

Use of Natural Elements as Surface Decoration Elements: An Examination of Traditional Earthenware Products in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Clay is a natural material that can be identified as one of the most useful material in the world. Water, fire, air, earth and space are the basic natural elements in the planet. These are recognized as Panchamaha Butha, Panchamaha Karma as, Apo (water), Thejo (fire), Wayoo (air), Patavi (earth), Akasa (space). These basic natural elements have a great impact on human beings and their requirements. Clay is a natural material formed with the combination of above mentioned elements. Earth means clay, which is flexible when mixed with water, and gets hardened by the effect of air. Further, the shape will be made permanent by the effect of fire and also product volume will be created as a result of hanging the shape. These are the basic requirements of making clayware items. So it can be identified as a natural material and it has a close relationship with natural elements. When considering about the earthenware products it goes back to the pre-historic era. It is not merely the function but also the outer appearance which is significant as it gives the first impression of the product. It adds an aesthetic attraction to the product appearance. According to the above facts the surface appearance could be identified as a significant aspect of an earthenware product. Several types of elements have been used to decorate the earthenware surfaces. They decorated the object using flora and fauna, cultural and traditional elements and motifs to express their ideas. It was an expression media for society. The natural element contributes to the surface decoration. Decoration is the main aspect which makes a piece of art more than the utilitarian communication to the user through contributing to the total appearance. The study of the surface decorations of earthenware products is a broad area. This research focuses only on traditionally painted pottery that was decorated with Flora and Fauna. Such as Liyawela, Nelum mala, Hansaya, Birds etc. This research shows the process of painted pottery, use of natural elements for the decorations, decoration techniques, and which types of designs were adopted to decorate the surfaces of earthenware products. This research will be a key factor to identify the blend of nature and environmental facts to decorate earthenware products in Sri Lanka.

Key words: Surface, Flora and Fauna, Decoration, Element, Appearance