

## **Elephants in Indigenous Art and Changing Society in Jharkhand, India**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In India, elephants have always been the theme of various artistic depictions in mythology, symbolism and popular culture. They are both revered and respected for their prowess and utility in both war and peace. Ever since the prehistoric times, elephants were represented by ancient cave art and they have been depicted in other forms of art, including pictures, sculptures, music, film and even architecture. This paper attempts to look beyond the mythological and classical representation of elephants and explores the indigenous depictions, particularly from the state of Jharkhand in Eastern India. Interestingly, elephant is the state animal of Jharkhand. The traditional folk arts including wall arts Sohrai and Khovar of Hazaribagh district, extensively depict elephants. The depictions have a wealth of symbolism. The stylistic renditions are an interesting study and this paper aspires to look into some of the aspects.

This paper focuses not only on the traditional depiction of elephants in the wall murals but also looks into contemporary issues of depleting elephant population, loss of habitat and rising human elephant conflicts in the State. Indigenous art is closely linked with the surrounding flora and fauna. Therefore, it becomes imperative to study the depiction of this art in contemporary times with changing equation between man and animal.

***Keywords:*** *Elephants, Jharkhand, Hazaribagh, indigenous art, Sohrai – Khovar*

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