

Transformation of Traditional Warli Art into Contemporary Textile Tapestry Design Through Materials and Visual Language

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Abstract—This research work deals with the adaptation of Warli painting into a textile tapestry in terms of materials, forms, and visuals. The Warli paintings are a part of the tribal art culture in the state of Maharashtra which is distinguished by minimalistic geometric patterns and representation of various activities in their life. In this study, Warli motifs will be adapted to the design of textile through handloom. This is a qualitative research study, and data collection has been done through books, journals, and the internet. The whole process involves selection of motifs in Warli painting, designing and weaving textures, and developing three-dimensional tapestry. The results have proved to be effective in adapting Warli painting into textiles.

Index Terms—Warli Art, Textile Tapestry, Handloom, Traditional Motifs, Contemporary Design, Cultural Heritage, Textile Design, Handcrafted Textiles,

I. INTRODUCTION

Warli painting is one of the ancient forms of folk art which emerged from Warli tribes living in the North Sahyadri region of India. The area includes villages like Dahanu, Palghar, and Mokhada within the Palghar district. This age-old form of folk painting is said to have been around since the 10th century AD or even older. It was closely related to the agricultural community. (1)

Warli paintings were made using basic geometric shapes like triangles, squares, and circles. These paintings depicted everyday events of life, agricultural activities, rituals, and festivals. Despite its simplistic nature, Warli paintings have immense significance. (2)

Although the precise history of Warli tribes cannot be traced, Warli art was discovered in the early seventies. Warli paintings are said to have existed for about 2500 years and were predominantly used during rituals, weddings, and harvest ceremonies. Unlike other types of traditional art, the subject matter in Warli paintings does not include deities or mythological characters. Rather, these artworks capture the mundane life of the community with artistic elegance. Geometric shapes in Warli art also carry symbolic meanings where circle refers to the sun and the moon; triangles refer to mountains and trees, and squares symbolize sacred places created by human beings (7,8). Over the past few decades, there have been many changes in traditional art forms because of globalization. Contemporary design emphasizes innovation and creativity through multicultural influences. Hence, traditional art forms like Warli art have acquired new uses in fashion, interior design, and textiles. (3).

Textile designing, in particular, offers a special opportunity for designers to tell their stories and play with their creativity and materials. The use of Warli art in textile designs is not about the mere duplication of conventional motifs. Rather, the motifs are reinterpreted through various forms of experimentation involving shape, color, material, and weaving/surface techniques. The scale and placement of the motifs are altered in a way that the modernity of the designs is retained without altering their significance. This method does not only improve the aesthetic quality of the textiles but also contributes to the preservation of the art itself (4).

The use of Warli paintings in textile designs also contributes to the cultural sustainability. The integration of traditional painting techniques in modern-day objects makes the paintings relevant to the younger generation. It will also help artisans to survive and promote cultural exchanges among different corners of the world. Consequently, the study on the inclusion of Warli paintings in textiles becomes necessary to understand the coexistence of different cultures.

This study has been carried out taking into consideration the application of Warli art form in textile design particularly with reference to handloom fabric. This study endeavors to analyze the process of designing motifs from the Warli art form by means of textile design. The purpose of carrying out this study is to fill the void which exists between the traditional art form and contemporary design.

History

The Warli painting is more than a mere artistic work; it is a storytelling medium that helps transmit culture from one generation to another. The Warli community is one of the oldest tribes in India. As per Yashodhara Dalmia, the origins of the Warli art can be traced back to about 2500–3000 BCE when it resembled the early cave paintings.

Warli artists are primarily found in the Sahyadri region in Maharashtra and Gujarat. This art form is deeply rooted in their everyday practices and traditions. During the 1970s, Warli art gained recognition globally through the efforts of Jivya Soma Mashe who was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri for his contributions. Thanks to his efforts, several other artists adopted Warli art to generate an income.

Nowadays, the Warli art has evolved into more than just a cultural tradition, serving both economic and developmental purposes through training programs and courses. (5,6)

Locations where Warli Art is Practiced

Warli paintings can be mostly found in western parts of India. In Maharashtra, Warli painting is usually practised in districts such as Jawhar, Mokhada, and Shahapur. The areas mentioned above are located in the Sahyadri zone where Warli tribes are settled. On the other hand, in Gujarat, Warli paintings can be

found in districts such as Valsad, Dang, Navsari, and Surat.

Research Gap

From previous literature regarding the use of Warli art, one can observe that this type of art has been widely used in modern design areas like painting and printing among others. In these areas, Warli art has received attention due to its aesthetic value and cultural value. Despite its use in these design areas, little has been documented about the possible application of Warli art in textile structures through handlooms. There appears to be very little research done on the possibility of using Warli motifs in creating woven fabrics. The possibilities that exist in making Warli art appear as textured and three dimensional fabrics through handlooms have been neglected and ignored in current literature. Similarly, there seems to be inadequate research done on the ways in which handloom technique may be exploited to enhance the visual and tactile value of Warli inspired textiles. This is therefore an area worth exploring. This study therefore focuses on exploring the possibility of using Warli art in weaving of textiles in order to make Warli inspired textiles.

Objective

Elements To create a textile tapestry incorporating Warli elements using handloom methods.

To experiment with various materials and yarns to achieve textures and depth. To develop new products by combining traditional Pattachitra art with contemporary designs.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to examine the origin, development, characteristics, and meanings associated with the art and culture of Warli community. In order to gather the relevant information on the subject, various books, journals, articles, and web sources have been referred, which deal with Warli painting.

The study seeks to explore the origins and history of Warli art along with its meanings and interpretations for people. Further, it attempts to assess the current status of Warli art. Several methodologies were employed to understand and analyze Warli art in the present study. Warli art forms the subject matter of the present study.

Sample Design



Fig. No. 1 Warli Folk Art Painting Ethnic Wall
<https://pin.it/23O4k5mWR>



Fig. No. 2 A house wall in the village



Fig. No. 1 Devchauk Warali

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Warli art has changed a lot over the years. Earlier, it was mainly practiced by tribal communities on mud walls using natural colors. But now, it has become a part of modern design and is used in different fields like textiles, clothing, and decorative products. Since 2015, many researchers have studied Warli art to understand how it can be adapted for modern use.

Patil (2017), through his analysis of Warli painting, discovered that it was no longer restricted to the use as traditional wall painting only. Currently, the design is incorporated in domestic textiles, clothing, and other ornamental products. This innovation ensures the survival of the art form, while at the same time providing economic benefits to the practitioners. The incorporation of the traditional designs in contemporary products increases the relevance of the art, thus making it appealing to the current audience. Very little information is available on the incorporation of traditional Warli designs into handwoven fabrics.

Yadav et al (2023) noted that Warli art is simple yet rich with meaning, making it appropriate to apply in various forms of design. Another important factor highlighted by their study was the growing interest shown by consumers in handmade items and cultural products.

Jamnekar (2024) The significance of Warli paintings was highlighted, stating that it is not only an aesthetic expression but also conveys the culture of tribal people. The connection between Warli paintings and nature, spiritualism, and community is very strong, hence making it significant in maintaining cultural identity. It was also stated in the article that Warli paintings are becoming famous globally and will contribute to cultural preservation.

Ojha (2025) The use of Warli art within string art was explored and various products such as laptop cases and wall decorations were created. Such products gained a lot of appreciation among people owing to their innovation. It was evident that the combination of traditional art with modern methods could enhance the value and appeal of the products.

Even though these studies give useful information, most of them focus only on surface-level applications like painting, printing, and string art. There is very limited research on using Warli art in handloom textile

tapestry, especially through manual weaving and structural textile techniques.

Because of this, there is a clear gap in research. This study tries to fill that gap by developing a Warli-inspired textile tapestry using handloom techniques. It

also focuses on combining traditional art with manual weaving to create a textured and three-dimensional textile product. This makes the study important for the field of textile design.

IV. MATERIALS

For the design and creation of the Warli-inspired textile tapestry, both traditional materials for handlooms as well as auxiliary tools were needed. Materials for the study include

Table No. 1 Materials (Self)

Sr,no	Category	Materials / Tools Used	Purpose
1	Yarn / Threads	Cotton yarn	Used for base fabric and weaving structure
		Woolen yarn	Used to create texture and raised surface effect
		Colored threads (Red and White)	Used to maintain contrast and highlight Warli motifs
2	Warp Threads	Cotton warp threads	Used as the base structure on the handloom
3	Weaving Equipment	Manual handloom	Used for weaving the tapestry
4	Weaving Tools	Shuttle	Used for passing weft threads
		Needle	Used for thread insertion and detailing
		Scissors	Used for cutting threads
5	Design Materials	Drawing Sheet	Used for motif planning and layout
		Pencil and eraser Clours	Used for sketching And Colouring Warli motifs



Fig. No. 4 “Process of creating a handwoven tapestry inspired by Warli art using red and white yarn on a traditional loom”.(Self)

Methods

Step 1: Collection of Motifs

Traditional Warli motifs were collected from secondary sources such as research papers, books, and online references. These motifs primarily included human figures, geometric patterns and scenes representing daily tribal life.

Step 2: Selection of Motif

From the collected motifs a suitable design was selected based on the following criteria

Simplicity and clarity of design

Suitability for textile translation

Cultural relevance Visual appeal

Step3: Design Development

The selected Warli motif was redrawn and modified to suit textile application.

The design was prepared on graph paper to maintain proportion and alignment

Necessary adjustments were made to convert the flat painting into a textile-friendly format.

Step4: Preparation of Loom

A manual handloom was set up for weaving the tapestry.

Cotton threads were arranged as warp threads.

Proper tension and alignment were ensured before starting the weaving process.

Step 5: Weaving Process

The base fabric was woven using plain weaving technique.

Through the manual hand twist tread through fingers

Weft threads were inserted using a shuttle.

The structure of the fabric was developed gradually on the loom.

Step 6: Motif Development (Thread Work)

After preparing the base the Warli motif was developed using thread insertion technique.

Woolen and colored threads were used to create the design.

The motif was formed by manually inserting threads to create texture and raised effects.

Red and white colors were used to maintain traditional Warli aesthetics.

Step7: Finishing

Loose threads were trimmed using scissors

The tapestry was cleaned and properly finished to enhance its appearance

Final adjustments were made to ensure neatness and durability.



Fig. No. 5 Warali Tapestry Design (Self)



Fig. No. 6 Self Finishing (Self)



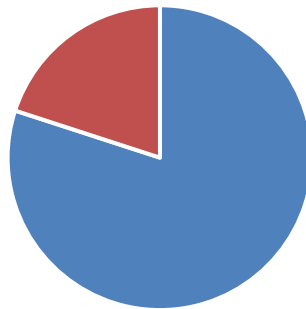
Fig. No. 7 Handloom (Self)

Analysis of Data

The collected data was subjected to simple percentage analysis. The data collected from the questionnaire was put in percentages and presented by pie charts. This approach made it possible to learn the choices and views of the respondents on the Warli inspired fabric tapestry.

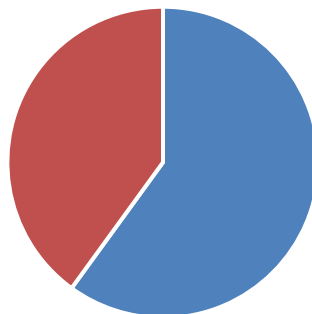
Sample Questionire

Q1.do you know about warli art or have you heard about it



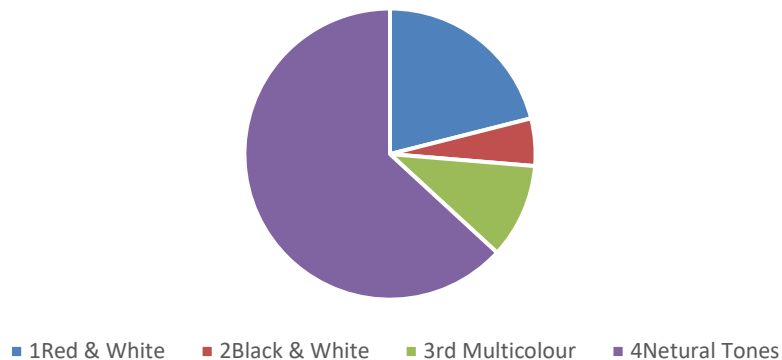
■ 1yes ■ 2 no ■ 3 ■ 4

Q2.Have you ever seen or used handmade tapestry weaving product?

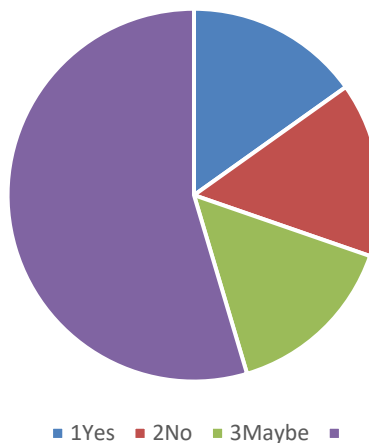


■ 1Yes ■ 2No ■ 3 ■ 4

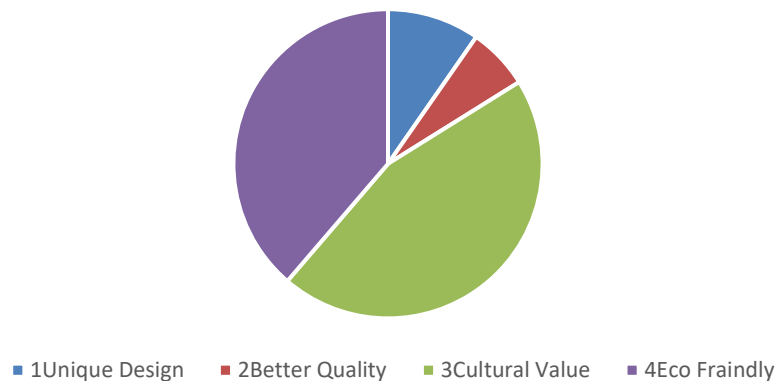
Q3 Which colour combination do you prefer for a tapestry design?



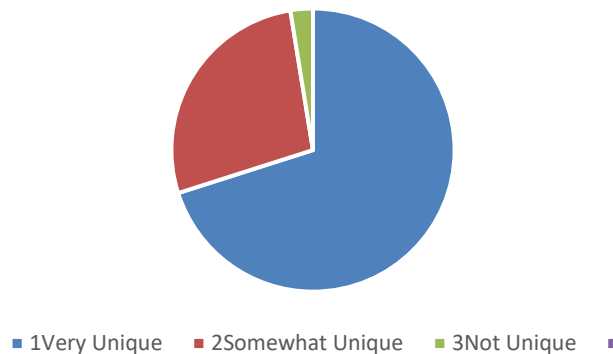
Q4 Would you Consider buing a handmade warli tapestry ?



Q5 What is main reson you would choosen a handmade product?



Q6 How Would you rate the uniqueness of handmade warli tapestry?



V. RESULT

The findings are derived from the survey questionnaires that have been responded by 10 participants. Almost all participants were aware of the Warli paintings and had shown interest in buying the handcrafted textiles. The combination of red and white colors was found most popular among participants. Almost all participants showed an inclination towards purchasing the handcrafted tapestry because of its unique pattern and environmentally friendly features.

Discussion

From the findings above, one can conclude that the use of traditional forms of art in contemporary design such as Warli art has been found to be well-received when used in textile designs. From the fact that traditional colors were preferred by respondents, it shows the need for authenticity in the product, and from the inclusion of handloom technique in designing the fabric, it brings uniqueness to the design.

Conclusion

In the study, there is an illustration that Warli art can actually be transformed into contemporary textile tapestries through the use of handloom methods. Through experimentation with different types of materials and threads, it was able to create unique designs without sacrificing the cultural essence of Warli artwork. The research is also able to illustrate that Warli art can actually be utilized not only for paintings but can also be applied to textiles. This technique is helpful in ensuring that the culture and art form of the people are able to survive despite the changes in technology.



Fig. No. 8 Front and Back Warli Tapestry Design (Self)

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