



Shadanga- the limbs of art

_Hello and welcome to our episode today where we are going to talk about Shadanga, The limbs of art

The limbs, through which, art gets life and stand completely as a creative creation by an artist. The subject Expert for todays episode is Kapil Lakhwan, Asisstant Professor ,FNG college, Greater Noida and I am Surangini Sharma

In this materialistic world, art or kalaa is considered as a purest form in itself and it can be showcased in any manner, and because it is pure, it needs to be a lot of dedication, meditation and concentration.

To carry this forward certain kind of rules and regulations were written down.

Now lets move to Shadanga.

Shadanga: a one of the rule of art of painting written in ancient period, a word consist of 2 very important words, one is shad, meas 6 and anga, means part. Shadanga consist of the six limbs, or canons of art, on which the whole art of painting depends.

If a painting with any subject is a body so these shadanga are the body parts of it and if the painting lacks any of the parts of shdanga, it was considered as an incomplete, fruitless and meaningless creation.

The word shadanga is very well elaborated in a text Vishnu dharmottarapurana.



As most of us are aware about the lord of dance shiva nataraj, and the divine architect vishwakarma, so because lord Vishnu was the first painter according to hindu mythology, who drew the image of urvashi on his thigh with mango leaf and infused the life into it to break the pride of indra. This is story of nara- narayan from bhagavat purana, and depicted in a form of a sculpture in dashavatara temple in deogarh.

This is the reason that the rules of painting are layed down in Vishnu dharmottara. And this reason makes the painting lively.

Now let's, see what is vishnudharmottarapurana?

The Vishnudharmottara Purana (or the *Vishnudharmottara*) is a text based on the hindu practices, a research, the detailed mythological subject on lord Vishnu, along with the purest research study on the whole universe and dance, music, art and literature.

And do know, that the text is that elaborated and big so that it was compiled with so many contents separately put into the three divisions of the purana.

Yes, the vishnudharmottarapurana is divided into three *khandas* (parts). The first *khandas* consist of 269 *adhyayas* (chapters), the second *khandas* consist of 183 *adhyayas* and the third *khandas* consist of 118 *adhyayas*.

As first and second khand consist of only the mythological subject based on shri Vishnu,



so now lets go through the third khanda (chapter) as it is basically deals with all the practicality performed with the reference of the chapter chitrasutra.

The third *Khanda*

Chapter I of the third *khanda* deals with the origin of image making and the self completed arts. Chapters 35-43 give an account of the various branches, methods and ideals of Indian painting. It deals not only with its religious aspect but also, deals with its secular employment. It "proclaims the joy that colours and forms and the representation of things seen and imagined produce".

Art historian, Stella Kramrisch says that while the Vishnu Purana cannot be earlier than the 2nd half of the 4th century CE, the chapters of the Vishnudharmottara that deal with painting must have been compiled in the 7th century CE.

Indian paintings provide an aesthetic continuum that extends from the early civilization to the present day. From being essentially religious in purpose in the beginning, Indian painting has evolved over the years to become a fusion of various cultures and traditions.

Treatises on Indian Painting

Chitrasutra a part of the third khanda of vishnudharmottarapurana, mentions six limbs (anga) of painting in form of a shloka:

rupa-bheda

pramaana

Bhaava



lavanya-yojanam
varnika-bhanga

saadrashya

rupa-bheda (variety of form); pramana (proportion); Bhava (infusion of emotions); lavanya-yojanam (creation of luster and having rainbow colors that appear to move and change as the angle at which they are seen change); sadreya (portrayal of likeness); and varnika-bhanga (color mixing and brushwork to produce the desired effect)

There are numerous works on this subject. Around 1st century BC the *Shadanga* or Six Limbs of Indian Painting, were evolved, a series of canons laying down the main principles of the art.

- The subsequent development of painting by the Buddhists indicates that these ' Six Limbs ' were put into practice by Indian artists, and are the basic principles on which their art was founded.
 - Now let's make a detailed study of these six limbs or shadanga along with the examples and elaborate accordingly.
- *Pramanam* Correct perception, measure and structure.
- *Bhava* Action of feelings on forms.
- *Lavanya Yojanam* Infusion of grace, artistic representation.
- *Sadrishyam* Similitude, has a reference to how faithful a picture is to be original.
- *Varnikabhanga* Artistic manner of using the brush and colours



1. Rupa-bheda

Rupa means form and bheda means a differentiation or the characterization in its individual manner. It can be living or non living.

Rupabheda is basically, the knowledge of appearances.

The object of the subject are classified as jiva means living and ajiva means non-living.

Living is divided in three categories:

Uttam; means all the superior characters in art, gods, goddesses, kings.

Madhyam; a category of the consorts

Adham: a category of demons, all disgusting, ugly looking creatures.

Non-living consist of the whole background, supporting objects like mountains, clouds, etc.

Rupa bheda showcase a deep and detailed variation in the whole diversity in the world.

For example humans and their types gods, goddesses, kings, queens, common people, animals, if deers so their will be a differentiation in between, trees with different varieties, and so on.

Rupa-bheda consists in the knowledge of special characteristics of things – natural or manmade; say, the differences in appearances among many types of men, women or natural objects or other subjects of the painting.



Rupa is 'form', visual as well as mental and 'Bheda' means 'Difference', such as the difference between forms instinct with life and beauty and the forms which have no beauty, no life. The study and practice of Rupabheda enable us to see and depict things as they are and as they appear visually.

From our birth to the day of our death, we live with Rupa (Form), seeing it with our eyes, touching it with the five organs of our senses, and feeling it with our mind. Jyoti Pasyati Rupani—which means the light which sees (and shows) forms, light waves from the planets, as well as the inner light of our soul, reveal Form to us, diversely shaped, differently moulded and coloured.

Endless and varied are the forms which our senses feel, perceive and observe. Rupabheda means the analysis and synthesis of forms given to us by our five senses and our soul, or mind.

When we approach Rupa merely with our senses, it is only the differences of visual things, or the outward form of things which we catch; it is either short or long, circular or angular, big or small, dark or fair, rigid or the reverse. Example - In the given painting of padmapani from Ajanta cave no. 1, so many forms are visible.

Padmapani a form of Buddha, holding a blue lily, showcased like a youthful king with luxury and charm, standing along with the princess, attendants, musicians, kinnaras animals like monkeys and birds.

Background with the architectural scene, trees and plants. And figures with different colour complexions, poses and performing actions.



In the basholi painting of clouds made along with the interesting variety of ghosts and demons submerging with the clouds, not only visually appealing but also a deep thought and conceptual features behind it, it makes a kind of soundfull subject to the viewer and speaking in itself as every cloud with its own individual characterization or rupa-bheda.

2.Pramana

pramāṇa, means measure, in Indian philosophy, the means by which one obtains accurate and valid knowledge (*pramā, pramiti*) about the world. A basic particular size and proportion of any character in art.

It is the correct spatial perception of the objects painted and maintaining a sense of harmony, balance and a sense of proportion within the figure and also in its relation to other figures; and to the painting as a whole. The sense of proportion also extended to the way major figures are depicted by placing at the centre and surrounding them with lesser figures in smaller size symbolizing their status with the main figure. The Indian artists were guided more by the proportions than by absolute measurements. The proportions were often symbolic and suggestive.

Pramana lets us to understand the important and less important parts and objects in subject of painting

Example - In the painting taken from Ajanta caves, with a subject- explanation of the dream by maya devi the mother of Buddha. Maya devi is standing in a very harmonious pose along with the servants with a support of a pillar. Because she is a queen she is different in colour complexion with Indian red and with a high proportion in size and rest of of the



figures with opposite colour scheme and smaller in size, which makes the difference in importance.

In the painting of trivikrama, the fifth incarnation of lord Vishnu, he is shown in the monumental size as he made victory on the three worlds with his three feet measurement, one foot on swarga (heaven), second on prithvi earth and finally he put his third foot on the head of demon bali to destroy his arrogance. So because he is the winner of three worlds he is shown gigantic in height and rest of the figures smaller in size.

3. Bhava

It is a *states of mind*, translated as *feeling, emotion, mood, devotional state of mind*. emotional energies created through the paintings.

It is the expression of the character which fulfills the meaning of the painting and the concept or the story behind.

The *Natyasastra* identifies eight *rasas* with eight corresponding *Bhava* (mood which was followed in indian art as:

- Śṛṅgāram (शृङ्गारं) which means, Love, Attractiveness. Holds the bhava *Rati* (Love)
- Hāsya (हास्यं) which means, Laughter, Mirth, Comedy. Holds the bhava *Hasya* (Mirth)
- Raudram (रौद्रं) which means, Fury. Holds the bhava *Krodha* (Anger)



- Kāruṇyam (कारुण्यं) which means, Compassion, Tragedy Holds the bhava. *Soka* (Sorrow)
- Bībhatsam (बीभत्सं) which means, Disgust, Aversion. Holds the bhava *Jugupsa* (Disgust)
- Bhayānakam (भयानकं) which means, Horror, Terror. Holds the bhava *Bhaya* (Terror)
- Vīram (वीरं) which means, Heroic mood. Holds the bhava *Utsaha* (Energy)
- Adbhutam (अद्भुतं) which means, Wonder, Amazement Holds the bhava. *Vismaya* (Astonishment)
- This is basically consists in drawing out the inner world of the subject; to help in express its inner feelings. It takes a combination of many factors to articulate the Bhava of a painting; says through eyes, facial expression, stance , gestures by hands and limbs, surrounding nature, animals , birds and other human figures. Even the rocks, water places and plants (dead or dying or blooming or laden) are employed to bring out the Bhava. In narrative paintings, the depiction of dramatic effects and reactions of the characters from frame to frame demands special skill.
- Since color is a major medium in painting, the emotions and moods are expressed through manipulating colors, their density, tones, lines, light, shades etc. The ingenuity, imagination and skill of the artist discover their limitations here.
- Example- there are so many examples represents expressions and emotional qualities. In padmapani because he is Buddha the expression of the prince is peaceful, compassionate, subtle, and serene. In



sittanavasala painting subjected to Krishna romance where Krishna is playing flute in the centre of the ashta-gopis(8 lovers), each and every character smiling in amazement and enjoying the company of romantic hero krishna.

- In the painting of durga mahishasura mardini where female hero goddess durga with power and pride showcases veer or victorious expressions whereas goddess kali and lord narasimha (a man lion form of god) makes a fear to the demons through terrified horror expressions.

Lavanya-yojanam

Infusion of grace, it is a planning to create a beautiful and gracefull environment, along with the beauty of the character. For example Krishna raas holds the highly aesthetical beauty, grace, charm in krishnas and gopis, same feeling will be infused in the environment whether trees, plants, foliage, flowers, animals and birds. The form and posture itself will be so speaking so that the meaning will be completed.

Emotive and lyrically graceful portrayal of the painting. So in totality, it is the creation of grace, beauty, charm, tenderness and illuminating the painting and the hearts of the viewer. It aims to uplift and brighten the mood of the figures, the viewers and the surroundings.

Example- In a painting where a princess is admiring her beauty in mirror fully decorated with jewels and ornaments, standing along with the servants holding her plate of make-up and a whisk. Because the painting has a subject of beauty the whole environment with the



variety of beautiful foliage and the pose and the posture itself is very graceful.

Same beauty and charm is rendered in the pahari painting of bhagvata series where romance of radha and Krishna flows in the woods and greens Krishna making the plait of radha within the spring environment consist of variety of greens and flowers with the sound of birds and the beauty of peacocks. Radha is shown with detailed decoration in her dress, embroidered chunari, covered with heavy jewells, beautiful expression and posture . Krishna is portrayed with his blue charm, romantic, lovely expression and gesture complimenting radha and the whole environment is covered with spring characteristics and colours.

Sadrashya

- Resemblance, which means how faithful a picture is to be original.
- Achieving credible resemblance to objects of the world around and to the persons. The resemblances are not mere general but extend to details too.
- It enhances the character of any individual and makes him complete in itself. For example mriganayani (eyes like a deer eyes), nose should be like a parrot beak, chest like a lion, waist should be like a tree-trunk, thighs should be like a banana trunk, fingers like lotus petals, lips like fresh bursted flower, etc.



Lets take an example of Buddha. The Buddha is traditionally regarded as having the Thirty-two Characteristics of a Great Man (*mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇa*).

The 32 major characteristics are:

- Level feet
- Thousand-spoked wheel sign on feet
- Long, slender fingers
- Pliant hands and feet
- Toes and fingers finely webbed
- Full-sized heels
- Arched insteps
- Thighs like a royal stag
- Hands reaching below the knees
- Well-retracted male organ
- Height and stretch of arms equal
- Every hair-root dark colored
- Body hair graceful and curly
- Golden-hued body
- Ten-foot aura around him
- Soft, smooth skin
- Soles, palms, shoulders, and crown of head well-rounded
- Area below armpits well-filled
- Lion-shaped body
- Body erect and upright
- Full, round shoulders
- Forty teeth
- Teeth white, even, and close
- Four canine teeth pure white
- Jaw like a lion
- Saliva that improves the taste of all food
- Tongue long and broad



- Voice deep and resonant
- Eyes deep blue
- Eyelashes like a royal bull
- White ūṛṇā curl that emits light between eyebrows
- Fleshy protuberance on the crown of the head

-The female paintings with their particular pose and postures are suggests as if these females body is like a trunk of a tree in a twisting manner, the gestures are like a soft branches, the breast makes a suggestion of a fertile fruit, the fingers are like a lotus petals, blown in a different-different manner, the almond shaped eyes with its perfect shape and glow. And the mood and expression itself of a divine nymph, as so much of these characteristics are cannot be held by a common man. And this is all just to create a beautiful fragrance into the composition. Goddess meenakshi is named because of her beautiful fish shaped eyes. Meen means fish and aksh means eyes.

Vishnu is described as kamal nayan or padmaksha.

Varnika bhanga

Varna means colour and bhanga is the use or application.

This portion deals with the mediums and techniques of art .

This is the, artistic manner of improvising color combinations, tones and shades. It also involves delicate and skillful use of brushes and other aids. It represents the maturity of the artist's techniques and fruitfulness of his experience.



Preparation of Wall - Base Plaster

The base plaster consisted of powdered brick, burnt conches and sand, mixed with a preparation of molasses and drops of a decoction of Phaseolus munga. To this were added mashed ripe bananas or tree resins and the pulp of bilva fruit (Aegle marmelos). After drying it was ground down and mixed with molasses and water until became soft for coating.

Preparation of Wall - Finish Coat (Vajralepa)

Buffalo skin was boiled in water until it became soft. Sticks were then made of the paste and dried in the sunshine.

When colour was mixed with this, it made it fast, and if white mud was mixed with it, it served as a perfect medium for coating walls.

The colours were prepared with the mixing of natural pigments and natural gum. These pigments are extracted from stones and minerals. Totally earth colours were used.

Most pigments were minerals available locally: red ochre, vivid red, yellow ochre, indigo blue, chalk white, terra verte and green.

Only Lapis lazuli was imported. Lamp-black was the only non-mineral

Brushes made of sticks and fibres.

Painting Sequence

A preliminary sketch in iron ore was drawn while the surface was still slightly wet, followed by an under-



painting in grey or white. On this surface the outline was filled in with various colours, proceeding from underpainting to the appropriate colours of the subject. Finally, when dry, it was finished off with a dark outline for final definition and a burnishing process to give lustre to the surface.

Right from the preparation of the surface, drawing, colouring and then shading and highlighting the objects of the subjects.

The tempera technique is carried forward.

The whole practicality performed by an artist is the varnika bhanga

Let's take an example of Ajanta mural paintings, where, flat surface is prepared on the walls of the rough stony caves, with the help of husk, plaster and natural gum. Then, the process of drawing starts with the proper division of foreground and background, sometimes multiple grounds. Then the colours were filled up, shadings were applied to give depth and highlighting to the subjects and to give three dimensionality.

For example the Ajanta murals and ceilings were considered with this element. The design patterns are drawn perfectly and with equal repetition to make a sense of rhythm. The contrasting colours were followed in background and foreground to make perfect visibility. The shading is followed in the subjects to make a sense of three dimensionality.

Even in the narratives of Ajanta the drawing of the characters is made harmoniously. The outlines drawn are



so powerful that make a kind of musical feel through it, it is not static or hard, it is sweeping and curvaceous that helps to make the perfect body movement and and creates a rhythm into it.

The colour application is in a manner to make equal visibility and importance to both foreground and background. The decoration is rendered with stippling, to create the precious, semi-precious stones, jewels, pearls.

In painting of padmapani the cheeks, chest, fingers, lips waist are the main and highly visible parts where shading is applied perfectly by making tint and tones. This light to middle to dark scheme helps to make three dimensional forms and lively in nature.

That is all we have for you today. Thank you and goodbye