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Educational Relevance of Fresco Paintings in Higher Education with Special Reference to Shekhawati Region

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Abstract

Art is everywhere. Shekhawati is the heart of Rajasthan. In Shekhawati region Fresco painting is also a type of art. In Shekhawati region Fresco paintings represent an important cultural and artistic heritage. This region is renowned for its rich and colourful tradition of wall paintings created using fresco and fresco-secco techniques. In this paper researcher try to understand the relevance of fresco paintings in higher education with special reference to Shekhawati region and its influence on higher education focusing on their possible for pedagogy, curriculum integration, and interdisciplinary learning. The Shekhawati frescoes, found in havelis, temples, and public spaces, depict themes ranging from folklore and mythology to colonial modernity and social life, making them valuable visual texts for higher education.

This paper also tries to study the existing literature related to the concept, use and challenges of Shekhawati fresco paintings in higher education across disciplines such as fine arts, art history, cultural studies, architecture, conservation, and heritage management in universities and colleges. It shows how the study of Shekhawati frescoes helps experiential learning by combining practical artistic systems with theoretical understanding of pigments, lime plaster chemistry, materials, and historical background. Furthermore, the review highpoints the role of these fresco paintings in enhancing students' visual literacy, critical analysis, creativity, and cultural awareness.

In this paper researcher also discusses the significance of Shekhawati frescoes in heritage education and studies related to conservation, underlining their importance in preserving indigenous art traditions through academic engagement. Challenges such as inadequate institutional support, limited field-based learning opportunities, Curriculum Constraints, Lack of Specialized Faculty and the declining condition of frescoes are critically examined in this conceptual based study.

NEP 2020 promote this kind of education. The review concludes that the systematic inclusion of Shekhawati fresco paintings in higher education curricula can enrich art education, promote interdisciplinary scholarship, and contribute to the preservation and revitalization of this unique regional heritage and support and it can become a milestone in achieving the vision of a Viksit India.

Key-words: Shekhawati Fresco Paintings, Higher Education, Art Education, Curriculum Integration, Experiential Learning, Cultural Heritage etc.

Introduction

The main objective of NEP 2020 is to transform education into quality education and ensure its accessibility to every individual. Art education is also a part of this. In higher education, Art discipline has increasingly highlighted the integration of traditional art forms with current pedagogical methods. Various regional traditions of the

world, fresco painting occupies an important and vital position due to its historical depth, technical complication, and cultural relevance. The word 'fresco' derived from the Italian word, means fresh, refers to the technique of applying colours on newly laid lime plaster, allowing them to become an integral part of the surface of the wall. This technique and method have been extensively

practiced across civilizations from early time, including ancient Rome, Renaissance Europe, and India.

In the Indian context, fresco heritage and traditions have flourished in regions such as Ajanta, Kerala, Ellora, and Rajasthan. The Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, in particular, known for its extensive and unique tradition of fresco paintings beautifying havelis, temples, stepwells, and public structures. Shekhawati region in Rajasthan is the part of India, including the three districts of Sikar, Churu and Jhunjhunu (Shaheen, T. 2022). Created primarily between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shekhawati frescoes reflect a blend of indigenous aesthetics, Rajput patronage, mercantile culture, and colonial influences (Shaheen, T. 2022).

Higher education institutions play an important and significant role in preserving, interpreting, and transmitting cultural heritage. The inclusion of fresco paintings, especially region-specific traditions like Shekhawati in higher education curricula can enrich art education, promote interdisciplinary learning, and try to increase cultural awareness (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R). In this paper researcher used conceptual understanding related to the above concept. This review paper explores the educational relevance of fresco paintings in higher education, with special reference to Shekhawati frescoes, focusing on curriculum integration, pedagogical value, interdisciplinary applications, and heritage conservation (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R).

Fresco Painting: Concept and Technique

Fresco is a type of painting. Fresco painting is a technically demanding art form that requires exact timing, related material knowledge, and skill of related art. Traditionally, this is the technique which involves the application of natural pigments mixed with water onto wet lime plaster. As the plaster dries, the colours chemically bond with the surface of wall, resulting in durable and long-lasting picture (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R). Variations such as fresco-secco involve painting on dry plaster using organic binders.

From an educational perspective, fresco painting is not merely an artistic activity but a multidisciplinary learning process. It integrates:

- ✓ Artistic skills (drawing, composition, color harmony)
- ✓ Cultural studies (iconography, symbolism, narratives)
- ✓ Historical understanding (patronage, socio-political contexts)
- ✓ Scientific knowledge (chemistry of lime, pigments, and binders)

In higher education, the study of fresco techniques enables students to engage in practice-based learning, encouraging experimentation, observation, and reflection.

Shekhawati Fresco Paintings

The Shekhawati region, comprising districts such as Sikar, Jhunjhunu, and Churu, is often referred to as an “open-air art gallery” due to the abundance of wall paintings (Shaheen, T. 2022). The frescoes of Shekhawati were largely commissioned by wealthy Marwari merchants who

migrated to various parts of India and abroad but invested in embellishing their hometowns.

Themes of Fresco Paintings

Shekhawati fresco paintings display a wide thematic range, including:

- ✓ Mythological and religious scenes (Ramayana, Mahabharata, Krishna Lila).
- ✓ Folk narratives and local traditions.
- ✓ Royal processions and courtly life.
- ✓ Colonial modernity (trains, airplanes, British officials).
- ✓ Social customs, festivals, and daily life.

This diversity makes Shekhawati frescoes valuable visual documents for studying history, sociology, and cultural change.

Ingredients and Techniques

Artists used locally available materials such as lime, sand, marble dust, natural pigments, and organic binders. The fusion of fresco and fresco-secco techniques is a distinctive feature of Shekhawati murals (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R). Studying these methods provides higher education students with insights into indigenous knowledge systems and sustainable artistic practices.

Fresco Painting and NEP 2020

Our new education policy, NEP 2020 strongly emphasizes on art integrated learning, preservation and restoration of culture and history of India, improve vocational skills and traditional art form. Fresco painting can be introduced in school in the form of art education. It will be helpful for a teacher and student to encourage hands on learning and creativity. NEP 2020 tries to promote traditional arts through art integrated and experiential learning for holistic development and preserve cultural heritage and develop creativity among students in higher education.

Fresco Paintings and Higher Education

The main objective of Higher education to develop critical thinking, creativity, professional competence, and cultural sensitivity in teacher, and students. Fresco paintings contribute to these goals by serving as both content and method of learning. Fresco paintings, particularly regional traditions like Shekhawati colours, offer vital educational value in higher education. These artworks combine artistic skill in historical context, and cultural heritage, making them ideal for interdisciplinary learning in art, history, architecture, and conservation. Integrating fresco study into curricula enhances creativity, critical thinking, visual literacy, and heritage awareness among students as well as teachers (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R). Practical workshops, field visits, and digital documentation enable experiential teaching and learning while promoting preservation of fragile colours.

Fresco Paintings: Art Education

In art education like, fine arts and visual arts programs, fresco painting offers students an opportunity to:

- ✓ Develop material sensitivity and craftsmanship.

- ✓ Engage in historical reconstruction and stylistic analysis.
- ✓ Learn traditional colour tools and techniques.
- ✓ Understand large-scale composition.

Shekhawati frescoes, as case studies, allow students to examine regional styles, colour palettes, and narrative strategies.

Fresco Paintings and Curriculum Integration

Fresco paintings can be integrated into higher education curricula through (Das, T. 2022, December):

- ✓ Research and core papers on colour traditions of different regions in India.
- ✓ Gives the option to student to choose it as elective courses on regional art forms.
- ✓ Workshop, seminar, Studio-based practice modules.
- ✓ Fieldwork and documentation projects and report writing.

Such integration supports outcome-based and vocational education, aligning theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

Interdisciplinary Educational Value

Interdisciplinary Educational mentions to the integration of knowledge, skills, and outlooks from different subjects to enhance teaching and learning. This will help students to connect this concept across disciplines like, art, history, language and science. One of the strongest arguments for including fresco paintings in higher education curriculum lies in their interdisciplinary potential (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R), which is as follows:

Art History and Cultural Studies

Shekhawati frescoes act as primary sources for understanding:

- ✓ Colonial influence on indigenous art.
- ✓ Cultural exchanges.
- ✓ Patronage systems.
- ✓ Understand economic development.
- ✓ Understand society and their culture.

Students and teacher learn to interpret visual scenery within broader historical and social aspects.

Architecture Studies

The relationship between fresco paintings and architectural works is IMPORTANT AND vital. In Shekhawati havelis, colours are integral to the design of courtyards, walls, ceilings, and gateways of the structures Das, T. (2022, December).. Architecture and heritage students benefit from studying spatial aesthetics and conservation challenges and its solutions.

Education of Conservation and Restoration

Shekhawati fresco art are progressively rare due to neglect and environmental factors Das, T. (2022, December).

Higher education programs in conservation can use these frescoes to teach:

- ✓ Condition assessment
- ✓ Ethical conservation practices
- ✓ Traditional repair techniques

Conservation and restoration education in higher education equips students with the knowledge and skills to preserve cultural heritage, including fresco paintings, manuscripts, and architectural monuments. It combines scientific understanding of materials, chemical processes, and environmental factors with practical techniques for repair, stabilization, and preventive care. Students learn ethical principles, documentation methods, and interdisciplinary approaches involving art, chemistry, and history. Fieldwork, workshops, and laboratory experiments provide hands-on experience, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills Gong, Z. (2024). This education not only trains professionals in heritage preservation but also raises cultural awareness, ensuring that traditional art forms like Shekhawati frescoes are sustainably safeguarded for future generations.

Science and Material Studies

The chemistry of lime plaster, mineral pigments, and natural binders provides valuable learning material for students of conservation science and applied chemistry.

Pedagogical Approaches for Teaching Fresco Paintings

Effective teaching of fresco paintings in higher education requires innovative pedagogical strategies.

Experiential and Practice-Based Learning

Hands-on fresco workshops help students understand the complexity of the technique. Recreating small fresco panels allows learners to connect theory with practice.

Field-Based Practical Learning

Educational visits to Shekhawati towns and havelis enable students to:

- Observe frescoes in different sites.
- Document artworks.
- Interact with local communities and societies.

Such fieldwork fosters contextual learning and cultural empathy.

Digital and Visual Documentation

Digital tools such as photography, 3D scanning, and virtual tours can supplement traditional teaching methods, especially where physical access is limited Dewatwal, P., & Singh, N. (2023, July).

Educational Role in Cultural Heritage Preservation

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to contribute to cultural heritage preservation Gong, Z. (2024). Teaching Shekhawati fresco paintings raises awareness about endangered art forms and encourages students to participate in documentation and conservation efforts Gong, Z. (2024). Academic engagement can:

- ✓ Support local heritage initiatives
- ✓ Promote research-based conservation
- ✓ Bridge the gap between traditional artists and modern scholars

Challenges in Participating Fresco Paintings into Higher Education

Higher education faces many challenges to integrate fresco painting. This art required specialization and special skills, material, techniques which is hard to available for students in most of the institutions. There is lack of trained teacher and artisan. This process is time consuming, expensive and difficult. Infrastructure like appropriate wall surface, studio spaces is also limited and challenge for institution. Moreover, students many times show low awareness or interest due to career-oriented priorities. Assessment and curriculum standardization further complicate its inclusion. Its curriculum is overloaded and there are insufficient elective options. Deterioration of fresco sites restricting field-based learning also a main challenge for this. Addressing these challenges requires institutional support, curriculum reform, and collaboration with heritage organizations (Khandelwal, D. K., & Guru, R.).

Opportunities and Future Directions

The future of fresco painting education lies in:

- ✓ Interdisciplinary curriculum design (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ Collaboration with art institutions, museums, and master artisans that can be useful to enhance skill-based education (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ NEP 2020 supports such integration through art-integrated, experiential, and vocational learning (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ The use of digital documentation, virtual museums, and heritage conservation projects can modernize fresco studies (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ Fresco painting can open career pathways in heritage conservation, restoration, tourism, and creative industries (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ Future curricula may adopt multidisciplinary modules, research-based practice, and community engagement to ensure sustainability and global relevance (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ Integrating fresco painting into higher education offers significant opportunities for preserving cultural heritage and promoting interdisciplinary learning (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ Collaboration between universities, museums, and heritage bodies (Agarwal, S. 2022).
- ✓ Encouraging research and documentation of regional traditions like Shekhawati (Agarwal, S. 2022).

Such initiatives can revitalize fresco studies and ensure their relevance in contemporary higher education.

Conclusion

This review paper highlights the educational relevance of fresco paintings in higher education, with special reference to the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. Shekhawati frescoes are not only artistic masterpieces but also rich educational resources that support interdisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, and cultural heritage preservation. Their integration into higher education curricula enhances students' critical thinking, artistic skills, and cultural awareness.

The paper also concludes that systematic inclusion of Shekhawati fresco paintings in higher education through curriculum designing, fieldwork, and practice-based learning—can significantly enrich art education and contribute to the preservation of India's mural heritage. Higher education institutions must recognize and utilize this potential to ensure that traditional art forms continue to inform and inspire future generations.

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