

**1****MADHUBANI PAINTING**

You have studied about features and descriptions of different folk arts. In this lesson, we will learn about the folk art of Bihar, Madhubani. Madhubani art is a style of painting belonging to Mithila that is practiced in the area of Nepal and Bihar. The culture of Mithilanchal is shown in this style of painting.

Madhubani painting is also called the art of Mithila (because it flourished in the Mithila region of Bihar). The characteristic of this style of painting is the use of bright and contrasting colours to fill up sketches and shapes. In fact, Madhubani art originated from 'Kohbar'. Kohbar is painted on the wall of the bride and groom's room as a decoration for performing the puja ritual. Kohbar is the oldest example of wall painting tradition in Bihar, Jharkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. It is made by women after marriage. Marriage is an important ritual of Hindu religion. The literal meaning of the word 'Kohbar' is koh- cave or room, bar - the groom. Hence, the word means the room where the newly married bride and groom stay for the first time or the room for the newly married couple.

**OBJECTIVES**

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the tradition of Madhubani painting;
- explain the origin of Madhubani painting;
- identify popular styles of Madhubani art;
- explain the painting materials used for illustration of Madhubani art;
- explain the present scenario of Madhubani art;
- describe interesting facts regarding Madhubani art and
- enlist different interpretations depicted in Madhubani paintings.



Notes

1.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

To begin with, we need to understand the general descriptions of Madhubani art. Many shapes or figures are made to decorate or show the significance of the room. It shows Hindu culture. The painting shows the marriage of Hindu God and Goddess Ram and Sita or figures of bride and groom. The Hindu religious and social tradition is depicted through symbolic painting. Gauri worship, Sun and Moon are shown as witnesses. It is said that the city existed during the time of Ramayan and got its name from the forest of Madhu. For this reason, it is called Madhubani painting, and due importance is given to painting of nature which is shown through symbolic painting. For example Sun, Moon, peacocks, fish, bamboo trees, tortoises, elephants, green trees etc. The Hindu Gods and Goddesses for example Ganesh, Krishna-Radha, Ram-Sita, Mother Gauri, Kul Devata etc. are painted in keeping with religious tradition. Although Madhubani painting is traditionally done by women, popular demand has also brought men to this art. These paintings are popular owing to tribal bright and earthy colour. The painting is done on a fresh coating of cow dung or clay on walls. Natural colours are used. For example the black colour is obtained by mixing kohl and dung. Similarly, the yellow colour is prepared using turmeric or nectar of flowers or lemon and latex of Banyan tree. The red colour is prepared using either safflower nectar or red sandalwood. The green colour is obtained from tree leaves. The white colour is made from rice powder and Basanti colour from the Flame of the forest (Palash) flowers. Such colours are selected to decorate the paintings. Flat colours are used without any shading and empty space. Nowadays this artwork is being done on paper, cloth and canvas for commercial purposes. Acrylic poster colours are also used for colouring. This handicraft has been handed over from one generation to the other. Thus, traditional designs and patterns are duly preserved. The All India Handicraft Board and the Indian Government encourage women to sell their traditional paintings made on handmade paper in the market as an additional source of income apart from agriculture. Madhubani painting has become the primary source of income for many families. Looking at the demand for this art in the world market, women's traditional art belonging to Mithila needs to be appreciated.

1.2 TRADITIONAL MADHUBANI MOTIFS

Now learner, let us learn about the traditional Madhubani motifs.

1. Sun : Sun and moon are often painted in Madhubani design. They are used as symbols of divine entities.
2. Tortoise : The tortoise motif is used in Madhubani painting. It is shown as a symbol of prosperity and fertility.
3. Ganesh : This motif is used for religious and mythological events. Apart from this, other Gods and Goddesses are also drawn.



Notes



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Fig. 1.1

4. Bamboo tree : A tree is the symbol of life and enthusiasm. Bamboo is considered auspicious.
5. Fish : The motif is an essential part of Madhubani painting. It is considered a symbol of prosperity and fertility.
6. Elephant : The elephant is used in Madhubani art as an interpretation of a local animal.

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7. Lady : The lady motif is used for various occasions such as marriage ceremony or group activities to depict rural life.
8. Lotus : The lotus motif is used in Madhubani paintings for religious ceremony, marriage, forest or royal garden. Lotus is considered an important symbol.
9. Pot : The pot is an essential part of religious rituals during a marriage ceremony.
10. Peacock : The interpretation of the peacock bird is used in several places. Such as Radha Krishna Rasa Leela, Ram going to the forest, depiction of royal spaces or religious rituals of marriage ceremony. The peacock motif is an integral part in the painting of flora and fauna.

1.3 MATERIAL REQUIRED FOR MADHUBANI PAINTING

Cloth or thick drawing sheet/handmade sheet/handmade paper

Pencil

Eraser

Black marker

Fine tip round brush (0, 1 and 8 size and others)

Scale

Carbon sheet

Fabric colour (for cloth)

Poster colour (for paper)

Tracing paper

Note: Traditionally, Madhubani paintings are made using fingers, twigs, brush, fountain pen and match sticks.

1.4 TRADITIONAL METHODS

Step 1: Border

You know that the border is an essential aspect of Madhubani painting. Continuous geometric pattern or forms inspired by nature can be used. The width of the boundary can be 1/2 to 2 inches. The bigger the canvas, the bigger will be the border. Here we will make a border of 1/2 inch.

Firstly, make semi-circles of the same size using freehand and add double lines to this semi-circle. Make a similar pattern for the inside boundary. Add a circle to double line. Finally, fill the gap between line and circle.

Step 2: Layout

Conceptualize the layout of the painting. Firstly, sketch the main character. Next, fill the remaining space with an abstract pattern. Abstract pattern can consist of flora such as trees and fauna such as fish, peacock, deer etc. The abstract pattern should be in adherence to the main concept.

Step 3: Patterns

Repeat patterns for the description. It does not have any fixed principle. Any pattern can be used. It should be compatible with the main subject. Patterns can also be used for description in a border. Care should be taken that no space is left empty around the main concept in Mithila painting.

Step 4: Background colour

Select the background colour first when colouring. Background colour should be according to the main concept.

Step 5: Foreground colour

After colouring the background, fill bright colour in the foreground. The selection of colour is very important. If in doubt, then use obvious colours. For example, brown for the tree trunk, green for leaves, blue for peacock etc. Introduce yourself to the colour wheel for more knowledge about colour combination.

Step 6: Background patterns

This step is optional. The background can be filled with a single colour. However, a pattern is an essential part of Madhubani art. A pattern can be repeated using a round brush to make the background more interesting.

Preparing Background for Painting

In the ancient period, Mithila painting was made on the floor and wall. These days cloth and paper are used. Choose your surface. For learning purposes, natural colour will not be used for ancient Mithila painting. Instead, synthetic colours such as poster colour, oil colours or acrylic colours will be used. Now select the topic, such as mythological or relating to day-to-day activities.

**Notes**

PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

So learner, we have learnt the traditional methods of Madhubani painting. Now we will illustrate a Madhubani art. The theme is Ram Sita Marriage.



Notes

Step 1: Border

Border is an important aspect of Madhubani painting and completes the painting. Continuous geometric patterns or forms inspired by nature can be used. The width of the boundary can be 1/2 to 2 inches. The bigger the canvas, the bigger will be the border. Here we will make a border of 1/2 inch.



Fig. 1.2

Step 2: Layout

Conceptualize the layout of the painting. Firstly, sketch the main character. Here we are painting the marriage of Ram and Sita. Therefore, we will make the sketches of Ram and Sita first.



Fig. 1.3

Step 3: Patterns

Care has to be taken that empty space should not be left in the area surrounding the main subject in Mithila painting. Empty space can be filled using motif symbols. Here we can use Sun, parrot, fish, pot and flowers. Sun has a prominent place in Madhubani art.



Notes



Fig. 1.4

Step 4: Colouring

In the final step, we will fill colours. First, we will fill the border with two separate colours. After that, we will colour the clothes of the main characters Ram and Sita, followed by flowers, fish, peacocks and the Sun according to the painting. Other colours can be used, but bright colours are appropriate. Colour the leaves green, peacocks blue, etc.



Fig. 1.5

PRACTICAL EXERCISE 2

Now we will illustrate another Madhubani art. The theme is Fish and Peacock.

Step 1: Border

Border is an important aspect of Madhubani painting and completes the painting. Geometric patterns or nature inspired forms can be used. The width of the boundary can be 1/2 to 2 inches. The bigger the canvas, the bigger will be the border. Here we will make a border of 1/2 inch.

Firstly, make semi-circles of the same size using free hand and add double lines to this semi circle. Make a similar pattern for the inside boundary. Add a circle to double line. Finally, fill the gap between the line and circle.



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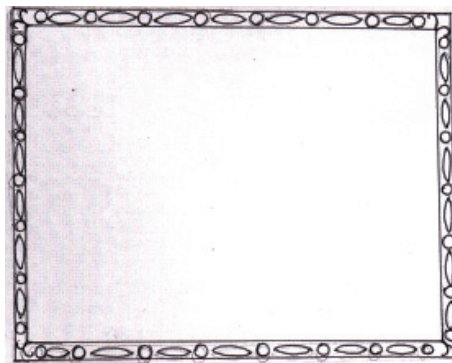


Fig. 1.6

Step 2: Layout

Conceptualize the layout of the painting. Sketch the main character first. In this case, make peacock and fish. After that, fill the rest of the space with patterns. Since the main topic is peacock and fish, compatible abstract patterns such as peacock feathers surrounding the peacock and semi-circular waves near the fish can be made.

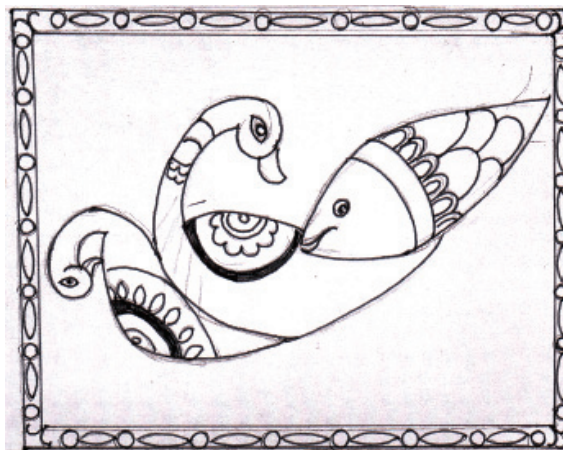


Fig. 1.7

Step 3: Patterns

Repeat patterns for the detailing. It does not have any fixed principle. Any pattern can be used. It should be compatible with the main concept. Patterns can also be used for detailing border.



Notes



Fig. 1.8

Step 4: Colouring

Care has to be taken that no space is left empty around the main concept in Mithila painting. Black colour may be used to complete the paintings, as shown in the figure given below.



Fig. 1.9

PRACTICAL EXERCISE 3

Let us draw one more Madhubani painting. The theme of the painting is Kohbar Painting.

Step 1

Kohbar painting is a prominent topic for Madhubani painting. The kohbar is made on the walls of a house. Make a large rectangle on the surface to make the painting. Make a border surrounding the rectangle. It can be of 1/2 to 2 inches in width. In this border, we will make a geometrical design using slanting lines giving a triangular shape.



Notes



Fig. 1.10

Step 2

Now, we will make Ban Devi in the centre of the main surface for painting. In the central portion of the Devi, make an embellished circle having the shape of a flower. In place of both the hands, we will make large leaves. Surrounding them make round fruits above and below. We will decorate the trunk of this tree in the form of a long skirt (lehenga). This Ban Devi is like the Goddess of prosperity. In this rectangle, we will make other forms such as newly married bride and groom



Fig. 1.11

at the top. At the bottom, a tableau surrounded by the figures of two ladies will be painted. Towards the left side, we will make two peacocks, and on the right side, we will make the figure of a lady in a sitting posture.

Step 3

Empty space is not left in kohbar painting. For this reason, we will make fish, parrots, pairs of snakes, tortoises, fruits, flowers, leaves and twigs. Pots and baskets, which are symbols of happiness and prosperity will also be painted.



Notes



Fig. 1.12

Step 4

We will make this painting on a white surface with saffron colour.



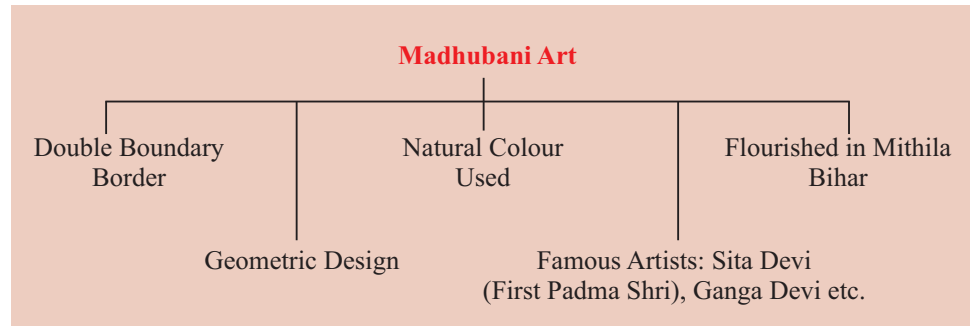
Fig. 1.13



Notes



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Draw Lord Shri Ram hunting the golden deer.
2. Paint a woman worshipping Lord Shiva in Madhubani style.
3. Draw natural motifs of fish and lotus in Madhubani style.
4. Draw a rural lady with a pot of water on her head.
5. Madhubani art originated from which place?
6. Make separate paintings of two prominent styles of Madhubani art.
7. Explain any three characteristic features of Madhubani art.
8. Paint any three motifs used in Madhubani art.
9. Who received the Padmashri first for Madhubani art? Make a copy of her paintings.

GLOSSARY

- Origin : the start or beginning of any activity or thing
- Purpose : Objective
- Motif : interpretations, pattern
- Enlist : to arrange in sequence
- Essential : necessary
- Activities : doing some kind of action or deed

Madhubani Painting

Symbolic	: relating to symbols and symbolism
Flourished	: spread
Compatible	: suitable
Flora and fauna	: plants and animals
Traditional	: related to tradition
Background	: the portion of a painting, scene or design that prepares a setting for the main subject
Geometric	: relating to the branch of mathematics about line and shapes

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Notes