



LIVING SPACES ARE TRANSFORMING INTO TOURIST HOTELS IN JHUNJHUNU DISTRICT

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Abstract

Havelis are the living space or residential blocks of Jhunjhunu district, usually three to five stories around an open courtyard. It normally accommodated several families who lived together, just as a joint families system was the smallest economic unit in the social structure of medieval India. These are transforms in the tourist hotels in the contemporary times. The visiting tourist can experience this diversity while traveling around Jhunjhunu district, comes under the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan state which not only has a strong historical background but also the main centre of fresco paintings where large number of frescoed living spaces constructed which are now in spotlight, offering a unique look at the painted imagination of the untrained artists.

This research paper is figure out on the role of tourism in Jhunjhunu and the main attractions are the numerous painted havelis by using wide variety of sources .This paper comprehensively reviews and analysis prior buildings in context of tourism.

This paper also projects future developments in the field of tourism, demonstrates critical changes that will influence the tourism industry structure. A major contribution of this paper is its overview of the research and development efforts and examines the relevance of Jhunjhunu district's heritage which is preserved directly or indirectly that was ignored by our local people. It doesn't matter, it is part of their business or earnings but the thing is that our precious rich heritage is preserved by them.

Key Words: *Frescoes, Jhunjhunu, Havelis, Heritage, Media, Tourism.*

Introduction

Jhunjhunu district falls within Shekhawati region, and is bounded with three districts; on the northeast and east by Hissar and Mahendergarh district of Haryana state, on the southeast, south and southwest by Sikar District, and on the northwest and north by the boundaries of Churu District. It is located 180km away from Jaipur, 220km from Bikaner and 240km from Delhi.

Jhunjhunu is laden with a multifarious history and my study enlightened me about the most rudimentary facts this land of kings is known for. From the Chauhans to the Jats, from Guptas to the Mughals, this place has seen many great dynasties rule it. In last few hundred years emanated the Nawabs, continued for about 280 years before Shardul Singh took over, until Indian independence. This town is not only famed for its eminent traders (who established financial empires all over the country) but also for its many magnificent buildings adorned with fresco paintings.

Havelis are the living space or residential blocks, usually three to five stories around an open courtyard. It normally accommodated several families who lived together, just as a joint families system was the smallest economic unit in the social structure of medieval India. I had the fortune of visiting almost each and every *havelis* of Jhunjhunu district, besides its grand temples and splendid forts, magnificent palaces, intricately carved temples but nothing comparable to the frescoed *havelis* of Jhunjhunu district. The legacy of Jhunjhunu is not about magnificence nor is it just about sheer opulence. It is a tale of the ordinary people of Jhunjhunu district and that is what makes it so special. It tells the tales of the enterprising Marwari merchants of the district, whose meteoric rise and enormous wealth was fueled by the artistic talent of the itinerant painters. Later the ingenious skills of the locals came to the fore as they graduated to become master painters and bestowed the region with an artistic wealth not to be seen anywhere else in the world.

The fresco culture in India dates back to many centuries but in Jhunjhunu district, it started at the end of the seventeenth century. At the beginning, the fresco paintings done under the *buono* technique and pigments were made from locally available materials. It was drawn only on the upper parts of the buildings like on a domed ceiling of *havelis*. Thereafter, from 18th century onwards, the usage of fresco paintings had spread to the guest rooms of the *havelis* and by 19th century saw its peak. Also during the 18th and 19th centuries, the practice to build decorative paintings was rampant amongst the nobles and the wealthier ones, and both strived to outshine each other in embellishing their resident *havelis*. Grand decorations with fresco paintings had become a status symbol.



A variety of subjects seemed to originate in fresco paintings. Generally speaking, this was the age of mythological frescoes interspersed with illustrations of local legends, floral, animals, portraits, hunting and wrestling scenes, and glimpses of everyday life. They are painted in the red and blue colours while ochre and green colour, are also used in some places within these broad outlines, the subjects were picked at random. Afterwards, around 1840, these had frescoes in ochres, blue, maroon and green on their outer walls, illustrating religious subjects, soldiers, hunters and wrestlers. Some have survived, but much of the exterior was recently in lime wash. Afterwards *havelis* saw the themes being changed to reflect the British (Raj) colonial and European influence on the Indian culture and economy. The traditional subjects gave way to frescoes of locomotives, cars, men clad in western outfits, balloons, and so on are drastically painted in multi-colours. Since the period in which the frescoes flourished (1830-1900) was longer than that of their decline and discontinuation (1900-30).

In the later years, around 1890, when synthetic dyes from Germany and England appeared, the technique of a fresco *buono* had to be abandoned, since the artificial pigments reacted adversely with the damp walls. It was replaced by fresco-*secco*, or tempera, technique of painting on dry plaster. The local artists were already familiar with this technique as they had earlier used the method of dry fresco in the interior rooms and on the walls which were adequately protected from the sun and the rain. Now days, these frescoes are painted in the tempera style by using ready-made colours but in same colour scheme as used earlier.

Earlier frescoes of Jhunjhunu district were adorned with bold lines and flat colours rather than depicting with shading for trying to express three-dimensional impression. Later on around in the end of the nineteenth century, these were made in little shading by using different shades of the colour. Beauty and brightness of the colour is subtracted by shading. Colours or pigments were made by the artists through a manual process of beating, burnishing and polishing. They have been continuously suffering lashing of the rains and trauma of scorching sun light. Yet they stay alive fresh and spanking. What is the secret behind this? It is the colours and methods used by the artists.

In the earlier frescoes painted mostly in ochres, blue, maroon and green with religious and traditional themes and mythology dominated the themes of the frescoes of the *havelis* displaying for the most part, local legends, animals, portraits, hunting, battle and wrestling scenes, etc. the later frescoes tackled a broader spectrum. Afterwards the themes being changed to reflect the British (Raj) colonial influence on the Indian culture and economy. The traditional subjects gave way to pictures of locomotives, cars, men clad in western outfits, balloons, and so on are drastically painted. Artists were influenced by oleographs, lithographs, and photographs of many of that time. Possibly, they brought references of their artworks and told *chejars* to paint and the artists are emulating the same without any training. For contemporary subjects, they sketched many sketches from the live scenes. Among them, best one selected and then painted but probably there are very few artists who can sketch by observing the scene or subject.

Although, subjects of frescoes were not constant, they changed with time and regularly appear in adjoining tableaux. These frescoes were influenced by the Jaipur and Mughal schools of painting, which in turn had been inspired by Persian art. The evolution of local fashion played an important role in there composition.

The technique employed for the Jhunjhunu frescoes were elaborate and similar to the Italian frescoes techniques developed around the fourteenth century. As the ultimate symbol of the business class opulence, the *Marwaris* commissioned artists to paint those buildings each of them covered inside out with colourful frescoes kept alive for almost 300 years. These artists are called *Chejara* in local language. They prepared colours from locally available materials and done fresco under the supervision of the owner of the buildings. In my opinion 'The artists were play main role' even though they were not formally educated as there were no art schools or academies in those days, few works were signed like one signed as the work of '*Binja*' Jodhraj Patodia Double Haveli in Mukungarh. They inherited the art from their ancestors; and developed and enriched it through their vision and hard work.

As I belong to the Jhunjhunu district and have lived there since childhood, I have overviewed the glory and charm of these buildings is fading day by day. This glory and charm only by the buildings which are adorned with the beautiful fresco paintings. If we talk about such buildings that they are less in present times as compared to the earlier times. These are erected in the Indo-Persian style of architecture. Few joint families are still living in *havelis*. They all still live in the same building; women prepared their food for all family members as well as children play together in the *chowks* of the *havelis*. The breaking up of the large joint families can be attributed to the combination of changing work patterns and increasing westernization. The decline of the joint family struck a double blow at the roots of the traditional *havelis* life. After the political and land reforms which followed independence, many more had to look for jobs elsewhere, as old sources of



income and employment vanished. Landowners had once used the income from their land but how they spent whole life with his family in this inflated market. Now most of the families have shifted in the cities, behind them they were renovated and refurbished into tourist hotels and the splendor of its beautifully decorated interiors are just mesmerizing; antique furniture, intricately carved poster beds and medieval delicate Rajasthani motifs on fabric recreates a flavor of luxury living for our guests. Many of are now been rejuvenated to offer some good rooms and a fine view. For example: Hotel Alsisar Mahal, Piramal Haveli (Neemrana Hotel), Seth Arjun Das Goenka Haveli converted into museum, Poddaro Ki Sone-Chandi Ki Dukand (Poddar Atithi Bhawan), Hotel Castle Mandawa (The Fort), Phoolchand (double) Chokhani Ki Haveli, Govind Ladia Ki Haveli (Hotel Radhika Haveli), Paawana Haveli, Hotel Heritage Mandawa, Anandi Lal Poddar Haveli, Birla Ki Haveli, Surajgarh Fort, Madan Lal Banke Raika Ki Haveli and many more. Beside these many are in under renovation in present times.

Recently in these years, these buildings are used as a commercial space to set up tourist hotels instead of residential purposes. In the present time, people are transforming these *havelis* into tourists place by not only renovating the building but also through the re-painting walls for the attraction point of the view to stay in hotels. In this way, buildings of Jhunjhunu district is in spotlight as they are being transforming into tourists hub which shows the royal dignity not only modern infrastructure of rooms in hotel but also each and every wall of hotel was magnificently painted with beautiful frescoes. The owners made profit by charging money from the visitors and tourists as people come here from all over the world to visit and experience this artistic glory and heritage.



Fig.1. Hotel Heritage Mandawa

Conclusion

Havelis are living spaces which are the master pieces of art and architecture, Jhunjhunu district which bear the wonderful fresco painting in various everlasting colours and designs. These buildings hail a large number of tourists every year. Today, very few of the *havelis* are survived usually due to the co-operation of their owners. Many of the buildings have been sold often to the natives and transforms into tourist hotels. This heritage is preserved directly or indirectly by the local people. It doesn't issue, it is part of their business or earnings but the thing is that our precious rich heritage is preserved by them.

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