

A. State Party

India

B. Name of the element

B.1. Name of the element in the languages and scripts of the community(ies) concerned

शेखावाटी क्षेत्र की पारंपरिक भित्ति चित्र (फ्रेस्को) कला परंपरा

B.2. Name of the element in English

Traditional Fresco Painting Tradition of the Shekhawati Region (churu-jhunjhunu-Sikar)

C. Name of the communities, groups or individuals concerned

Traditional fresco painter families (chiteras), artisan communities, local master painters, heritage haveli-owning families, temple custodians, and cultural organizations of the Shekhawati region (Churu, Jhunjhunu and Sikar districts of Rajasthan), including community-based heritage conservation groups.

1. General information about the element

1.1 Brief description of the element (≤300 words)

The Traditional Fresco Painting Tradition of the Shekhawati region is a distinctive wall-painting practice that flourished primarily from the 18th to early 20th centuries in the semi-arid region of northeastern Rajasthan, India. Practised on lime-plastered surfaces of havelis, temples, wells, cenotaphs and public buildings, the tradition combines natural pigments, mineral colours and organic binders with indigenous techniques of fresco and fresco-secco painting.

The visual repertoire reflects a unique synthesis of local aesthetics and wider cultural influences, depicting episodes from Indian epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, folk legends, courtly life, colonial encounters, technological innovations, flora and fauna, and everyday social life. Women-centric imagery—rituals, domestic scenes, musical performances and symbolic narratives—forms a significant aspect of this tradition, offering insights into social values and gender perceptions of the period.

The paintings are not merely decorative but serve as visual narratives transmitting moral values, collective memory and regional identity. Knowledge of surface preparation, pigment processing, iconography and compositional balance has traditionally been transmitted orally and through apprenticeship within artisan families. Despite challenges such as neglect, environmental damage and modernization, the tradition continues through restoration practices, community-led documentation and renewed artistic engagement, maintaining its relevance as a living intangible cultural heritage of the Shekhawati communities.

1.2 Bearers and practitioners (≤100 words)

The bearers of the element are traditional fresco painter families (chiteras), master artisans, and their apprentices, along with haveli owners and temple custodians who commission, maintain and safeguard the paintings. Men and women both participate: men traditionally handled surface preparation and large compositions, while women contributed to detailing, pigment preparation and ritual knowledge. Senior master painters play a key role in training younger generations and ensuring continuity of stylistic and technical knowledge.

1.3 Transmission of knowledge and skills (≤100 words)

Knowledge is transmitted primarily through oral tradition and hands-on apprenticeship within families and local workshops. Skills are learned by assisting senior artisans in preparing lime plaster, mixing natural pigments, and executing motifs. Transmission also occurs through community restoration projects, heritage walks, documentation initiatives, and workshops organized by cultural institutions and local heritage organizations.

1.4 Social functions and cultural meanings (≤200 words)

The fresco tradition serves as a visual expression of collective identity, social values and historical memory for the communities of Shekhawati. It reinforces cultural continuity by narrating religious stories, moral ideals, social customs and regional history in accessible visual form. The paintings foster a sense of pride and belonging, linking families and communities to their ancestral spaces. Today, the tradition also contributes to cultural tourism, education and heritage awareness, strengthening intergenerational dialogue and promoting respect for traditional knowledge systems. It continues to function as a bridge between past and present, local traditions and global appreciation of cultural diversity.

1.5 Human rights compatibility (≤50 words)

The State Party confirms that the element is fully compatible with international human rights instruments and promotes dignity, cultural expression and inclusive participation of communities.

1.6 Mutual respect among communities (≤50 words)

The element fosters mutual respect among communities by encouraging shared appreciation of cultural diversity, historical coexistence and collective heritage.

1.7 Sustainable development compatibility (≤50 words)

The element supports sustainable development through community-based heritage conservation, skill transmission and responsible cultural tourism.

1.8 Customary practices governing access (≤100 words)

Access to fresco-painted spaces is traditionally guided by respect for private ownership, ritual contexts and sacred functions of temples. Community norms emphasize non-invasive viewing, consent-based documentation and responsible conservation practices to ensure long-term safeguarding of the heritage.

2. Contribution to visibility, awareness, dialogue and sustainable development

2.1

Yes, communities consider that the element contributes to visibility and awareness of intangible cultural heritage, encourages dialogue, and reflects cultural diversity and human creativity.

2.2 Relevant contributions

- Quality education
- Inclusive economic development
- Gender equality
- Peace and social cohesion

- Environmental sustainability

2.3 Explanations (≤200 words)

Inscription of the element will enhance national and international awareness of India's mural traditions and highlight community-led heritage practices. The fresco tradition encourages intercultural dialogue by reflecting historical interactions between local, regional and global influences. Educational initiatives based on fresco art support heritage education and skill development among youth. Revival and conservation activities create livelihood opportunities for artisans, guides and local communities, promoting inclusive economic growth. The use of natural materials and traditional techniques aligns with environmentally sustainable practices, while shared stewardship of heritage sites strengthens social cohesion and collective responsibility.

3. Safeguarding measures (≤500 words)

Safeguarding measures include systematic documentation of existing frescoes, community-led conservation and restoration projects, training programmes for young artisans, and awareness campaigns through exhibitions, heritage walks and educational workshops. Communities actively participate in identifying significant sites, planning conservation priorities and implementing restoration under guidance of master artisans and conservation experts. Local cultural organizations facilitate intergenerational transmission by organizing apprenticeships and public demonstrations. Collaboration with academic institutions and government agencies supports research, inventorying and policy integration. Sustainable tourism initiatives are promoted to generate resources while ensuring respect for community values and conservation ethics.

4. Community participation and consent

4.1 Participation in nomination (≤300 words)

The nomination has been prepared through consultations with traditional painters, community elders, heritage haveli owners, scholars and local cultural organizations. Community members contributed historical knowledge, identified significant motifs and sites, and reviewed the description of practices and safeguarding measures. Their free, prior and informed consent has been obtained through meetings, written statements and audiovisual documentation, ensuring that the nomination reflects community perspectives and aspirations.



Consent materials attached

4.2 Community organizations / representatives

Contact person for the communities:

Title: Mr

Family name: Bajaj

Given name: Nitin

Institution/position: Founder & Cultural Activist

Organization: Rajasthan Kala Sanskriti evam Virasat Sanrakshan Abhiyan

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5. Inventory

5.1 Name of inventory

National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India

5.2 Responsible body

Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Family name:

Bajaj

• Given name:

Nitin

• Institution / Position:

Founder & Secretary

Rajasthan Kala Sanskriti evam Virasat Sanrakshan Abhiyan

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