

Sanjhi Folk Art of Mewar: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract: The making of Sanjhi is closely linked with cow-dung. In fact in Indian folk-art tradition, a separate category of art form can be delineated, where the main material used for drawing is cow-dung and clay. The present study was carried out on sixty respondents making Sanjhi at Nathdawara and Devghard of Mewar region. To achieve the objective of the study sixty respondents were selected thirty from each region. Structured interview schedule was used for data collection. It was observed from the present investigation that the tradition of Sanjhi making is prevalent in Brahmins families of the region. Adolescent girls and young women in the age group of 15-30 years were found to be widely involved in this art. Regarding family structure and education, most of the respondents were graduate and lived in joint families. Majority of the respondents were found to be associated with this craft from more than 10 years. All the respondents reported that Sanjhi making is their family tradition. They paint their home specially at the time of pitri-paksha (the fortnight of the ancestors) occasions. The time spent on a particular design is depended upon the intricacy and details of the designs. Majority of the respondents also knew about the significance of different motifs and scenes used in Sanjhi and respondents opined that Sanjhi art have enough potential to be establish as enterprise in Apparel sector.

Keywords: Sanjhi Motifs, techniques of making Sanjhi

1. Introduction

Sanjhi is a traditional art form, prevalent in many parts of India, especially in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. Sanjhi tradition is also prevalent in Maharashtra and Goa. The festival of Sanjhi is celebrated by young girls in honour of a goddess named Sanjhi or Sanjhya. This festival coincides with the annual worship of ancestral spirits during the Hindu month of Ashwin (September), that lasts a fortnight, beginning with the first day of the dark-half of the Ashwin month and concluding on the sixteenth day i.e. the new moon day of the same month. During this fortnight, known as pitri-paksha (the fortnight of the ancestors), young girls in Rajasthan emboss various motifs inside a parallelogram with four gateways, on front walls of their houses. These motifs are embossed in cow-dung every day and are scraped off the next day. In their place new motifs are drawn. This process is repeated everyday till the end of pitri Paksha fortnight, when the process of drawing a full blown Sanjhi known as kila kot (literally-fortified dwelling) begins.

The Young unmarried girls and Brahmins use to do pooja of this Sandhya Devi to get all their desires fulfilled. The Sanjhi is also done for this to get the Lord Shri Krishna as a husband by Shree Gopikas of Vraj. Vrajalanas did the pooja of this devi during this period for 14 days and as a result, got Shree Vrajraj Shree Krishna in Maharaas. This is called as "Sanjhi" or "Sandhya". During this period, the gopikas used to create beautiful pictures on the ground/walls depicting the places, leelas, characters etc of Vraja and other places. After that, they use to do the pooja of these pictures and thus the pooja of Sanjhi. They did the pooja with the objective of getting Shree Krishna as her husband. Everyday new motifs are added to the ones drawn on the previous day and finally the pictograph depicting the story of Sanjhi is completed on the 14th day. On the new moon day, i.e. the last day of pitri-paksha, kila kot is also scraped off the wall and this along with the earlier scrapings is immersed in the river, accompanied by ritual worship amidst dancing and singing. The aim of present study is to collect motifs used in Sanjhi art of Nathdawara and Devghard made by the Brahmins

families for documentation and digitized for textile end uses.

2. Methodology

The present study was conducted in the Nathdawara and Devghard district of Mewar region of Rajasthan. Sixty respondents from Nathdawara and Devghard were selected randomly to know about different Sanjhi motifs for documentation and digitized for textile end uses. Structured interview schedule was used for data collection. Suitable statistical technique was used for analysis of data.

3. Results and Discussion

It is discussed under two heads general information and specific information along with motifs used and technique of making Sanjhi. Profile of Sanjhi making respondents is as follows:

- 1) **Age:** The data collected on age of respondents revealed that majority of the respondents (70%) belonged to the 15-20 year age group. However 30 per cent respondents belonged to 20-30 years age group.
- 2) **Sanjhi artisans:** It was observed that the tradition of Sanjhi making was more prevalent (80%) among girls and only a few women (20%) practiced this folk art.
- 3) **Family Type:** The data pertaining to distribution of respondents according to family type revealed that majority of the respondents making Sanjhi lived in joint families (70%) while a very few (30%) lived in nuclear family.
- 4) **Education:** The data pertaining to education revealed that all the respondents were educated. Majority of the respondents (40%) were educated up to senior secondary level followed by 30% of respondents who were graduated. Twenty per cent of the respondents were secondary pass whereas the rest of 10% were post graduated.

Table 1: General information of the *Sanjhi* artisans, N = 60

S. No.	Aspects	Categories	No of Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
1	Age (in years)	15-20	42	70
		20-30	18	30
2	<i>Sanjhi</i> artisans	Girls	48	80
		Women	12	20
3	Family Type	Nuclear	18	30
		Joint	42	70
4	Education	Secondary	12	20
		Senior secondary	24	40
		Graduation	18	30
		Post graduation	6	10

Specific information related to *Sanjhi* art

Associated with *Sanjhi* making: Respondents were asked from when they are making folk *Sanjhi*. It was reported that 60 percent were making *Sanjhi* from more than ten years and rest 35 percent were making it from last 5-10 years.

Different motifs used in *Sanjhi* : It was reported that all the respondents used figurative motif and geometrical motifs in *Sanjhi* and in geometrical motifs spirals, dots were used by nearly all of the respondents. One third of the respondents (33.33%) used holy symbols.

Places painted with *Sanjhi* : *Sanjhi* were generally drawn by majority of the respondents (80%) on the door steps followed by 60 per cent of the respondents who draw *Sanjhi* on walls of their home whereas, about 50 per cent of the respondents also decorated *both door steps and walls* with *Sanjhi* motifs.

Design source: For majority of the respondents (40%) old stories and songs served as a base for developing new designs while 60 per cent of respondents used own imagination related to *Sanjhi* art for selecting designs. Majority of the respondents relied on their own imagination for design development.

Raw material used: As per the information about the raw material being used for making *Sanjhi* includes: fresh and green cow-dung of a young cow, flowers and leaves of various kinds, corn cobs, bright and colourful paper strips, tin foil, *cowrie* /shells, bamboo sticks and any other object that may come in handy. Red ochre, *kumkum* and *kharia* are some other ingredients used to give outline and colour to the sculpted figures of *Sanjhi*.

Table 2: Specific Information related to *Sanjhi* making, N=60

S. No.	Aspects	Categories	No of Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
1.	Associated with <i>Sanjhi</i> making	Less than 5 years	3	5.0
		5-10 years	21	35.0
		More Than 10 years	36	60.0
2.	Type of Motifs used	Geometrical motifs	60	100
		Holy symbol	20	33.33
		Celestial symbol	8	26.67
		Figurative	60	100
3.	Places painted*	Door steps (<i>dheli</i>)	3	5.0
		Walls	36	60
		Door steps& Walls	30	50

4.	Design source	Own imagination	46	60
		Old stories and songs	24	40
5.	Raw material used*	<i>Kumkum</i>	60	100
		<i>Kharia</i>	60	100
		<i>Khadiya</i>	60	100
		<i>Geru</i> (Red ochre)	60	100
		Fresh Cow Dung	60	100
		Flowers and leaves	60	100
		Coloured aluminum foil	60	100
		Shells (<i>Cowrie</i>)	48	80
		Bright and colourful paper strips	48	80
		Bamboo sticks	15	25
		Corn cob	12	20
6.	Type of Flowers used	Gul-tevari	60	100
		Genda lal	60	100
		Sada suhagan	58	96.7
		Caner	48	80
		Jasmine (Chameli)	52	86.7
		Seeds of <i>Achcha hagar</i>	60	100
7.	Type of <i>Sanjhi</i> prepared	Floral and By leaves of bananas	3	5.0
		With natural colors	24	40
		With Gheru and cow dung	48	80
		in water sanjhis	6	10
		Floral , With natural colors, By leaves of bananas	6	10
		All types	9	15
8.	Frequency of making <i>Sanjhi</i> art	Each day of <i>Pitra pkash</i>	60	100
		On <i>Govervadhan puja</i>	12	20
		No	24	40

*Multiple responses

Specific kinds of flowers are used in *Sanjhi* and besides being a decorative medium they may have symbolic importance. **Gul-tevari, Genda lal, Chameli, Baramasa or Sada suhagan** flowers are used in region. (Table -2) Flowers of pink, white, pinkish-brown colours have a special place in *Sanjhi*. Big black seeds of *Achcha hagar* are used in making eyes of the figures.

Type of *Sanjhi* prepared: The four types of *Sanjhi* are made in the region. *Sanjhi* pictures were created by flowers, natural colours, leaves of bananas and in water. Making of water *Sanjhis* is very difficult only few respondents know this art of making water *Sanjhis* (10%). Making of water *Sanjhi* is more prevalent in Udaipur as reported by respondents. Majority of respondents made *Sanjhi* with Gheru and cow dung with floral and coloured foil paper decoration. It was also found that sometimes respondents also make *Sanjhi* with dry fruits but it is not very common.

Frequency of making *Sanjhi*: Cent percent of the respondents made *Sanjhi* during festival times like *pitri-paksha* (the fortnight of the ancestors).

Motifs used in *Sanjhis*: All the respondents reported that at Srinath ji temple of Nathdwara, the *sanjis* are made from leaves of the plantains and cut into various shapes and

placed in the *Kamal chok* after the sandya arti. The themes are usually the **Krishna leelas**. There are set designs created on each days of the *Sanjhis*. Folk *Sanjhis* prepared by the respondents on walls of the houses are different and a list

of motifs that are usually made on the full moon day to no moon day by the respondents (**Nathadwara** and **Devghard**) are documented below:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • <i>Aam ka Jhad</i> | • <i>Davat- kalam</i> | • <i>Pachete,</i> |
| • <i>Aankad-Baankad,</i> | • <i>Dhanusha,</i> | • <i>Panda,</i> |
| • <i>Aanvala ka Jhad,</i> | • <i>Dheeni,</i> | • <i>Pandav,</i> |
| • <i>Aath Rahen,</i> | • <i>Dokra Dokri,</i> | • <i>Pankhi, Paamna,</i> |
| • <i>Athkali Phool,</i> | • <i>Gadula,</i> | • <i>Panware,</i> |
| • <i>Baaman-Baamni</i> | • <i>Ganesh,</i> | • <i>Parmesar,</i> |
| • <i>Badshah ki Fauz,</i> | • <i>Gehun ki Umi,</i> | • <i>Patang,</i> |
| • <i>Bandarval,</i> | • <i>Ghevar,</i> | • <i>Pattal-Done,</i> |
| • <i>Bani-thani,</i> | • <i>Giriraj,</i> | • <i>Paya Baajot,</i> |
| • <i>Bara-Dati</i> | • <i>Goojarni,</i> | • <i>Peepali,</i> |
| • <i>Bari,</i> | • <i>Gordhan</i> | • <i>Penkda, Paan,</i> |
| • <i>Beejani,</i> | • <i>Gubbara,</i> | • <i>Phool,</i> |
| • <i>Belan-Chaklota,</i> | • <i>haathi,</i> | • <i>Pomcha</i> |
| • <i>Bilouna,</i> | • <i>Hatyara,</i> | • <i>Premli Bor,</i> |
| • <i>Biranbeti,</i> | • <i>Janeu,</i> | • <i>Ramnaam,</i> |
| • <i>Chamarake,</i> | • <i>Javara</i> | • <i>Saagar,</i> |
| • <i>Chanvar,</i> | • <i>Jhalar,</i> | • <i>Saanjha Savar,</i> |
| • <i>Charnote</i> | • <i>Kalash,</i> | • <i>Saat Rishi,</i> |
| • <i>Chaklota,</i> | • <i>Kangsi,</i> | • <i>Saatiya,</i> |
| • <i>Chakri-Bhanvara,</i> | • <i>Kel,</i> | • <i>Sanjhi-Sanjhya,</i> |
| • <i>Chamacha,</i> | • <i>Khajoor</i> | • <i>Sitara,</i> |
| • <i>Chand,</i> | • <i>Khajur,</i> | • <i>suraj,</i> |
| • <i>Chand-Suraj,</i> | • <i>Kothali,</i> | • <i>Taakdi,</i> |
| • <i>Charbhar,</i> | • <i>Kunwaralal,</i> | • <i>Taakdi-Tola</i> |
| • <i>Charkha,</i> | • <i>Kunware,</i> | • <i>Taal-Talyya,</i> |
| • <i>Charu-Charavi,</i> | • <i>Majira,</i> | • <i>Taare,</i> |
| • <i>Chaupad,</i> | • <i>Mangal kalash</i> | • <i>Tamancha,</i> |
| • <i>Chauraya,</i> | • <i>Meran,</i> | • <i>Tara Mandala,</i> |
| • <i>Chchaarni-Chchaarno</i> | • <i>Mor,</i> | • <i>Tari Pharriyan</i> |
| • <i>Chchabdi,</i> | • <i>Nagara Jod,</i> | • <i>Teen Makye,</i> |
| • <i>Chchahkali Phool,</i> | • <i>Naj Kootna,</i> | • <i>Tairaku,</i> |
| • <i>Cheetiyan.</i> | • <i>Nau Dokra,</i> | • <i>Tikare,</i> |
| • <i>Choonkdi,</i> | • <i>Nau Kothali,</i> | • <i>Teer,</i> |
| • <i>Daala Jhad,</i> | • <i>Neemdi</i> | • <i>Teerath-Dham,</i> |
| • <i>Daan-Peti,</i> | • <i>Nisarni,</i> | • <i>Tibari Badla</i> |
| • <i>Dal Bati,</i> | • <i>Nuth,</i> | • <i>Tota,</i> |
| • <i>Danka,</i> | • <i>Pacheta,</i> | • <i>Vandarwa</i> |

Technique and Process of making Sanjhi folk art: The process and technique of making *Sanjhi* is both simple and elaborate. On full moon day, a motif called *Poonam Patala*, symbolizing the stool or seat in a square form is drawn. *Sanjhi*, is invited to take her seat on this *patala*. Prayers are offered and songs welcoming her to take the seat are sung. The first step involved in making *Sanjhi* is called *gohali*. It consists of plastering a specific area of the wall with clay and cow-dung mixture and sculpting a square boundary with a triangle at the top in relief with cow-dung.

The process of making designs inside this square involves use of thumb and first three fingers. Lines that evolve into concrete designs and figures are drawn by pressing cow-dung on the surface of the wall with the help of the thumb and the fingers. Once the design is complete, flower petals and paper strips are pressed against these figures while the dung is still wet. Some motifs may be embossed directly by placing balls of dung on the wall and pressing it and moulding them into specific designs.



Designs of Sanjhis on wall

The designs of the previous day are scraped off the next day and the surface is plastered with a fresh coat of cow-dung. Motifs are drawn in harmony with the *tithi* i.e. the exact day of the waning lunar fortnight. They either communicate numerically with the date or the object that is embossed shares in common its first letter with that of the date. The *gohali* is done using *geru* and green arsenic (*harhmachi*). This *gohali* is left untouched for three or four days after which another coat is applied over it. *Gohali* can be a square, rectangle, triangle or polygon in shape. The next step in the making of *Sanjhi* is the actual embossing of motifs inside the *gohali* enclosure. The depiction from *theras* onwards is called '*kot*'. *kot* refers to thick circular boundary wall running along town and cities to secure them against attack from enemies.

On the sixteenth day of *pitri-paksha* called *pitri-moksha amavasya*, (the new moon day when *pitris* are believed to be released from the cycle of birth and death) the *Sanjhi-kot* is completely scraped off the wall and this along with the scrapings of the earlier days are ritually immersed in the river water. Girls carry their *Sanjhi* scrapings in a bamboo basket on their heads and singing songs go on together to the nearby water source. After immersion they share the *prasada*. They also sing and dance together.

Table 4: *Sanjhi* art have potential to be establish as a microenterprise, N=60

S. No.	Aspects	Categories	No of Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Sanjhi</i> motifs used in other articles	Yes	02	2.3
		No	58	96.7
2.	<i>Sanjhi</i> art have potential to be establish as a microenterprise in apparel sector	Yes	36	60
		No	24	40

Sanjhi motives used in article: Vast majority (96.7%) of the respondents were unaware that *Sanjhi* could be used as a motif in designing different articles.

Potential of *Sanjhi* art as enterprise in Apparel sector: Majority (60%) of the respondents viewed that *Sanjhi* art have enough potential to be established as enterprise in apparel sector whereas 40 per cent of the respondents were not in agreement with this view.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that *Sanjhi* is the traditional art work and is prevalent in among all the Hindu families respondents were found to be associated with this craft from ten years. Adolescent girls and young women in the age group of 15-30 years were found to be widely involved in *Sanjhi* art. Regarding family structure and education, most of the artisans graduate and living in joint family. *Sanjhi* are drawn during *pitri-paksha* (the fortnight of the ancestors),. The four types of *Sanjhi* are made in *pushtimarg*. These pictures were created by Flowers, natural colors, leaves of bananas and on water. The time spent on a particular design is depending upon the intricacy and details of the designs. Majority of the respondents were known of the also known to the significance of different motives of *Sanjhi* and widely used geometric motives like Spiral, Dots, Pentagonal, Squares and Rectangle. Respondents also use holy symbols like, *Ashadal Kamal*, *Swastika*, *Deepak*, *Om*, *Mangal kalash* and scenes of Raasa leela lord Krishna are depicted in *Sanjhi* at *Shrinathji* temple of *Nathdawara*. Traditional *Geru* and *Khadiya* were still used by majority of the respondents for *Sanjhi* making. Majority (60%) of the respondents viewed that *Sanjhi* art have enough potential to be established as enterprise in apparel sector.

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