



MODULE – 1

Introduction to Folk and Tribal Art



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INTRODUCTION TO FOLK AND TRIBAL ART

The Folk Art of India belonged to the ancient period and passed from one generation to another. The artists adopted the themes of art from the epics, myths and legends Gods, Goddesses, etc. The traditional artists used the natural colours prepared from locally available materials, i.e. vegetables, fruits, clay, stones etc. They painted on their roof, wall, courtyard, cloth and different types of objects.

The origin of folk art in India finds its roots in prehistoric art, and our ancestors began to walk on the earth with two feet more than a million years ago. One day, they invented tools. People gradually discovered that the shapes of some stones or sticks were more suitable for some tasks, and they set them aside for future use. Further, they started sharpening the tools to improve their shape. This was the first craft. Studies have revealed a similarity between the development process of cavemen and that of children. When a child draws he/she reflects his or her feelings along with the surroundings. In the same way, cave art also reflected the feelings through figurative and symbolic drawings of their surroundings. The life of primitive people was governed by the force of nature like the sun, moon and rain that were difficult to understand. They felt that these forces of nature had to be placed and painted or engraved figures and symbols denoting these forces. Gradually, it became part and parcel of human life.

Dear Learner, in this lesson, you will learn the different folk and tribal forms of Indian art. Starting from the prehistoric paintings of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh, you will learn how the tribal art of Jadupat in West Bengal and the folk art of Madhubani in Bihar took shape in the later period.

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OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the brief background of folk and tribal art;
- explain the prehistoric painting of Indian art;
- describe various prehistoric paintings of Indian art;
- explain when and how Indian art transformed into folk and tribal art;
- elaborate different types of folk and tribal art.

1.1 BHIMBHETKA PAINTING

Let us learn about rock cut painting

Title	: Bhimbhetka
State	: Madhya Pradesh
Type	: Rock Painting
Period	: 3000 B.C.E. (Pre-historic age)
Artist	: Unknown

Basic Information

You know that folk and tribal art have roots in prehistoric rock painting. The study of rock paintings of India would help to understand and appreciate folk and tribal painting.

India's prehistoric rock paintings are now regarded quantitatively and qualitatively as works of major importance. The Indian subcontinent was inhabited by hunters and food gatherers. Later the archaeological discoveries proved that hunters and food-gatherers were the earliest people known to have existed on Indian soil. Moreover, their presence is attested not only by stone tools and other implements but also, after a given date, by rock painting and rock engravings. At the same time, each picture is valuable in the earliest manifestation of Prehistoric Indian Art.

General Description

Our country contains about seven hundred such sites and each site has one to thirty caves, where people lived. 'Bhimbhetka' of Madhya Pradesh is one of them. Some of you may have seen it. The style, content and usage of colours for painting depict its pre-historic character. The given picture (Fig. 1.1) shown here are the animals of virgin jungle and men with their primitive hunting implements their stones, axes,

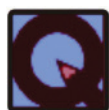
throwing sticks, clubs, harpoons, bows and arrows. Increasingly we find pictures of confrontations between men and wild beasts, that is to say, hunting scenes, and early allusions to animistic practices in different shapes.



Fig. 1.1: Bhimbhethka



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.1

Tick the correct answers:

1. What type of painting is Bhimbhethka painting?
 - (i) Rock painting
 - (ii) Clay painting
 - (iii) Phad painting
 - (iv) Mithila painting
2. In which state do you find Bhimbhethka rock paintings?
 - (i) Uttar Pradesh
 - (ii) Madhya Pradesh
 - (iii) Bihar
 - (iv) Bengal

1.2 JOGIMARA PAINTING

So learners now, we will learn about the Jogimara, fresco painting.

Title : Jogimara
State : Madhya Pradesh
Type : Fresco painting
Period : 1st B.C.E.
Artist : Unknown

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Basic Information

You know that prehistoric rock painting in India entered protohistoric era through Zhob, Aamri, Nandra, Nal, Shahi Tump, and Harappa-Mahenjodaro in Pakistan periods. In the cave of Jogimara of Ramgad hill of Surguja, Chattisgarh some paintings were discovered. Experts have suggested that these paintings may be dated as of the paintings of the historical age. These are 'Fresco Paintings'. Here a plaster of lime and sand or other materials is layered on the stone or wall. On that wet plaster, artists make drawings and colour it after it dries up. Then, finally, it becomes a permanent painting.



Fig. 1.2: Jogimara

General Description

In this picture you can find both animal and human figures. They are coloured in red, the borders are marked by black, and the base is white. Sometimes yellow colour was in use, but blue colour appeared to be rarely used by them. Generally, these paintings were made from the point of the circle, and the circles were filled with geometric figures. In Jogimara, you can find most of the paintings have a religious base. Religious or supernatural feelings were an important thing at that time. The style of drawing was unique. But an impact of pre-historic rock paintings was there. The legacy, which started from pre-historic rock painting, continued through Jogimara, influencing the art of the tribals and folk people.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.2

1. In which state do you find Jogimara Fresco painting?
2. What is the age of this painting?
3. What colours were generally used in Jogimara painting?
4. Which colour was rare in Jogimara painting?

1.3 CLASSIFICATION OF FOLK ART

In this section, you will get to know the classification of art. Prehistoric hunter and food gatherers gradually introduced agriculture and farming into their lifestyle. Safety and security became important to them. Cave dwellers started to live in a group in a colony like a settlement for security. Day by day, the sphere was on expansion, and the people exchanged their thoughts and ideas among other neighbouring groups.

Due to unequal development of the societies, the art diversified into two branches. Some hunters and food gatherers engaged themselves in agriculture and farming. In contrast, some of them remained hunters and food gatherers. This unequal growth of lifestyle and other factors was reflected in their art. Thus, the cave art transformed into two different segments :

1. **Folk Art** (The people who had opted for agriculture).
2. **Tribal Art** (The people who remained hunters and food gatherers).

1.4 THE TRIBAL PAINTING

Let us learn about the tribal art in West Bengal.

Title	: Jadupat Painting
State	: West Bengal
Type	: Tribal Art
Period	: Contemporary
Artist	: Unknown

Basic Information

Both the folk and tribal artists wanted to establish their cultural identity in their artwork. Their art was primarily ritualistic and religious. They liked to add some visuals to illustrate the stories narrated by storytellers. Paintings emerged as a visual in a scroll form.



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This Jadupat is a specialized painting of the Santhals of West Bengal. This community is the third largest tribe in India. It largely inhabits West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh. The painters are known as 'Jadupatua.'



Fig. 1.3: Jadupat

General Description

In the painting, the figures are simple and depicted on a single flat surface. The stories of the divine love of Radha Krishna are depicted in a series of simple clear-cut images in panels divided by horizontal bands. Trees, flowers or rocks are depicted by simple, diagrammatic forms. Figures are drawn in frontal perspective with a standard wavy line tracing sloping forehead, nose, lips and chin. Eyes are depicted enormously large.

Some spaces are executed or drawn for expression purposes, and colour is applied unrealistically creating dramatic effects. The emphasis is given on colour and lines, making the pictures very attractive. There is a symbolic use of the body colour of Krishna as blue, Radha as orange and Gopies as yellow. The figures show lots of movements disregarding the equality archive of tribal and folk art.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.3

1. What type of art is Jadupat?
2. Which state does it associated with this tradition?
3. Who are Jadupatuas?



ACTIVITY

You will visit the library and collect some information regarding Jadupat’s magic painting. Now you may express your feelings about the expression, and colour applied in the painting, creating dramatic effect.

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1.5 THE FOLK PAINTING

So, learners, you have learnt about the tribal art , now you will know the Madhubani folk art.

- Title** : **Madhubani Painting**
State : **Bihar**
Type : **Folk Art**
Period : **Contemporary**
Artist : **Unknown**

Basic Information

It is quite logical to believe that man from his early childhood takes a keen interest in drawing with the help of lines and strokes. This must have been prevalent practise amongst the people of the early eras settled age who painted the walls of their shelters as per their experiences and encounters through nature and life. The entire middle Ganga plain and especially Bihar, was no exception. Like in many spheres, it also has a distinct place in context to the deeply rooted painting tradition. Although if you look at the map of the world, you will not find the village of Madhubani on it. Though Madhubani paintings are universally famous. It is also known as *Mithila Painting*. Within this area, a rich ritual and domestic painting tradition has survived from very early times. In Mithila, the tradition of painting is represented by three communities of women Kayastha, Brahmin and Dusadh



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(Harijan). The people of Mithila are highly religious, and they are quite naturally influenced by the worship of Shiva, Shakti and Visnu. Goddess Durga worshipped as 'Istadevi,' The subject matter of any Madhubani Painting is governed by the occasion, and fresh painting is painted for every occasion.



Fig. 1.4: Ardhanariswara, Madhubani Painting

General Description

In the painting, you see an 'image of Ardhanariswara'. Now, let us know in detail about the painting. The confident and bold lines enclosing different colours. Further energized by red and yellow monochrome washes on the vast area of painting, dividing the space and providing a background for the painting.

Initially, the traditional themes and subjects were replicated in the ritual paintings. But soon as the demand grew for such paintings, other events and stories, including

the narration of myths and even personal life, were incorporated. The regular use of synthetic and fabric colours in place of vegetable colours came into vogue. Using a pen instead of twigs as a brush was found more aptly.

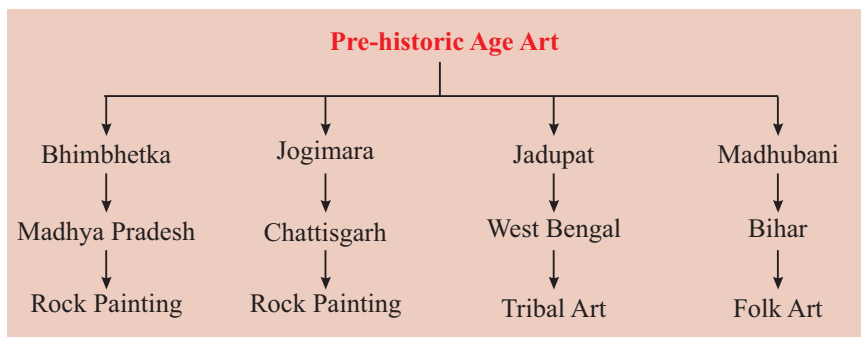


INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.4

1. What type of art is Madhubani?
2. Which state does it associate with?
3. Which communities of people generally represent this painting?



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner

- identify and use the symbolic features of folk and tribal art from pre-historic to the ancient era in their different artwork.
- use a variety of styles, materials and structures to create any folk art form.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What is Rock painting? Give one example of a prehistoric Rock painting and describe it.
2. What is Fresco painting? Give one example of Fresco painting and describe it
3. What are the divisions that cave art had divided, and why?



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4. Give an example of tribal art and explain it.
5. Give an example of folkart and explain it.
6. Name those gods and goddesses who are associated with Madhubani painting?
7. What are the major two changes you have found in Madhubani paintings nowadays?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

1.1

1. (i) Rock painting
2. (ii) Madhya Pradesh

1.2

1. Fresco Painting
2. Madhya Pradesh
3. Ist Century BCE
4. Red, black, white, yellow
5. Blue

1.3

1. Tribal art
2. West Bengal
3. Santhals, who make Jadupat paintings

1.4

1. Folk art
2. Bihar
3. Kayastha, Brahmin and Dusadh

GLOSSARY

Synthetic : Not natural

JADU : Magic

Santhal : Tribal people of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha.