

Wall art, the traditional way

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ABSTRACT

Indian tribal art forms are like the expressions and feelings of people who belong to different states of Indian life sharing different languages, different cultural values and different rites and rituals. The folk and tribal arts are very ethnic and simple and yet colourful and vibrant enough to speak volumes about the countries rich heritage. Indian folk paintings have always been famous for super creative and imaginative work. Some of the prominent paintings traditions under this have been Madhubani paintings of the Mithila region of Bihar, the Warli paintings of Maharashtra, Gond paintings of Madhya Pradesh, Kerala mural paintings, Pithora paintings Gujarat, Saora paintings Orissa.

Key Words : Wall art, Indian tribal art, Pithora paintings, Saora paintings

INTRODUCTION

India has always been known as the land that portrayed cultural and traditional arts and craft. Every region in India has its own style and pattern of art, which is known as folk art. There are multiple modes through which folk and tribal art forms are represented in India. Due to diverse regional and tribal setup through the Indian Territory, we can find great difference in the depiction of feelings in these modes. The folk art can take up the form of pottery, paintings, metal work, paper art, weaving, jewellery, toy making.

Madhubani paintings :

Madhubani paintings are also referred to as mithila art is characterized by line drawings filled in by bright colours, contrasts and patterns. Traditionally women of the region have done this style of painting; through today men are also involved to meet the demand. These paintings are popular because of their motifs and bright earthy colours. These paintings are done with mineral pigments prepared by the artists. The work is done on freshly plastered or mud wall. The artists are simple housewives who don't go to any school to learn the art of painting. Every girl learns this art from her mother at an early age. These talented ladies of mithila have been decorating their walls on every social religious occasion with beautiful paintings full of aesthetic value. These paintings vary from village to village. Peacocks, parrots, flowers, mythical gods and goddess and vividly coloured motifs are part of these paintings.

For commercial purposes, the work is now being done on paper, canvas, cloth etc. Cotton

wrapped around a bamboo stick forms the brush, vegetables colours are used for paintings. Tumeric, rice powder, kumkum, juices of certain bright coloured flowers, heena leaves etc. are used to make paints. And the colours are usually deep red, green, blue, black, light yellow, pink, the colours are applied flat with no shading and no empty space is left.

Welcome to Madhubani railway station :

Bihar's Madhubani station is awash with colours, thanks to rural artists. In presumably biggest such works, they have painted an array of themes in sharp and colourful strokes depicting village life and mythology. The fact is that there is probably not a single home in that area that does not have a painter; mostly women. The volunteers-teenagers and elders-arrive each morning by buses; or by foot from nearby villages, singing and chirping as they sketched out and painted magical forms on the walls of railway station.



The Warli Paintings :

Maharashtra is known for its warli folk paintings. Warli is the name of the largest tribe found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai, in western India. Warli art is the vivid expression of daily and social events of the warli tribe, used by them to embellish inside walls of village houses. Women are mainly engaged in the creation of these paintings. It is one of the simplest and most enduring craft forms in India. Its beauty lies in the creative positioning of three geometric shapes the squares, triangle and circles and the result is a great painting.

The warli people are inborn artists. The wall paintings of the tribe have marked their impact in India, as well as in the world. The most important aspect of the painting is that it does not depicts mythological characters or images of deities, but depict social life pictures of human beings, animals along the scenes from daily life are created in loose rhythmic pattern. These paintings usually depict scenes of human figures engaged in activities like hunting, dancing, sowing and harvesting, geometric designs dominate most paintings. War paintings are painted white on mud walls with occasional dots in red and yellow. This colour is obtained from grounding rice into white powder and water, with gum as a binder.



Gond painting :

The gond paintings transports us to the seamless world of the imagination. The gonds are artistically gifted and possess astounding creative vision. Traditionally, their paintings on mud walls houses relied on share symbols within a local community context. More recently they have taken paintings on canvas or paper using new colours and new themes. One of the largest tribal communities in South Asia, the gonds are mainly found in Madhya Pradesh.

Gond paintings in their singular two dimensional styles cover numerous themes- folk stories, religion, nature etc. Though similar in style, they are individual in expression and interpretation. The child like simplicity of these art works reflects the community's very own straight forwardness and simplicity. Use of shapes, dots or any other geometric pattern to fill up various forms, is another character typical to this style of freehand art. Most of these paintings have multiple but very

contrasting uses of bright and lively colours. Drawn during festivals or rituals connected with seasonal changes like sowing of crops, onset of rains harvest or on a significant occasion in their families such as birth, marriage, pregnancy, death etc. Mythological stories depicted in epics like Ramayana or Mahabharata nature in the form of forests, domestic as well as wild animals.



Before painting, the wall or the floor are thoroughly cleaned and prepared for the art. A paste made up of straw, cow dung and soil is applied on the walls once the paste dries a special kind of soil known as pidor is made and applied on the entire paintings surface. Pidor soil is white in colour and provides a nice and smooth background painting. Once the soil dries, the gonds go to work with their paints and brushes. The artist starts with an outline, which is then filled with black.

Gond paintings can be best described as 'on line work'. The artists make sure to draw the inner as well as outer lines with as much care as possible so that the perfection of the lines has an immediate effect on the viewer.

Kerala Mural Painting :

This art form is deeply inspired by the Hindu scriptures; belong to Kerala, a land whose very geographical formation has its roots in mythology. Evidence indicates that this art form flourished between the 17th and 19th century and adorned the temple walls, including, the famous Guruvayur temple in Trichur. It is a rich, vibrant, bold yet delicate style. The realistic portrayal of hindu gods and goddesses with acute clarity in form, costume and expression displays and artistic brilliance. The five colours: yellow, red, green, black and white used in the art, are even today sourced from naturally occurring minerals and vegetable pigments. The Kerala mural is process driven with at least 6 steps involved in completing one painting. It is interesting to note that characters are given colours based on their virtues.



Green is for divinity, red for those inclined towards power and wealth, white (unlike its normally ascribed attribute) indicates lowly, mean characters, and demons, as is always, are in black.

Pithora Paintings Gujarat :

Pithora art is highly ritualistic, painted on the walls of tribes like Rathwas and Bhils from Gujarat. Offered in gratitude or to bring peace, prosperity and happiness, the paintings hold great significance. The presence of their God pithora baba is extremely important and the Rathwa's spend generously on paintings portraying him. Legends and myths of gods and man find expression in their individualistic style. The marriage of pithora is the most important legend. Long necked horses, kings, farmers, cows, bulls, and creatures of the forest resonate with the vibrant colours of yellow, indigo, orange, green, red, black and silver.



The paintings find its sacred place at the threshold or the front room of the house on walls prepared with cow dung and chalk paste. As artist or Lakharas paint, the priest or badwa accompanies them with singing and chanting. The paintings culminates with a sacrifice performed at night and the celebration continues into the wee hours with singing, dancing and feasting as all gathered rejoice.

Explaining the characteristics of Pithora art, artist Haribhai says that it is an auspicious tradition of the rathwa community. If a person falls sick, he makes a wish from Baba Pithora. If he recovers a pithora painting is made on the wall of the village hut in consultation with village badhwa or priest. The painting has to be drawn and painted in atypical way and no member of the family is allowed to make it except the Lakhadas.

Saora Painting Orissa :

The Saora people are one of the oldest known tribal community's in India, living mainly in the hills of Rayagada district of Orissa. The Saora are famous for a rich variety of paintings made on the inner walls of their houses. The paintings were created for religious and superstitious reasons such as to enable an easy delivery, preserve a good harvest, find a good bride etc. Noted in Saora art are the sacred "idikon" paintings, always painted in the darkest rooms of the house. They were used to contact and appease the dead ancestors of the clan.

Their diversity, detail and unique style have given ikons an 'in-vogue-appeal' and increasing popularity in recent years.

Their art also reflect everyday life- household and hunting activities and the celebration of festivals with music and dance.

Like the Warli paintings, stick figures make their presence felt in this art form. But, while the Warli is fluid in style the Saora art appears to exert more restraint. Naturally inclined towards the land, these people depend on subsistence farming.



Conclusion :

Today, most of these paintings are done on cloth and paper, but they look best on the walls or in the form of huge murals that bring out the vast and magical expressions and creativity of the artists. Tradition is still adhered by the people practicing these art forms but at the same time new ideas have been allowed to seep in which helps them face new challenges from the market and in providing world wide exposure to these paintings which can now find those way on designer costumes, bags, souvenirs and household articles.

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