

## Wall Painting of Pujari Math of Bhaktapur: An Exploration<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Historical evidences prove that painting is considered as the mother of all other forms of art and crafts. While artists start to sculpture the icon and any art objects, very first, they sketch the drawing of concerning deities and specimens, therefore, a painting is said to be the mother of all other sculpture arts. Therefore, the history of creation of painting is older than other forms of arts. On the basis of creating materials, mediums, instruments, technologies, and nature, painting can be classified into three different forms such as fresco, miniature and painted scroll. This article has analyzed the fresco painting of Pujari Math of Bhaktapur. This is an example of polychrome painting which displays an excellent craftsmanship of the artist. Through the perspectives of religion, culture, social values, art skill and technology this art object is known as the representative fresco paintings of Nepal which reveals the fine handiworks of the artists of the medieval period. In painting where people can observe several secular and religious figures of deities and social events associated with the myths of religious scriptures especially Ramayan and Mahabharata the great epics of Hindu. Despite all its amusing qualities, unfortunately, this painting is still not properly considering as the subject of research and study. It is its academic problem and research gaps as well. Thus, raising the research questions such as what types of paintings are painted on the walls and beams of Pujari Math? Why the painting of Pujari Math is considered wonderful work of art? And what are the major features of the painting of Pujari Math? Likewise, this paper fulfills the certain specific objectives such as to examine the paintings of Pujari Math; to explore the significance of the work of art and to analyze the major features of the fresco paintings. It

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is qualitative research based on primary data and secondary information. Primary data have been obtained from the field using observation and interview method whereas the required secondary information has been collected from different reliable literatures such as journals, documents, books, published and unpublished relevant reports. Thus, for fulfilling the research gaps and problems this paper has been prepared.

**Keywords:** Dating issues, Origin of art of painting, Painting of Pujari Math, Terracotta, Wall painting.

### Introduction

As the mother of all other sculpture art, the history of creation of painting is older than other forms of arts. Archaeological findings discovered from the different prehistoric caves of France, Spain and elsewhere suggested that the people of prehistoric culture were skilled to create beautiful and wonderful art specimens as the form of paintings (Dulal, 2019b, p. 554). It is an extremely difficult task to determine the absolute date of origin and tradition of creating the painting in Nepal. In this respect, some inscriptional records suggest that painting in Nepal was existed from the *Lichchhavi* period (Bajracharya, 2030, p. 1, 526). But unfortunately, they all have been lost and hence cannot be observed at present. Whatsoever, the number of paintings can be observed today, they all are created during the medieval period. The painting had been developed in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, which can be classified into three different forms such as miniature, scroll and fresco. As for iconography it is evident that art of painting adopted tantric influence much earlier than other forms of art (Regmi, 1966, pp. 972-973).

Some fresco paintings such as Fifty-Five Window Palace, *Kumarighar* and *Jayabageswori* temple of Kathmandu, *Bhagha Bhairav* temple of *Kirtipur*, *Chandeswori* temple of *Banepa*, *Mulchowk*, *Sadashivachowk*, *Kumarichowk*, *Kuthu Math* and *Pujari Math* of *Bhaktapur* are known as the best illustrations of this kind. The illustrative paintings mentioned above suggest that the tradition of creating fresco painting was become popular in Nepal during the medieval period.

*Bhaktapur* preserves some beautiful paintings in the forms of miniature, fresco and scroll. Miniature and scroll are found in the museum and also in an individual's curio shops. Whereas, the illustrative fresco paintings can observe on the wall of Royal Palace, *Kuthu Math* and *Pujari Matha* as well (Dulal, 2019a, p. 273). Apart from the scroll and miniature paintings, *Bhaktapur* is famous for its fresco i.e. wall painting. In *Bhaktapur*

visitors can observe the remarkable illustrations of wall paintings especially in the Fifty-Five Window Palace, *Mulchowk*, *Sadashivachowk*, *Kumarichowk*, *Kuthu Math* and *Pujari Math* which might have been created from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Due to art heritages today, *Bhaktapur* is known as the capital of fresco painting.

The paintings of *Taleju* temple were created in different period. They are known as the illustrative examples created from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian era. There are frescos of Sati, dancing *Vishnu* with *Laxmi* and *Garuda*, *Lord Krishna* with *Radha*, birds of *Saranga* and *Jarita*, paintings of Goddess with demons *Shumbha* and *Nisumbha* in the wall of the *Taleju* temple. The painting of Sati was practiced in 15<sup>th</sup> century AD, which is understood as the unique piece among the paintings found in *Bhaktapur*. Sati, daughter of *Dachhyaprajapati* seated inside the flame of the fire surrounding with the figures of different plants and birds. Painting of dancing *Vishnu* with playing *m dal* i.e. tum-tum is another fresco where there can observe the figure of *Laxmi* as well. There is another painting of *Lord Krishna* with his consort *Radha* who beating *jyalli* in her hands. Similarly, there is a fresco of *Saranga* and *Jarita* which was painted on the story described in the text *Mandapal*.

There are some beautiful fresco paintings on the wall of *Sadashivachowk* which is also known as *Bhairavchowk*. Among various frescos painting of king *Bhupatindra* is considered as one of the important works of art of medieval period. In the painting King *Bhupatindra Malla* knee led in devotional posture with long garment on the body and *Pagari* i.e. turban on his head. The dress up of the king shows the influence of *Rajaputana* School of art.

The 55 Windows Palace also provides wonderful fresco painting on the wall of its *Lalbaitthaka* i.e. meeting hall where the artists create the paintings in five layers. It is believed that all the frescos of this gallery were painted by the guidance and supervisions of King *Bhupatindra Malla*. The paintings were created on the basis of the story of *Ramayan*, *Mahabharata* and *Devi Bhagawata*. The paintings regarding on the life history of royal family, warrior, royal princes, *Lord Krishna* with *Gopinis*, *Visworup* *Shiva* are the main paintings of this gallery which known as the illustrative examples of polychrome art where one can observe the beautiful combination of red, black, white, green and yellow colors in the art objects. These are recognized as the best representations of medieval folk art of Nepal.

The frescos are the representative and noteworthy paintings of Nepal which prove excellent artistic appeal of the artists of medieval period. Among the several illustrations, in this paper researcher has presented some analytical study of the fresco of *Pujari Math*. This issue is new and researcher has not found regarding the present issue. This is a huge problem of academic field. Therefore, realizing this research gaps, researcher has carried out this research entitled *Wall Painting of Pujari Math of Bhaktapur: An Exploration* to address the enlisted research problem and gaps as well.

### **Research Problem**

Through the perspectives of research and study regarding the miniature, scroll and fresco paintings, Nepal is known as a unique country in the world. There are several illustrative specimens of art of paintings in Nepal. Among them, fresco painting of *Pujari Math of Bhaktapur* is one of the wonderful art heritages. The studies concerning paintings and sculptures have already been carried out by different scholars. But, in the context of fresco painting of *Pujari Matha of Bhaktapur* such types of specific studies have still not been conducted. Thus, this study is an attempt to investigate the different issues relating to this painting. There are various research problems and gaps which inspire to prepare this research paper. So, to explore the problem and research gaps of the subject researcher has raised the following questions such as what types of paintings are painted on the walls and *beems* of *Pujari Math*? Why the painting of *Pujari Math* is considered wonderful work of art? And what are the major features of the painting of *Pujari Math*?

### **Objectives**

This paper is confined to two types of objectives i.e. simple and complex. To provide the meaning and origin of painting and brief description of such *Matha* is the simple or general objectives, whereas, to examine the paintings of *Pujari Math*; to explore the significance of the work of art and to analyze the major features of the fresco paintings are the specific objectives.

### **Review of Literatures**

Theoretical foundation is considered as an important tool that helps to evaluate the research problem, research questions and gaps as well. In scientific research reviewing the literature is taken as only one approach of constructing solid theoretical foundation. Thus, in social science research it adopts as one of the major components

which helps to determine what theories might be used to explore the questions in a scientific study. In accordance with the above mentioned doctrine the following literatures have been reviewed in this paper.

Amatya's (2031) paper entitled Nepalak Kehi Mahattwapurna Bhittechitraharu (Some Important Wall Paintings of Nepal) deals with different wall paintings of Nepal especially Kathmandu Valley. In this paper Amatya has explored the origin and development of painting in the world and Nepal as well, makes brief survey regarding the wall painting of Kathmandu Valley. But, the special study of the fresco is not explored.

Amatya (1988, pp. 1-7) has published an article entitled 'Pujari Math: The background history of the *Bhaktapur* development project' in the journal *Ancient Nepal*, Department of Archaeology. In his paper Amatya studied overall aspects of the Math. But, regarding the wall painting available in the main worshipping hall of the Math is still remained unexplored.

Amatya (1999) has written a book entitled *Art and Culture of Nepal* and published from Nirala publication, New Delhi in 1999. Amatya contributed but discussed very shortly about the fresco painting of *Pujari Math*. This gallery is fully covered by the paintings of ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu such as *Matsya, Kurma, varaha, Nrisinha, Bamana, Rama, Parasuram, Krishna, Buddha* and *Kalki* and the story regarding on the religious texts Ramayana and Mahabharata in its *beems*. Similarly, the paintings of *Ardhanariswor Shiva, Dattatreya, Shiva, Gajendramoksha, Ramana* can be observed in *Pujari Math*. Although, the detail study such as its individual painted images, features and using materials and methods are remained to gap to explore.

Dulal's (2019) doctoral study on cultural tourism of *Bhaktapur* explored and highlighted several tangible and intangible cultural tourism products such as royal palace, temples, *Mathas*, Buddhist monuments, *Jame Masjid*, Church, dwelling house, *Patis, Pauwas* and *Sattals, Raths* and *Khats*, museums, water ponds, water spouts, *Dabalis*, arts and crafts, musical instruments, dresses and ornaments, foods and drinks, oral traditions and expression, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship. His study has also addressed the wall paintings of *Bhaktapur* including the fresco of *Pujari Math* in brief, but he still remains behind to explore and detail study of this particular art heritage.

Dulal (2019b) wrote an article entitled Dasa Mahavidhyas Painted Scroll of National Museum: an Illustrative Art Heritage of Nepal and published on the *International Journal of Research and Analytical Review* in 2019. In this paper Dulal explored the concept and historicity of painting, classified it in three different folds and other different issues regarding the paintings. Still he left exploring the fresco painting of *Pujari Math* of *Bhaktapur* in his paper.

Besides the above mentioned literature, Burkitt (1992) *The Old Stone Age: A Study of Paleolithic Times*, Amatya (2014) *Archaeological & Cultural Heritages of Kathmandu Valley*, Bajracharya (2030) *Lichhavigalaka Abhilekha*, Bajracharya, (no date). *Nepalako Madhyakalin Kala*, Regmi (1966) *Medieval Nepal (Vol- II)*, Bandel (2034) *Prachin Nepali Chitrakala*, Pandey (1968) *A Brief Survey of the Nepalese Art Forms*, Pal (1978) *The Art of Nepal (Vol-II)*, Raya (1975) *The Art of Nepal*, Chhetri & Rayamajhi (2056) *Nepali kala*, Vastukalara *Pratimalakshan* and Roy (2005) *Anthropology the study of man* are considered noteworthy sources and materials which deal with the Nepali paintings. Abovementioned literature are based on theoretical approaches and empirical studies which are quite useful for this research work that can help to set up solid theoretical parameters and generate the empirical knowledge in this study.

### **Methodology**

Scientific research methodology has been applied to carry out this research paper. The methods and procedures have been followed to explore its objectives and generate valid data and information. Basically, there are two types of data: primary and secondary. Both data have been applied as the major sources of information. Primary data have collected from the field using observation and interview method whereas the essential secondary data have been collected from reliable sources such as journals, documents, books, published and unpublished relevant reports, library use; various publications from government as well.

### **Conceptual Framework**

During the study researcher has applied theoretical and empirical approaches as per their requirements. To examine the paintings; to explore the significance of the work of art of the wall painting and to analyze the major features of the fresco paintings of *Pujari Math* are the main objectives of this paper. For addressing the above mentioned

research gaps and problems as well as fulfilling the determine objectives this paper has been prepared by applying the following conceptual framework:

**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework*

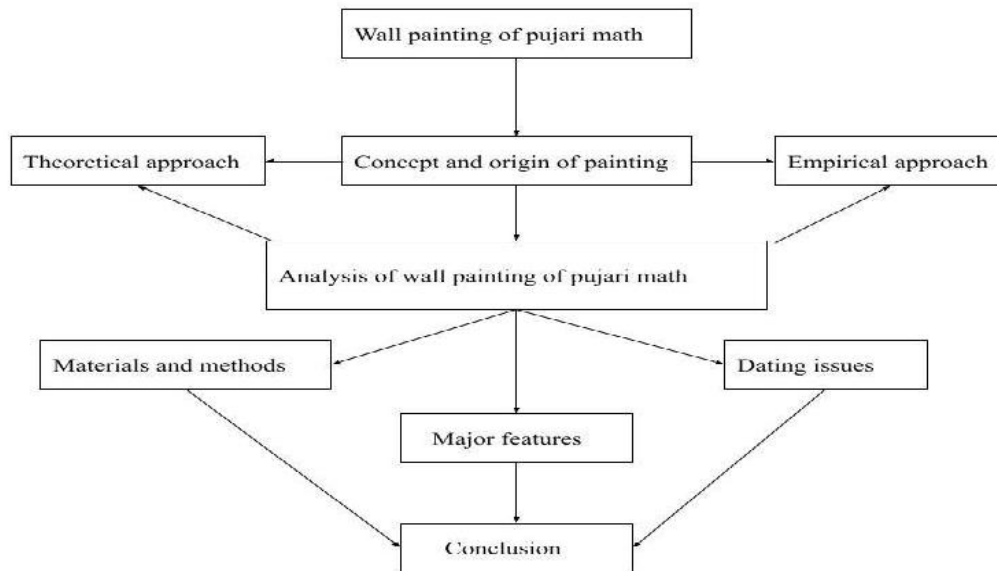


Figure 1 signifies the conceptual framework of the study that helps to explore the wall paintings including materials and methods, dating issues and major features.

### **Result and Discussion**

The researcher has conducted by applying field survey method for finding the primary sources and information regarding the issues. In this process researcher has used observation and interview methods. What is *painting*? What are its major forms? These questions have been addressed by reviewing the relevant literatures. Likewise, regarding the specific study of the painting the researcher has frequently conducted field work for collecting data and information. Finally, in the process of analysis of data, this paper has presented different issues such as origin of art of painting, wall painting, wall painting of *Pujari Math*, major features and dating issue in chronological order.

#### **Origin of art of painting**

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Anthropologists considered the artistic appeal is one of the four basic social activities of human life, but it is a matter of surprise that how are appeared in the dim past, hundreds of thousands years back. What inspiration acted behind those aesthetic activities? The various pursuits of creativity have been classified in a number of groups like visual art, oral literature, music, dance etc. Among these, the visual art in the oldest as well as a tangible form. It includes drawing, painting, carving, engraving, sculpturing etc. (Roy, 2005, p. 512). In this respect Burkitt (1992, p. 237) states that:

when excavating an upper Paleolithic home site in the mouth of a cave or rock-shelter, one frequently comes across bone tools, portions of which have been carved into the shapes of animals heads or have had their surface covered with engravings of animals or signs or patterns: often too there are fragments of bone or suitable pieces of stone that are similarly engraved. Not only is it astonishing that such manifestations of artistic activity should occur at such an early date, but it is doubly amazing to observe to what a high degree of proficiency these upper Paleolithic artists had already attained. It is safe to say that there is no one person in a thousand in this country today who would be capable even after some drawing lessons of emulating the works of art that were made by these old folk so many thousands of years ago.

The excavated upper Paleolithic home sites suggest that prehistoric men created beautiful engraving, drawing and paintings in the mouth and wall of the cave or rock-shelters. All the objects were known as astonishing manifestations of artistic activity of early human civilization and that can represent the high degree of artistic appeal of upper Paleolithic artists which cannot compare with the artists belong to present world.

The birth of painting began along with the primitive people who ate raw meat, used stone weapons and tools and walked naked. Presumably the primitive people during their leisure hours drew figures with solid objects like stone and iron tools on the walls of their caves some fifteen thousand years before (Amatya, 1999, p. 195). The first discovery of primitive was made in 1879 from a large cave Altamira of Spain. It was drawing cum painting found on the ceiling of the cave. Many such drawing and paintings were discovered thereafter from the darkest corners of different caves from Southern France and Spain which definitely of prehistoric period (Roy, 2005, p. 512). Regarding the tradition of its creativity Amatya (1999, p. 195) further highlights:



For the last five thousand years approximately, the ancient Egyptians with a view to making the monuments of their family deities, the temples of goddesses, royal palace and the tombs of the kings more beautiful and attractive caused the walls to be coated with plasters with the aid of the local artists and colour and made or drew murals. The living samples of ancient murals can still be found in most of the temples and royal tombs. This tradition was not limited to ancient Egypt alone. It had been used in other ancient and civilized countries as well. About twelve hundred years ago in India, very beautiful murals were made in the caves of Ajanta between the second to the seventh century CE.

Approximately, for the last five thousand years in ancient Egyptians civilization and culture there was a tradition to making the monuments of their family deities, shrines of their gods and goddesses, royal palace and the tombs and other art and architectural monuments. Especially, in the wall of the monuments they created amazing, beautiful and attractive fresco by using different pigments. These types of illustrative art objects can still be found in most of the ancient monuments.

History suggests that painting has been the means of temptation of the artists since the pre-historic age. Similarly, the discoveries of painted terracotta seals from different archaeological sites of Indus Valley suggests, that the inhabitants of this civilization have had basic knowledge about the creation of paintings. Later on, through the Vedic period the creation of paintings was the traditions of the people where plenty of descriptions of this form of arts can find which can testify the tradition of paintings creation in eastern civilization. In this circumstance Roy (2005, p. 513) further mentions:

In India, no artistic activity has been discovered contemporary to Paleolithic in Europe. Some rock paintings and engravings were found in *Sone Valley*; *Manikpur* and *Vijaygarh* in UP, which can be compared to the slandered of Paleolithic art in Europe, but those definitely not so ancient. The remains of Indus Valley Civilization which are considered to be of Bronze of Chalcolithic Age show certain evidences of artistic ability. The findings painted and engraved forms of art specimens from pottery, beads, jewelries, brassware, statuettes, seals etc., where human as well as animal figures are depicted.

In the case of Nepal, it is estimated that the palaces of *Lichchhivi* period such as *Managriha*, *Kailashkuta* and *Bhadraniwash* were highly decorated through the different paintings (Pandey, 1968, p. 41). Judging by the rich sculptural remains, it can be

postulated with a certain degree of confidence that art of paintings also flourished in *Lichchhavi* period which is also testified by the Chinese accounts (Pal, 2078, p. 1). Chinese account suggests that the houses of either kings or the people, they were constructed using by wood and painted walls (Raya, 1975, p. 46).

According to the descriptions of Chinese Account the famous *Kailashkut* palace of *Amshuvarma* was decorated with the different art of paintings on the walls and ceiling as well. There are several examples of frescos on the walls and ceilings of the pre-historic caves of France and Spain, therefore, if proper scientific explorations and excavations have to be conducted, there might be possibility to discover the specimens of art of paintings from the caves of Nepal as well (Bajracharya, nd, PP. 63-64). Regarding this issue Amatya (2031, p. 39) writes that:

Nepal may be deemed to be an ancient country in the field of painting. The geography and ecology must have witnessed the development of painting as in other countries along with stone or sculpture because the scholars contend that painting and sculpture flourished side by side. If the images pre-dating Christ are available in Nepal, the development of painting might have been gone ahead. The figure of *Boddhisattva* carved on the pedestal near the temple of *Tundal Devi* at *Bisalnagar* is the most ancient finding of wall painting.

On the basis of style and combination of drawing, some scholars viewed that the painting of *Tundal Devi* temple might be the late *Lichchhivi* or early medieval period (Chetry & Rayamajhi, 2056, p. 140). There are four inscriptional records which deal with the art of painting of *Lichchhavi* period. The inscription of *Chabahil* where there can find the descriptions of painting of *Kinnari Jataka* on the wall of the Buddhist temple. Similarly, in the inscription of *Sangha Sambat 32* of *Amsuvarma* there is a description of beautiful *Kailaskut Bhavan*, *Gorakhanath* cave inscription of *Gorkha* where there can find the term *pancharangachitrakarmane* (painting creating by using five different pigments) and in *Naksal Narayanchour* inscription there is a term *prasadarathachitreana* (painting creating in royal palace) deal with the art of painting (Bajracharya, 2030, p. 1,520, 526 & 565).

The painting of *Kinnari Jataka* on the wall of fifth century Buddhist temple must have been rendered in the monuments of Gupta period of India (Pal, 2078, p. 3). In this respect, Ms. Stien has mentioned that the paintings find into the cave of *Tuhuwang* from West province of China, were painted by the Nepalese artists. Among them, there are two

paintings on the collection of Ms. Stien, which belonged to late eight and early ninth centuries CE (Bandel, 2034, p. 9). Apart from the inscriptional records, on the upper part of some of the *Lichchhavi* inscriptions there can find different types of religious symbols such as trident, double dram, conch, wheel, bell, bull, fish, deer, lotus flower which indicate the beautiful engravings and drawings of the period.

Finally, above mentioned discussion regarding the issue of origin and development of painting, in the ancient time, where there was no existence of language and writing as a script, painting was the medium of expression of feelings which served to the human beings since the beginning of civilization. Later on, it became a source of recreation and religious believe of the people. Then people of the early civilization gradually started to decor and worship to their creation which emphasized to the people towards the creation of this art specimens. In Nepal, not from the *Lichchhavi* age, still earlier i.e. *Gopal*, *Mahishapal* and *Kirata* period the art of painting might have existed. As the mother of all other sculpture arts, the origin of painting might have been dated older than the history of other forms of art. But, misfortune, all the previous art of paintings have gone to decay, now how many are seemed to be existence they all are belonged after 10<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### **Wall painting**

Wall painting is known through the different terminologies. Fresco and mural are the most popular synonyms which denote to the wall painting. It is a painting of the surface of a wall, or of kindred surfaces, with ornamental designs or figure-subjects, as a decoration. This form of art painted on the wall and ceiling of the caves, houses, religious monuments, palaces and other architectural buildings by using drawing, engraving and painting. Therefore, it is called wall painting.

Any figure written, drawn, or etched on the wall may be called a mural but generally mural may be termed any figure depicted on the wall of any memorabilia with the medium of colour (Amatya, 1999, p. 196). It is a type of monumental art. Such painting is usually classified *as encaustic or as fresco or tempera* painting. The most common techniques of wall paintings are fresco, distemper, tempera, encaustic, and oil painting. Fresco is a technique of mural painting executed upon freshly laid lime plaster. Water is used as the vehicle for the dry-powder pigment to merge with the plaster, and with the setting of the plaster, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall.

*Mural painting is any piece of artwork painted or applied directly on a wall, ceiling or other permanent surfaces of the buildings. It is a painting executed by any of various techniques, as encaustic, tempera, fresco, or oil paint on canvas, often as an enhancement of the architecture of which the recipient wall is a part. A distinguishing characteristic of mural painting is that the architectural elements of the given space are harmoniously incorporated into the picture. This form of painting is a picture or design painted either directly on plastered walls and ceilings or on canvas, paper, or some other material that is attached to an architectural surface.*

Painting is one of the ancient achievements of human civilization. Mainly it seemed miniature, scroll and fresco in forms. Mural is also one of the various components of painting (Amatya, 1999, p. 195). The drawings, paintings and engravings of the walls and ceilings of prehistoric Cave of Altamira, Spain is the wonderful and amazing illustration that can prove and testify the long antiquity of fresco painting in the world (Roy, 2005, p. 512). Likewise, the painting of Ajanta Cave of India is known as the beautiful examples of Indian Subcontinent (Amatya, 1999, p. 195).

It is estimated that from the *Lichchhavi* period the traditions of creating wall painting was emerged in Nepal. Descriptions regarding on *Managriha* and *Kailashkut* palaces and some other inscriptional records strongly suggest and justify the history of wall painting. During the medieval plenty of wall paintings were created on the walls and ceilings of the temples, monasteries, *mathas*, palaces and individuals traditional houses as well. The wall paintings such as Fifty-Five Window Palace, *Kumarighar* and *Jayabagheswori* temple of Kathmandu, *BhaghaBhairav* temple of *Kirtipur*, *Chandeswori* temple of *Banepa*, *Mulchowk*, *Sadashivachowk*, *Kumarichowk*, *Kuthu Math* and *Pujari Math* of *Bhaktapur* are still in preserved condition and recognized as wonderful creation of the skillful artists. Among them, the fresco of *Pujari Math* is one of the most important specimens of this kind.

### **Wall painting of pujari math**



#### A glimpse of pujari math

The Hindu counterpart of the *Vihar* i.e. monastery is the *Math*, which are essentially houses that provided quarters for a community of male Hindu ascetics gathered around a religious leader i.e. *mahanta*. There are several *mathas* in *Bhaktapur*. *Pujari Math* in *Bhaktapur* is large rambling affairs composed of several domestic quadrangles of variable size, condition and age (Slusser, 1998, p. 141). It is closely associated with the *Dattatreya* Temple of *Dattatreya* Square. After restoration in 1972, it was turned into a wood carving museum with the technical and financial support of the German; where beautiful wooden images such as *Pujadevi*, *Maravijaya* and *Nrityadevi* of dated back to fifteenth century and other specimens have been displayed (Amatya, 2011, pp. 126-127).

From the socio-cultural and art/architectural perspectives *Pujari Matha* is known as an illustrative one. In middle ages, this was an important center for learning not only for Hindu religion, philosophy, but Indian and Tibetan herbs and medicines as well. *Pujari Math* was built in the fifteenth century. It was the oldest existing Hindu monastery in the Valley, although extended and altered by a *Mahanta* or priest in the eighteenth century. It is well known for the rich, finely nuanced wood carving (Amatya, 2011, p. 126). Peacock window which is adjoining on the wall of eastern part, is known as an important example of wood work of the building.



An illustrative wall painting of *Pujari Math*

*Pujari Math* is not only famous for wooden art but, it is also known as the center of beautiful and miraculous wall paintings of Nepal. There are some illustrative paintings belonged to 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century of Christian era in the walls and ceiling of the main sanctorum. More or less the paintings are painted by using polychrome. The door flakes, wings, entablature, pillars, *beem*, *dalin*, wall and other portions of the room are fully decorated by the beautiful polychrome paintings (Dulal, 2019a, p. 274).

The most important and most beautiful room in the *Pujari Math* is located on the first floor of the northern wing. It serves as the reception and living room of the *Pir Mahanta* i.e. chief priest. The walls and ceiling are paneled and the floor is boarded. The ceiling and walls were apparently once brightly painted as traces of colour are still to be seen (Korn, 1989, p. 45). The art of paintings are painted with interesting murals, unusual features in Nepalese buildings and should they be accessible well worth to visiting (Sanday, 1979, p. 128).

In this gallery one can observe the paintings of ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu such as *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Nrisinha*, *Bamana*, *Rama*, *Parasuram*, *Krishna*, *Buddha* and *Kalki* in its *beems*. Similarly, paintings of *Ardhanariswor* Shiva, *Dattatreya*, Shiva, *Gajendramoksha*, *Ramana* and the different stories regarding on the religious texts *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are also known as the important paintings of *Pujari Math*. These paintings seem to be of good quality because the colors are fast and figures are sharp and balanced. The paintings have scenes from *Ramayan*, *Mahabharata* and *Samundramanthan* i.e. churning of the eternal ocean (Amatya, 1999, p. 204).

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### Creating Materials and Methods

For making art of painting either miniature or scroll and fresco there are some materials and methods have been applied. On the comparison of using materials and methods for creation of fresco it is slightly easier than the other forms of paintings. As per the local people for the construction of fresco the materials such as wall, ceiling and floor, rubbing equipment, different pigments, drawing instruments, measuring tools, *chuna* i.e. white cement, ochre clay, and glue are considered more essential materials. Similarly, during the process of creation of fresco, for the first artists should have to select wall, ceiling and other suitable places, which beyond the moisture as possible. And the places covered with white *chuna* and rubbed by the ochre clay paste. For making the floor very smoothness, this is rubbed by the conch and other smoothie instruments. After completing this primary work of artists drew the double drawing on the basis of iconographic features of the deities. Finally, artists used the pigments to fill the drawings (Interview: Om Prakash Daubhadel).

As mentioned above, the wall paintings are the ones painted by the tempera method. These paintings have been made by first layering the wall with clay, dung, *patuwa* (jute), *bhang* (a kind of tobacco plant) and *khudo* (a kind of glue) followed by the shining of the layers and then the actual drawing is done on those shined layers. The colors used in these paintings are the same used in miniature paintings which are red, blue, white and black. The wall paintings in fact look quite similar to the paintings in the miniature and slightly bigger. These are usually made in square and even layers using red and golden color giving them a dwarfed shape which makes them quite distinguishable to one another (Interview: Saraswati Singh).

#### Major features

Painting has a long history in comparison to the other forms of arts. The findings evidences testify that from the pre- historic culture, the tradition of creation of paintings evolved. Art of painting is known as the common matter of human beings in the world. But, due to the variation of places, periods, perceptions, situations, religious beliefs, available raw materials and methods, art skills, techniques, technology, and ecology, there can observe some kinds of differentiation between the painted objects. Therefore, because of the above mentioned causes the art of paintings of Nepal seemed to be different than elsewhere.

On the basis of nature, forms and raw materials used to create, paintings can be classified into three different categories which are miniature, scroll and fresco. Some illustrations of these all categories can be found in Nepal (Dulal, 2019b, p. 563). Rest of them, the fresco painting of *Pujari Math* is known as an important specimen. It is extremely significant art heritage through the perspectives of religious, cultural and artistic appeal. The artists very carefully used the pigments for the combination according to the facial structures of the deities. Red, white, yellow, green, blue and black are the major pigments which seem to have been used in this painting. In this work of art the secular and religious motifs can be observed and overall which has revealed the following features:

***Coverage of the main portions of the gallery***

It is not a single painting. It covered overall main section of the Math. More or less door flakes, door wings, entablature, pillars, *beem*, *dalin*, wall and other portions of the worshipping hall are fully covered by polychrome paintings.

***Reflect specific tradition and technology***

It is made by first layering the wall with clay, dung, *patuwa* (jute), *bhanga* (a kind of tobacco plant) and *khudo* (a kind of glue) followed by the shining of the layers and then the actual drawing is done on those shined layers. Therefore, it is well planned and systematically painted fresco which reflects specific tradition and technology of creating this type of art objects.

***Best quality of production***

The paintings of *Pujari Math* seem to be of good quality, fast and figures are sharp and balanced as well. Combination of different colors such as red, white, yellow, green, blue, and black, emphasize to the stories and events of great religious epics *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata*, used of high quality of skill, knowledge, technology and materials while creating such an art suggest the best quality of production of medieval period.

***Based on the events of great religious epics***

The painted figures of this art gallery are related with incarnations of Lord Vishnu such as *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Nrisinha*, *Bamana*, *Rama*, *Parasuram*, *Krishna*, *Buddha* and *Kalki*. The finding features show that this work of art created on the base of the stories and events of great religious epics *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata*.



### ***Beautiful example of polychrome art***

Artists applied different types of colour such as red, white, yellow, green, blue, and black and so on according to the requirement of deities, stories and events. The beautiful and wonderful combination of multi pigments can be observed high artistic skill in this polychrome art of paintings.

### ***Based on iconographic sciences***

Artists applied iconographic science while creating the painting especially ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu such as *Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Nrisinha, Bamana, Rama, Parasuram, Krishna, Buddha* and *Kalki*. Similarly, the paintings of *Ardhanariswor Shiva, Dattatreya, Shiva, Gajendramoksha* and *Ramana* are also created as per the features of iconographic sciences.

### ***Based on religious and Mythological legends***

More or less all the painting specimens of this art gallery created on the mythological stories and events of great epics literatures *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata*. Hence, they have known as the representative specimen of religious and mythological legends.

### ***Beautiful combination of pigments***

Combination of different colors such as red, white, yellow, green, blue, and black and so on seem to well-arranged according to their nature and features of the objects that represent the high quality of skills of artists.

### ***Amazing specimen of 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century CE***

Here are series of painted figures in the main worshiping hall which look like a decorated gallery of amazing arts. Therefore, the hall is known as the gallery of beautiful paintings about 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### ***Coverage the aesthetic emotion and thematic values***

Aesthetic emotion represents the beauties and alluring aspects whereas thematic values denote the thematic doctrine and subjective significance of the objects. As per the same doctrine wall painting of *Pujari Math* keeps beauty and reveals subjective values. Therefore, through the perspectives of aesthetic emotion and thematic values it is one of the important heritages of *Bhaktapur*.

### ***In depth work of art***

Full text can be downloaded: <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/craiaj> & <http://www.craiaj.info/>

Artists provide in depth artistic features while drawing the sketches, using the pigments, painted their heads, hands, facial structures, their dresses, ornaments, weapons, and holy mounts and other else. Thus, this is known as the in depth work of art of medieval period.

### ***Represent high quality of skill, knowledge and technology***

Selection of excellent sites, well drawing and paintings of figures, combination of different colors, using materials, in depth work of art, and so on finally suggest and justify that the fresco of *Pujari Math* represents the high quality of skill, knowledge and technology used in this form of art.

### **Dating Issue**

The tradition of creation of painting seems very old in comparison to the other forms of arts. On the basis of findings archaeological evidences from the prehistoric caves of France, Spain and other parts of the world the antiquities of painting can be traced back to the pre- historic culture and civilization. Findings art objects of the period suggest that people of prehistoric culture were skilled to create beautiful and wonderful art specimens as the form of paintings. No doubt, the tradition of creation of painting had come into practice from the very earlier in Nepal. Regarding this issue some inscriptional records suggest that the painting in Nepal already existed from the *Lichchhavi* period (Dulal, 2019b, pp. 563- 564).

The *Pujari Math* was not only the most important, but also the eldest and most beautiful Math in the kingdom of *Bhaktapur*. During the course of history is has inspired the construction of eleven *mathas* in and around *Bhaktapur* (Amatya, 1988, p. 4). It stated that a *Matha* was built on this site in 1428-82, during the reign of King *Yaksha Prakash Malla* (Korn, 1989, p. 44). It was reconstructed during the reign of *Viswa Malla* in 1548 to 1560 (Amatya, 1988, p. 5). It is recorded that the math was consecrated and opened for public intensive renovations were carried out to restore the building to its original form. Later, in 1763 CE, further extensions and alterations were made by the *Mahanta*, or the chief priest (Sanday, 1979, p. 127).

The original shape of the Math has changed a lot in time. At present the wood carving particularly carved windows, doorways, pillars, sculptures etc. that are seen belonged to the eighteenth century. According to inscription dated 1763, the present shape of the math took place during the reign of the last *Malla* ruler *Ranjit Malla*

(Amatya, 1988, p. 5). Finally, on the basis of above mentioned discussion, findings features, using materials, painting skill, craftsmanship and technology the date of the fresco painted in the main worshipping hall of the Math might be estimated about 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### Conclusion

The tradition of creation of painting has been evolved from the pre- historic culture. Literary sources especially *Rigaveda* mentions some illustrations regarding the issues of painting, therefore, it is believed that painting was existed during the Vedic civilization in Indian subcontinent and their culture. On the basis of nature, forms and raw materials used to create, painting has been divided into three different categories; miniature, scroll and fresco. In the context of Nepal it is an extremely difficult task to determine when the tradition of creation of painting started. Thus, the absolute date of origin of this tradition cannot be estimated. But, inscriptional records of *Lichchhavi* period suggest that from the very early it was practiced in Nepal.

The fresco of *Pujari Math* belongs to 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century CE is one of the important wall painting which is remained to preserve in Nepal. Through the perspectives of religious, cultural and artistic appeal it is extremely significant art heritage of *Bhaktapur*. The pigments of the paintings have been used very carefully for the combination according to the facial structures of the deities by the artists. The pigments such as red, white, yellow, green, blue and black are the major colours which seem to have been used in this painting. For the creation of this art specimen, artists have relied on their high skills which can be easily observed in this beautiful work of art.

But, unfortunately, the fresco of *Pujari Math* is gradually losing the original shape and size due to moisture and other causes of decay. Today, several painted images of the deities become unseen therefore; it is very difficult to recognize the deities and overall features of the paintings. Some painted images are still well preserve on the door flakes, wings, entablature, pillars, walls, *beems* and *dalins* but the situation of preservation and conservation not properly seem excellent. If don't take seriously in time for safeguarding to this precious heritage, no doubt, that might be lost in coming days. Thus, without delay the concerned authorities should take seriously to conserve and preserve in time.

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Full text can be downloaded: <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/craiaj> & <http://www.craiaj.info/>

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