

Minor Research Project

IMPACT OF MURAL PAINTINGS ON CHRISTIAN ART IN KERALA

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Title of the Project : Impact of Mural Paintings on Christian Art in Kerala

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT:

- To understand the traditional links between Kerala Christian mural paintings and Kerala traditional art of painting.
- To promote interest among the students to see and enjoy these paintings as an expression and sign of the aesthetic sense and value system of a society.
- To appreciate our mural paintings and to conserve the mural paintings.
- To encourage field visits to these places.
- To give the awareness about the value and significance of these mural paintings to people specially the Christian society.
- To break the unnecessary bondages of religion, caste and creed among art.

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT:

Mural painting is a public art. It stays on the wall exhibiting itself to the public for centuries. It is a sign of the tradition and culture of a particular people. Mural painting of the churches in Kerala have a history of at least four centuries. These paintings reveal the history, religiosity and aesthetic sense of the people of that age. Kerala has its own traditional art of painting. We can find the influence of these ritualistic paintings in Kerala Christian mural paintings. The only traditional mural painting of Kerala Christian is the mural paintings found in the ancient Kerala churches. The study is very interesting and relevant where a lot of research is yet to be done. When we study the Mural paintings in the churches of Kottayam, Kothamangalam, Kanjoor, Angamaly, Akaparambu, Edapally, Paravoor, Pazhanji, Velur and

Ollur in Kerala, it would be undoubtedly revealed that these paintings are the relics of a traditional art of painting that transcends religious barriers. Socialistic and secularist features are observed in Kerala Christian mural paintings. Even though the mural paintings in Kerala churches are a part of Syrian Christian tradition it can be seen that there is a traditional rhythm in it.

There is a strong influence of Kerala mural paintings on Christian Mural paintings in the churches of Kerala. Study about this influence creates social unity among people. Earlier studies were based only on western influence on the Christian Mural paintings. But this study is based on folkloristic aspects and the areas mentioned above. Neither the people nor the Christian society has awareness about the value and significance of these Mural paintings. This research will enable to create awareness that these invaluable Mural paintings are to be protected and maintained. The study of the influence of the traditional Kerala Mural paintings on Christian mural paintings will create a reverence towards these painting and enable people to approach and enjoy it casting of the boundaries of religion, caste and creed. The study creates an interest in the new generation to see and enjoy these paintings as an expression and sign of the aesthetic sense and value system of a society and thus enhance its protection as a category of Kerala mural paintings.

In this age when a sectarian thought based on religion, cast and creed prevails such a study will enable to break these unnecessary bondages. This study is credible evidence proving that though Christianity has a forgin origin, it has become part and parcel of native culture from its growth here. This is also a contribution to the study of History, Sociology, and Archeology & Aesthetics in Kerala. Moreover, these Christian Mural paintings of Kerala play a key role to connect the missing links of history.

This Minor Project titled “Impact of Mural Paintings on Christian Art in Kerala” is divided into three chapters. In the first part of this project titled Kerala Mural Paintings- History& Tradition is discussed about the traditional painting in Kerala, and Mural paintings in Kerala Temples, Palace etc. More over that mural paintings in Edakkal caves, Marayoor caves, Kanthaloore caves were also discussed. In Kerala tradition colures will making from nature itself, especially from red stone, leaves and flowers, Manjal etc. Brush for painting is also making in a natural way. Arrow grass is using for to make these brushes for painting.

In the first part of second chapter titled Kerala Christian Mural Paintings have given a brief sketch of the Christian mural paintings, churches in Kerala and a brief history of Kerala ancient Christians. The mural paintings are visible in almost all churches in Kerala. But

traditional mural paintings of Kerala Christian are found only in the ancient Kerala churches. These paintings are the relics of a traditional art of painting that transcends religious barriers.

Next the background, Topics and style of the painting were also discussed. The most famous Christian mural paintings in Kerala Churches are the churches in Kottayam, Kothamangalam, Akaparambu, Angamali, Kanjoor, Edapally, Paravoor, Varappuzha, Ollur , Velur, Pazhainji etc. Almost all the pictures are based on old and new testament of Bible. Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Apostates, Saints are shown in that pictures.

In the third chapter discussed about the cultural influence and confrontation against colonial influence of art. This chapter is the study of the influence of traditional Kerala Mural art on Christian mural paintings and how much this cultural unification reflected in these Christian mural paintings. Though Portugal influence are there in the Christian mural paintings in Kerala churches, we can see the native artists purposely trying to mix the traditional style of painting with this western style. So these paintings in the wall of churches proclaiming Kerala has its own traditional art of painting. There are no differences in art even though one belongs to Christian religion and other belongs to Hindu or any other traditional casts. The tradition followed by Kerala artists about mural painting whether they are Christian or non Christian was same. We cannot see any religious bondage among these two traditions. This chapter is a detailed study about the historical importance of Mural paintings and how these paintings play a key role to connect the missing links of history. Historically the mural paintings in Kerala are very relevant and significant.

OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED:

Through this project I understood the historical importance of the mural paintings in Kerala churches. There is a strong influence of Kerala mural paintings on Christian Mural paintings in the churches of Kerala. Study about this influence creates social unity among people. This study enabled me to create interest among the students in historical and cultural importance of mural paintings. By a field visit to all these old churches the students are able to locate the churches and temples - the treasures of traditional mural paintings. The student community began to appreciate our own art and culture specially Kerala style in mural paintings. The literary sources are very limited on Christian mural paintings in Kerala state as a whole. So this project is a valuable contribution in that regard.

ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE PROJECT:

Detailed study of Christian Church mural paintings in Kerala state has been carried out and much information were collected. There is a strong influence of Kerala mural paintings on Christian Mural paintings in the churches of Kerala. Study about this influence creates social unity among people. I discussed with the neighboring people and parish people who come to these churches for adoration. They are not allowed to do any reconstruction and repairing work on these walls to renovate. Awareness impacted to them about the significance of these paintings. By this study the objectives framed in the research project has found to be attained. Continued studies are needed to find out the other relationships of these paintings and culture.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIETY:

The literary sources are very limited on the mural paintings in Kerala state as a whole. So this project report is a valuable contribution in that regard. The people of the locality and the student community got awareness about the mural paintings. There is a tendency to demolish these paintings among parish people and they want to build up new model churches. Through this project the new generation began to appreciate the ancient art and our culture.

In the first part of my Minor Project titled “Impact of Mural Paintings on Christian Art in Kerala”, I have given a brief sketch of the traditional painting in Kerala, and Mural paintings in Kerala Temples etc. Next I traced the writings of the artists and Historians to know more about the mural paintings in Caves, Temples, Churches, Palace etc. Field visits were conducted to the Edakkal caves. Marayoor caves, Kanthaloore and Churches in Kerala such as Kottayam, Kothamangalam, Akaparambu, Angamali, Kanjoor, Edapally, Paravoor, Varappuzha, Ollur , Velur, Pazhainji. I interacted with eminent artists of Chumar Chitrakala Padana Kendrum Guruvayoor, Priests and Trustees of different churches and local people of the place where the churches sited and collected information from them. Different methodologies were adopted to collect, classify analyze and interpret the data, Interviews, field visits, field work etc were the most important among them. Quantitative and Qualitative analysis were done. Deductive method and critical analysis were applied to reach conclusion.