead, beautiful women with fully developed breasts, thin waist line reflect the special features of the Garhwal School to spread a message of love in fusion of religion and romance.



Miniature Painting of Garhwal School- Krishna lifts mountain



Miniature Painting of Garhwal School- Lady with Shiva

#### 4. Folk Art and Culture

Aipan, folk art of Uttarakhand, with in or out of the state is being used rapidly by transferring with the help of stickers or in oil paints beyond the mud / stones houses. These apian express the mythological stories. In the past Aipan are put with nimble fingers and palm during every ceremony and festival for decorating the floor and walls of houses associating with some ritualistic figures. The worship place/room especially the seat of Gods and Goddesses are decorated with tantric motifs called Yantra. These can be compared with Rangoli from other parts especially South India. The main difference is however that of wet Rice powder (biswar) being used over a brown (Geru) background in Aipan.

Putting dots and lines, figures are drawn for different Peeths. According to some extend to Dr. Purnima "For Shiva and Vishnu the Peeth is a square figure drawn by putting 12 to 19 dots, both longitudinally and transversally. In the Vishnu Peeth the number of dots is 19. The dots are joined to denote the cosmic field condensed at the central point. The centre or Bindu represents the place where the deity resides. The outer largest Square is the plan of a raised alters and the internal lines leading towards the centre represent the flight of steps. The steps symbolize entry from the earth through the cosmic field to the throne of divinity. Shakti Peeth is represented by two interlocked triangles forming a hexagon. The circles represent lotus petals numbering 12 to 64. The whole Yantra is framed by lines of a square. It is an area where the object and subject meet the central point, Bindu which controls everything, serving as a vehicle of the mind. The circles symbolize wholeness or totality and denote the elemental earth or the material quality of nature."

Vishu and Shakti both are worshiped by the majority of Uttarakhandis. Besides, Swastik Peeth is common for all the deities including Ganesh and Panch Devatas made by nine-point square. Either leaves, flowers, petals, conch shell, etc. or wavy or zigzag dashed lines are put in the outer part of the square.

Chauki of Namkaran (Naming ceremony), Janeu (Thread ceremony), and Byah (marriage) are executed with different motifs and designs. The motifs are of sun, moon, bell, and conch shell including the utensils used in Puja. Namkaran Sanskar Chauki is made by putting Aipan on wooden Chauki during the naming ceremony of a new born baby. Arranging zodiac signs of Great Bear (Sapta Rishis) in hexagons by putting Aipan during the Janeu (Scared thread ceremony) imitates a boy to perform the social ritual. Dhuliargh Chauki (Wooden seat for the groom) is used during the marriage (Vivah/ Byah). An Aipan symbolizing cosmic universe with the crown and making nine squares at the centre encircled by lotus petals are drawn.

Pata are the paintings based on Legendary and Puranic myths painted on a big wooden sheet or sheet of paper pasted on wall or directly painted on the wall of the place where rituals and ceremony are to be held. Pata are generally painted with Jev Matrika, Shri Krishna Janma, Laxmi and Durga in red or multicolor. Different geometrical patterns are also drawn by arranging dots which are then joined by lines to form different shapes called Barbood.

Dekaras are the colourful unbaked clay idols of Gods and Goddesses made by the people of Uttarakhand for worship. Lord Shiva and Parwati is very famous Dekara in which their marriage is depicted especially during a typical Kumauni marriage. These are usually made of colorful clay or sweetened wheat flour. These are built either in relief or in three dimensional forms.

## 5. Performing Arts and Culture

In performing ceremonies and other rituals Rangwali Pichhora is commonly used. This Rangwali Pichhora, the tradition of colourful ornamentation on Anchal cloth is a unique symbol of Kumaon. Women wear the cloth Rangwali Pichhora or Kusumia during all the rituals and ceremonies. The Rangwali Pichhora is about three meters in length and one to one and half meter width white muslin cloth dyed in yellow colour and dried in the shade.



Dance in Traditional Costumes

Designs of Swastik, the motifs of sun and moon are made on the cloth in red colour by padded wooden stick including bell and conch shell at the centre part. The rest of the Pichhora is stamped with the help of padded small coins.

Colour and patterns of Kusumia has a different look regarding the Kusumia tradition Dr. Pande explains, "In one tradition, the lemon yellow background bears pink or red rose patterns, whereas in the Kusumia, the traditional yellow base has crimson or red patterns embossed on it. The red colour is the symbol of abiding conjugal life Suhaag, the warmth of fire and sun health and wealth, the joy of spring; and the golden colour means attachment for the material world. The combination of the two colours is symbolic of the focal theme of a functional life."

Hurkiyabol, Jagar and Jhore etc. are others the major source of storytelling. Hurkiyabol is a kind of work done in the field of agricultural. During this task an enchanting dance-music performed in the harvesting fields when women do the works of sowing, hoeing, and implanting especially during the Kharif crop. The ladies do Ropai, Nirai and a person(s) having and beating Hudak (instrument) sing the different songs simultaneously with them to increase their working capacity. Now this tradition is not so much functional.

Jagar, a form of ancestor spirit worship, mostly performed at night was common in the villages. Gods and local deities are called or waked from their dormant stage and asked for favors or remedies for certain problems plaguing the person. There are many kinds of Jagar in Kumaun and Garhwal. The Jagar of Goril Devata is very famous in Uttarakhand especially in Kumaon. The Jagaria, Dangaria, and Syonkar play their important role in the Jagar. Bachiram and Kirdev of Kui, Tika Ram of Mainoli, Jagdish of Katholi and some others were famously known for Jagaria. Nar Singh, the God is worshiped for seeking justice while Bhumia Devata (God of Land), Nagarjuna Devata/ Chamu (God of Animal) are others majorly worshiped in villages of Kumaun.

Bhishma Kukreti, Dharmma nand Pasbola, Ramkrishn Kukreti, Dr Vishnu Datt Kukreti etc. have worked with compiling its literature/manuscripts related to Jagar and its related Mantra Tantra in Garhwal, Mantra and Tantra in Kumaun, Mantra and Tantra in Himalaya, Mantra Tantra in Uttarakhand.

Jhora is a group dance performed spontaneously in a circle by men and women. Jagar, Baisi, Ramoli, Jhumelia and Ghaneli performed in dance- music are ritualistic ceremonies. Thadya and Chancheri are a free-movement dance and a kind of playful competition respectively based on love. The following songs are the best examples of villagers need and awareness for the environment protection as sung by villagers time to time during festivals.

Par ka Bhida ko chhe ghasyari, Malu a to malu na kata  
Bhainsi vye rainchhe thori hai rachhe Malu a tu malu katan de Malu

ChhoriLashima to banjani kata  
Loanda Mohana to datulinaluta  
ChhoriLashimamyrinaukarichhutali  
Loanda Mohanamyarithori ke khali

Meaning: In above the message is conveying the seriousness for the protection of forest. Those who are cutting something in the forest are being watched by forest guard when a lady/ villagers collecting the fodder for her/their animals some extend she/they were exempted after a warning on her/their request for the cause.

Now day intoxication is increasing in hills. Villagers as a lesson try to convey through following Jhora as sung.

Pahad ka dajyu jhan piya sharaba  
Lal lal thaili nau chhu gulaba

Meaning: Message to Dajyu (brother) of hills, you don't drink coloured (red) liquor 'Gulaba' packed in pouch.

Chholia is a war dance. The performers of Chholia wear unique garments having coloured steps on white –based dress. The dance begins with the blowing of the Beenbaja- Musk Been or Bagpipe and sound beatings of Dhol and Damuas, in that music two people with shield and sword perform the dance. Not a single woman participates in this dance.

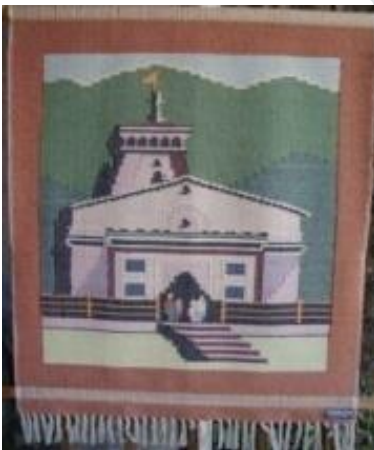
## 6. Tribal Art and Role of Women

No society can flourish without the support of women. Women are the most pampered lot among the tribes of Uttarakhand. The tribal women have a great importance in the society particularly in their families. They perform certain specific tasks set aside for them in the family and also play a great role in continuing the family art and craft tradition passed on to them by their predecessors (mothers) / elders.

Bhotia women are good weavers of carpet, blankets and woollen clothes etc. Purdah was common among Bhotia women. However they do not observe Purdah at present and mix up freely. The Ranpa women of Nitimana practice Purdah. House wives in tribes not only work hard at home throughout the day but also work in the fields and looms. They are experts in arts and crafts and contribute towards the family economy through their creations; carpets, woollen clothes and other utility items.



Wall Hanging of Badrinath



Wall Hanging of Kedarnath

They do not have sufficient time even to take care of their children due to heavy domestic task. They also look after the domestic animals. Women of lower strata undertake all types of household duties such as fetching water, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, tending to animals, cooking, collecting firewood, and so on. Their children assist them in some of these activities. A folk song entitled "Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri" A Lori Geet (a lullaby) of Munsyari village Visha depicts the true picture of a women in the society.

O Meri Sas Jyu, Bolo Dekhi Diya,  
Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri...2  
Mi Jyunli Goru Charunon Juli  
Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri...2  
Sanjh Paran Myaro Chh Unn,  
Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri...2  
O Meri Byari, Yo Buria Kala  
Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri...2  
Nai Tari Taran, Nai Gali Bhag,  
Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri...2  
Tyari Balo Ki Bat Nai Jananyu  
Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri...2

Meaning: A lady has to go to feed her cattle in the forest after finishing all the routine house hold work of home. She requests her mother in law to look after her child at home in her absence. Due to her old age the mother in law refuses to look after the child as she does not have strong arms and legs and sweet voice to be able to do so. The child begins to sleep as she pats him/her with the sweet sound of the lullaby. (Holo Ri Bolo Holo Ri). Finally he/she puts the child in Doka (a basket carried on the back). Having been denied any help by her mother-in- law, she requests her husband's elder brother.

Gaura Devi played a vital role in Chipko Movement (Andolan) that started from the village Lata. She led the movement initially from her village Raini in Chamoli, and subsequently became its inspiring leader. This movement brought the importance of our ecological balance among the people to maintain the close relationship with trees.

## 7. Contribution in the Visual and Performing Culture

Recently (in 2019), Pritam Bhartwan awarded Pdamshree, who is also known Jagar Smrat, according to him, "People are developing a deep interest in local cultures now. Our pahari culture is extremely rich and has a lot to offer to the world. That's why I am planning to teach more local people so that they learn to embrace their culture and help spread it widely."

Shekhar Chandra Joshi is experimenting to revive the art of Finger Nails along with his innovative ideas and visuals. According to Valentina DuBasky, Fulbright Senior Specialist in India from New York, USA; Almora-based painter Dr. Shekhar Joshi has abandoned brushes in favor of using one of the most ancient art tools of all time: his nails. His softly-colored paintings of watercolor washes capture figures, landscapes and dreamscapes. With nothing between the artist and his paper, Dr. Joshi enters into a relationship with the surface of the paper that is the most physically direct of artistic processes. The physicality of using his nails brings a unique sense of rhythm and movement to each piece, and when combined with the poetic applications of color onto the raised surfaces, it's no surprise to discover how engaging the paintings become.



Old Style- Oil Painting by Shekhar Chandra Joshi



New Style- Nail Painting by Shekhar Chandra Joshi

Dr. Joshi seeks to invent a new pictorial language entirely his own. His technique brings to mind the art of embossing, the method of producing raised patterns on the surface of paper and other materials, and yet is something altogether different. However much his paintings include images, the rivers of embossed lines make the pictures appear abstract (not a contradiction of terms in his case) to express elegance and wit. Seen as a series of linear variations, the embossed lines –meandering, scrolling, angular, and interrupted – are endlessly individualized, as if the image could break into three dimensions. There are unusual perspectives and interplay of light on the surface that defy the logic of what we know about the rules of perception, but most intriguing are the metaphorical associations, specifically to landscape and a sense of topography that evoke a specific landscape: the Himalayas of Almora, she added.

About his older work shown in solo, according to HT correspondent, "The paintings are a unique combination of symbolic, figurative, abstraction and linearity art. Billed as an experiment by Dr Shekhar Chandra Joshi with music to express his everlasting chaos of fantasy with real dreams, the exhibition of Ragamala series of paintings was inaugurated then in 1999 by the Lalit Kala Akademi Chairman, Yogendra Nath Yogi."

Alike Bhartwan and others engaged in their respective field all should come forward and work for the restream and rethink about the changing or dying Art and Culture of Uttarakhand, India for the cause of its extremely rich art and culture instead of telling the truthful stories for future in fact continuing its reality.

## 8. Suggestions

The following points are raised in my mind to promote the art and welfare of the artists including the welfare of the society. The following points are raised in my mind to promote the art and welfare of the artists including the welfare of the society.

- Government should release an order to all the departments that they should decorate their departments with the artifacts made by the local artists instead of printed or readymade materials. It will encourage to the art and artists automatically.
- There are several programme funded by Ministry of Science to make science popular among the students. Unfortunately we do not have any such funding agency to make art popular among the students especially in the field of visual arts.
- There are several funding agencies for the science scholars ready to provide the expenses to attend any national and international seminars/ conferences/ workshops. In the field of visual arts we do not have such funding agencies that provide the expenses for this purpose.
- Indian Government including Indira Gandhi National Open University could not start distant learning courses (except few) in the field to the students of visual arts.
- Unfortunately artists especially painters and sculptors etc. in the field of visual arts do not have the provision to seek 50% discount while they travel by rail to attend any artistic meet/ function. However this kind of facility is being provided to the sports persons.
- Art of any state should be properly preserved and exhibited; our state Uttarakhand does not have any Lalit Kala Academy to do this kind of work. However other state academies of the country are fulfilling this kind of work.
- Indian Administrative Service and Public Service Commission (*Lok Seva Aayog*) of each state should include the theory course of visual arts for those students who have studied and passed out in the subject up to graduation and post graduation level for the several examinations like IAS and PCS.
- Art should be compulsory up to the high school level including their states art and artists in the syllabus.
- Americans for the Arts has developed an online toolkit to help arts organizations respond effectively in times of crisis. The Arts Funding Response and Readiness Kit provides current information, key messaging, communications and advocacy strategies, and the research you need to make the case for keeping the arts in your community. Our government should plan to bring out such information.

## 9. Conclusion.

After above deliberations we find the facts that the role of Uttarakhandi art and socio - culture as a traditional media for the story telling in visual arts is very significant. Art of Uttarakhand has a variety of artifacts and art tradition as well as a rich artistic and cultural heritage. It has very healthy approach in the society for the joy, education and environment. These are the basic source for the harmony of any society in each walk of life. Government support, as suggested in this article would be more beneficial to strengthen to socio - visual culture and its overall communication through story telling for future too.

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