

THANJAVUR PAINTING: A CLASSICAL SOUTH INDIAN STYLE

Prof. Amruta Dinde.
Dept of History
Kamala College,
Kolhapur .

INTRODUCTION:

Thanjavur painting is a classical south indian painting style ,which was inaugurated from the town of thanjavur .the art form draws its immediate resources and inspiration from way back about 1600 AD,period when the nayakas of the thanjavur under the suzerainty of the VijaynagarRayasencouraged art- chiefly ,classical dance and music –as well as literature,both in telugu and tamil and painting of chiefly hindu religious subjects in temples ,it is distinguished by its famous gold coating .however ,it can safely be summed that thanjavur painting ,as we know it now ,originated in the Maratha court of thanjavur (1676-1855).most of these paintings revolve around the theme of hindu god and goddesses:along with saints .the main figure is always painted at the center of painting .since thanjavur paintings are mainly done on solid wood planks , they are locally known as “paiagaipadam”.

Thanjavur paintings are characterized by rich vivid colours, simple iconic composition,glittering gold foils overlaid on delicate but extensive gesso work and inlay of glass beads and pieces or very rarely precious gems. In thanjavur paintings one can see the influence of Deccani ,Vijaynagar ,Maratha and European styles. In Thanjavur paintings one can see the influence of Deccani ,Vijaynagar ,Maratha and European style of painting. Episodes from Hindu Puranas,Sthala- puranas and other religious texts were visualized, sketched or traced and painted with the main figure or figures placed in the central section of the picture surrounded by several subsidiary figures ,themes and subjects .there are also many instances . when jain , sikhi , muslim other religious and even secular subjects were depicted in Thanjavur paintings.

KEYWORDS: Thanjavur, painting, Empire ,Vijaynagar, Religion

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION:

Thanjavur painting is a peculiar , miniature type of painting named after the place thanjavur in tamilnadu, a southern state of india.thanjavur district is famous for various arts and crafts in which paintings are ranked high among the other arts like Thanjavur toys , Thanjavur plates, etc .its Origin dates back to the Nayak and the Maratha period in the 16th Century.the Maratha rule of Thanjavur lasted for about two centuries from the late 16th century the Thanjavur school painting evolved in a period full of political chaos in south India.Thanjavur paintings flourished under the patronage of the Nayak and Maratha princes in 16th to the 18th centuries.

The early paintings were embedded with real diamonds , rubies and other precious stones. later, use of semiprecious and artificial stones gained popularity. There are some

examples of this art in the “saraswatimahallibrary”, in Thanjavur set up and developed by King Sarfoji, this monarch, who reigned from 1798 to 1832, to whom we owe the “Ganesha shrine of his time.

STYLE AND TECHNIQUE :

Thanjavur paintings were made in various sizes depending upon the function, the subject and the choice of the patron. The painting was made generally on a canvas pasted over a plank of wood (jackfruit or teak) with Arabic gum. The canvas was evenly coated with a paste of French chalk or powdered limestone and a binding medium and dried. The artist then drew or traced using a stencil, a detailed outline of the main and subsidiary subjects on the canvas. A paste made of limestone powder and a binding medium called sukkan or makku, was used for creating the gesso work. Gold leaves and gems of varied hues were inlaid in selected areas like pillars, arches, thrones, dresses, etc. In the past, artists used natural colours like vegetable and mineral dyes, whereas the present-day artists use chemical paints. They used red, blue, black, green and brown colours in painting.

For outline dark brown is usually used. Red is favoured for the background. Scholars say that the red background is the distinctive mark of Thanjavur paintings, but green is also sometimes used. Lord Vishnu, appropriately enough, is coloured blue, but black is employed on occasions. The portrayals of the figures in the paintings are breathtakingly brilliant. Almost all the figures have rounded bodies and almond-shaped eyes, which is unique to THANJAVUR PAINTING. The traditional Thanjavur artists have a flair for ornate dresses. Paintings are notable for their adornment in the form of glass pieces embedded in part of them.

The frames used for paintings are of two types. 1) the wooden type where in plain type of wood is used. 2) the Chettinad type which are more ornamental with designs. Instead of breakable glass, “transparent acrylic sheets” are used to avoid breakage during transit.

THEME OF PAINTING:

Paintings are being inspired by classical dance, music and literature. The themes of the paintings are of Hindu deities, figures, birds, flowers, animals and saints.

PAINTING IN MODERN TIMES:

Modern-day Thanjavur paintings are becoming very much famous all over the world. These paintings have become very much inspiring in the modern times. Revival programmes, exhibitions, workshops and training camps on Thanjavur paintings are being held regularly by many including state government. The materials used have also changed according to the cost, ease of availability and the choice of individual artist. Plywood, for example, and adhesives are preferred over the natural and mineral colours and other traditional components. Artists have taken this old form of art and over the years combined it with other styles.

to create mixed media arts for example ‘ they are also done on mirrors , glass and canvas . the idea of applying gold foil is unique to this traditional art, so this same style is taken and recreated on different mediums.

CONCLUSION:

Thanjavur painting is a popular form of classical south indian painting. It originated from Thanjavur city of Tamil Nadu. Richness and vibrancy of colours and dense composition used makes them unique and different from other types of paintings. The use of Thanjavur painting has been started from 11th century it has been developed in Chola wall paintings. Then later spread out and became famous in Vijaynagar, Nayaka and Maratha Empire. With the changing times and eras the Thanjavur paintings have seen transformation in their painting art and painting prints.

REFERENCES:

- 1) Thanjavur – A cultural history by Pradeep Chakravarthy published by Niyogi Books.
- 2) “ News Archives” : The Hindu
- 3) “Thanjavur paintings of later Maratha period Discovered in Abandoned Temple.
- 4) en.m.wikipedia . org.
- 5) www.thanjavurpaintings.com.
- 6) www.culturalindia.net