

MODULE – 2

Medium, Techniques and
Styles



Notes



5

SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS OF FOLK ART

Dear learner, in the previous lesson we have learnt about the Traditional and Contemporary Methods and Materials of Folk and Tribal Art. In this lesson, we will learn about the Symbols and Motifs of folk art. A symbol means an object which represents or is to be interpreted as meaning something else than it appears to be, as in the forms standing for the sound, picture and colour. A symbol is very close to allegory. A sign stands for the identity of the object. Where as a symbol is not necessarily on the object. It can signify a more subtle meaning. For example, the lotus is a symbol of the extension of creation. Thus whenever lotus is used in painting or poem, it symbolises the same meaning. A motif is a design or figure that consists of recurring shapes or colours. Motifs are used in painting as decoration. Sometimes a single motif is used in art. Man created the signs and symbols to understand the mystery of the universe with the help of his imagination and reasoning. The symbolic meaning of development can be spread like a tree from a seed. Presentation or art-related symbol is the expression of the human mind which cannot be expressed in words. It is expressed through simile, which can not be communicated directly, becoming a symbol through motif. Both symbols and motifs are depend on each other.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the folk symbols;
- use of symbols in art;
- state the prevalent traditional symbols in folk art;
- describe the importance of motifs and symbols in folk art style;
- list the main folk symbols and motifs in art.

Learner, let us learn first different kinds of symbols and motifs used in traditional folk and tribal art. The folk style of Indian art is full of motifs and symbols. These are found in Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Patachitra of Odisha and Bengal, Chitrakathi of Maharashtra Kalamkari and Cheriwal of Andhra Pradesh. Besides these, the motifs are also used in murals and floor paintings of folk tradition.

- Kinds of symbols are as follow:
 1. Geometrical symbols:
Dots, Zero, Lines, Triangle
 2. Mythological symbols:
Swastik, Trident, Disc, Om, Pots (Kalash)
 3. Natural symbols:
Nature, Sun, Moon, Stars, Earth, Sky, Water, Air, Fire etc.
 4. Vegetational symbols:
Tree, Plants, Seeds, Lotus, Leaf, Fruit etc.
 5. Organic symbols:
Animals, Birds, Creatures, Parrot, Peacock, Kamdhenu, Serpents etc.
 6. Celestial symbols:
Deities, Gods, Goddesses etc.



Notes

5.1 MOTIFS

Learner, now we need to know about the motifs used in folk and tribal art.

5.1.1 Pilli Odgu

Basic Information

Pug marks of cat (Pilli) are auspicious symbols in Kalamkari folk art. These motifs are used to fill empty spaces in the painting. These are also used in the borders of the paintings. The size of Pilli Odgu depends on the space in which it is painted. There is no specified colour for it. The painter can choose any colour. This symbolic motif is used by all traditional Kalamkari painters.

Symbol

- Sign : Pilli Odgu (Kalamkari)
Place : Sri Kalahasti (Andhra Pradesh)
Artist : Late M. Munireddi

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Medium : Cloth, ink, vegetable water colour

Size : 3' × 4'

Collection : Adibasi Lokkala Evam Boli Vikas Academy, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh



Fig. 5.1: Pilli Odgu (Kalamkari)

General Description

The given painting is done in the Kalamkari technique. This work is an exhibit in Adibasi Lok Kala Evam Boli Vikas Academy in Bhopal. The painting shows a squirrel eating fruit on a tree branch. The whole painting is created in a decorative style by repeating the motifs. The squirrel is painted in brown while the bird is painted in red, yellow and green. The beak is painted in red colour. Leaves are painted in yellow and orange colours.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.1

1. What is the name of folk art of Andhra Pradesh?
2. What is the meaning of Pilli Odgu?
3. What is the name of the artist of the painting Pilli Odgu?
4. Which colours are used to paint the bird in this painting?



ACTIVITY

Visit any library or art gallery and collect four geometrical and four mythological symbols used in traditional folk art. Now you paste all these symbols one by one and write at least two lines about these



Notes

| Picture of Symbols | About the Symbols |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

5.2 LATPATIA SUA (MADHUBANI)

Basic Information

In this portion, you will know about the motif of Latpatia Sua (Fondling Parrot) is used in Madhubani painting in abundance. This motif is sometimes drawn in black, and in some cases, it is painted with colours. This motif is so popular that it is painted in almost all Madhubani paintings. It is the symbol of wealth and love.



Fig. 5.2: Latpatia Sua (Madhubani)



Notes

Symbol

| | |
|------------|---|
| Sign | : Latpatia Sua (motif), Kohbar, Madhubani |
| Artist | : Mahasundari Devi, Ranti, Madhubani, Bihar |
| Medium | : Paper and Red black ink |
| Size | : 8½" × 9½" |
| Collection | : Personal |

General Description

Latpatia Sua is a motif of enthusiast couple or loving pair of parrots. This motif symbolises the eternal love and happiness of the newly married couples. The images of parrots are taken from Kohbar for Madhubani painting. This is popular symbols of Madhubani paintings.

This painting is done on paper in Madhubani style. This painting is created by internationally famous Mahasundari Devi, which is now in her collection. It is painted in red and black ink. A tree is painted in the middle of the space. Two parrots are sitting on the two sides of the trunk of the tree. This is a popular motif of Madhubani painting as it symbolises wealth, happiness and love. The branches and leaves are decoratively painted with a pen. The beaks of the birds are painted red. The border of this painting is done simply with black colour, space between the black trees is filled with red colour.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.2

1. Which bird symbolised Latpatia Sua?
2. Which state is related to the Madhubani painting?
3. Which good wishes are symbolising in this motif?
4. How the Madhubani paintings are done?

5.3 DHARI OR DHADI ODIA PATTA

Now, let us learn another motif Dhari Oria patta used in folk art. A tradition is prevalent to create beautiful borders or four sides of a Patta painting in Odisha. The motifs of flower leaves and fruits are used to decorate these borders. These increase the beauty and meaning of the painting. Many such borders are painted motifs of Kerala, Alakhpankh, Patrajhara, Phoolkira, Phoolmora Panchpatri, Patrakosa, Kumbhapata, Ambakosia Likori etc.

Symbol

Sign : Dhari, Odia Patta

Artist : Jagannath Mahapatra, Raghurajpur, Odisha

Medium : Patta, water and earth colour

Size : 18" × 12"

Collection : Adibasi Lok Kala Evam Boli Vikas Academy, Bhopal



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Fig. 5.3: Dhari, Pata Chitra

General Description

Some emphasis is given on the painting of border as it is given in the main painting. The borders can be drawn only by an expert Odia Patta painter. The border with Patra Kara has jhalar. Flowers are painted in between the Jhalar. The border with Alakhpankha is painted with feathers of birds, especially peacock feathers. A flower motif is also added to it. In Jhara Dhadi the leaves are shown hanging downwards. In Phoolkira the Jhari of flowers is shown. In the case of Phoolmora, the climber flowers are shown more twisted. The Patra Kumbha Dhadi shows the leaves in the form of Pat. Panchpatri is painted with five types of leaves. The Panchkasa Dhadi has different types of climbers with flowers. In the case of Kumbh Pata border, leaves are given the shape of vessels. It appears like rows of vessels. All these Dhadis are beautiful to look at.



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.3

Tick the Appropriate Answer:

1. Which state has Dhari or Dhadi in folk art style?

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| (i) Bihar | (ii) Odisha |
| (iii) Rajasthan | (iv) Karnataka |

2. Who is the painter of this Dhadi?

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| (i) Jagannath Mishra | (ii) Dalal Singh |
| (iii) Jagannath Mahapatra | (iv) Mansha Devi |



ACTIVITY

Take a A4 size sheet and draw a Dhari Pata Chitra with watercolour. Try to paint the border with the feather of birds and flowers motif is also added to it



5.4 SURYA

Basic Information

Learner, you know that the Sun is a natural symbol. Sun is the source of light in this world. Day and night are caused by the Sun. The Sun is the centre of the earth's orbit. The Sun is one of the most powerful stars in the universe. Thus the Sun symbolises light, energy, space and time. Rock painting of Signghanpur of Raigarh shows an image of the Sun with seven rays, and this one is the oldest example of the Sun worshipping in the prehistoric age. The Sun is generally presented as a circle with rays around it in traditional folk art. These images are frequently used motifs in folk art. The Sun is related to nature and worshipped as God by primitive man.

Folk Symbol

- Folk symbol : Sun
- Artist : Mahasundari Devi, Ranti, Madhubani, Bihar
- Medium : Paper and colour
- Size : 3½" × 3½"
- Collection : Personal

General Description

The Sun is depicted in folk art in a very simple way. It is shown as a circle or round shape with short and long lines around it as a symbol of the Sun. The Sun could be shown only by drawing lines and painting colours. The image or motif of the Sun is given a prominent place on the floor, wall temple, house, painting and art as decoration. It is mandatory to draw the sun in folk art as it is the symbol of eternity.



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Fig. 5.4: Sun Symbol



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.4

Fill in the gaps:

1. In folk art the Sun is drawn as a circle.
2. is drawn in a very simple way in folk art.
3. Sun is a symbol of
4. The painter of the text is
5. The Sun is also symbol of in the folk art.

5.5 LOTUS

Basic Information

Learner, do you know that the lotus is the symbol of the first creation? It symbolises the cause of origins and evolution. The motif of the lotus is created in different forms in folk art. These motifs are beautifully decorated in traditional paintings.

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These motifs are used as symbols in and outside of home, floor, walls and temples. The motif of lotus painted with creative and imaginative form in Mandana and mural.

Folk Symbol

Folk symbol : Lotus
Artist : Unknown
Medium : Colour on canvas
Size : 8' × 8'
Collection : Internet

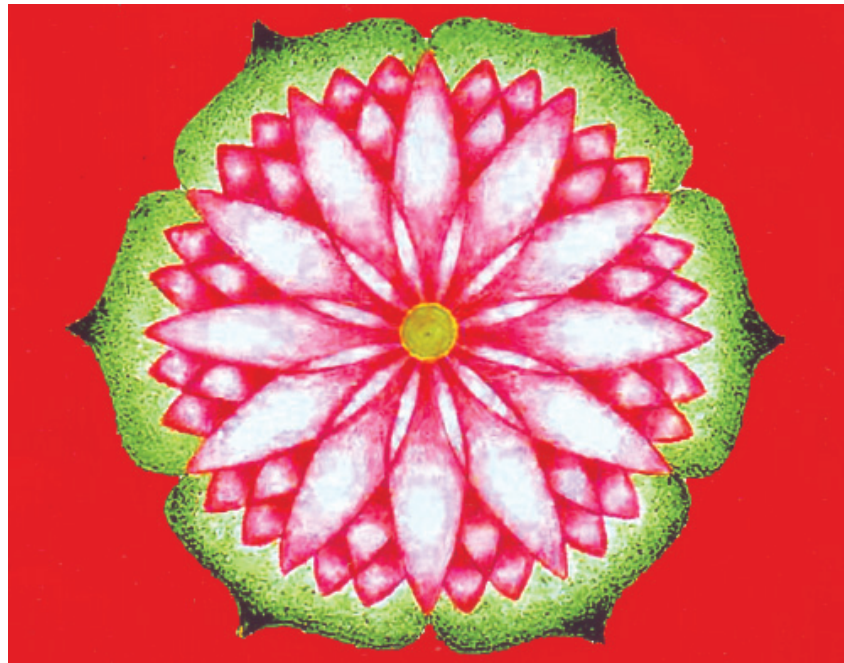


Fig. 5.5: Lotus Symbol

General Description

The lotus motifs in different forms with four petals, six petals, eight petals, sixteen petals are available in folk art and rock paintings. Every part of the lotus is symbolic. The stem of the lotus is called the stem of Brahma (Brahmanal). The floating leaf of the lotus is composed of petals which are that symbolises symbols of creation and evolution. The centre of the flower symbolises the cosmos (Bramhand). In the oral narration and literature the lotus is presented as an allegory. Lotus is painted in a very simple manner in folk art. It is, therefore, a very popular symbol.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.5

Match the Right Answer:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Folk symbol | 8' × 8' |
| 2. Artist | Colour on canvas |
| 3. Medium | Unknown |
| 4. Size | Lotus |
| 5. Form | Four petal |

5.6 SWASTIK

Basic Information

Now, let us learn about the Swastic symbol. Swastik is an exclusively Indian cultural symbol which is auspicious. Religion, philosophy, art, history, literature, culture and everything are included in it. It is probably a unique symbol in the whole world that is deeply rooted, universal, precise, simple, beautiful and attractive. This motif is found even in the prehistoric age in many parts of India. This symbol is used in many traditional paintings and drawings. This symbol is used in the rural area in Chauk and Satia. Swastik sign is used almost everywhere, whether it is Mandana or wall painting. Womenfolk never forget to use it in their religious fasting or celebration of social rituals. Swastik is painted with different mediums like powdered cereal, turmeric or red colour (Kumkum).

Folk Symbol

- Folk symbol : Swastik
- Artist : Unknown
- Medium : Paper and colour
- Size : 4½" × 4½"

General Description

Swastik is drawn with vertical and horizontal lines. The intersection point of these lines is the root point of Swastik. The straight lines are a symbol of development. It is very simple to draw a Swastik sign. For this reason, it is very popular. No Hindu ritual is complete without the Swastik sign. Swastik is used as a motif and



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symbol in folk art. It is considered the life of folk decoration. Homes, temples or buildings must be decorated with Swastik signs. Swastik has its presence in all folk paintings and sculptures.

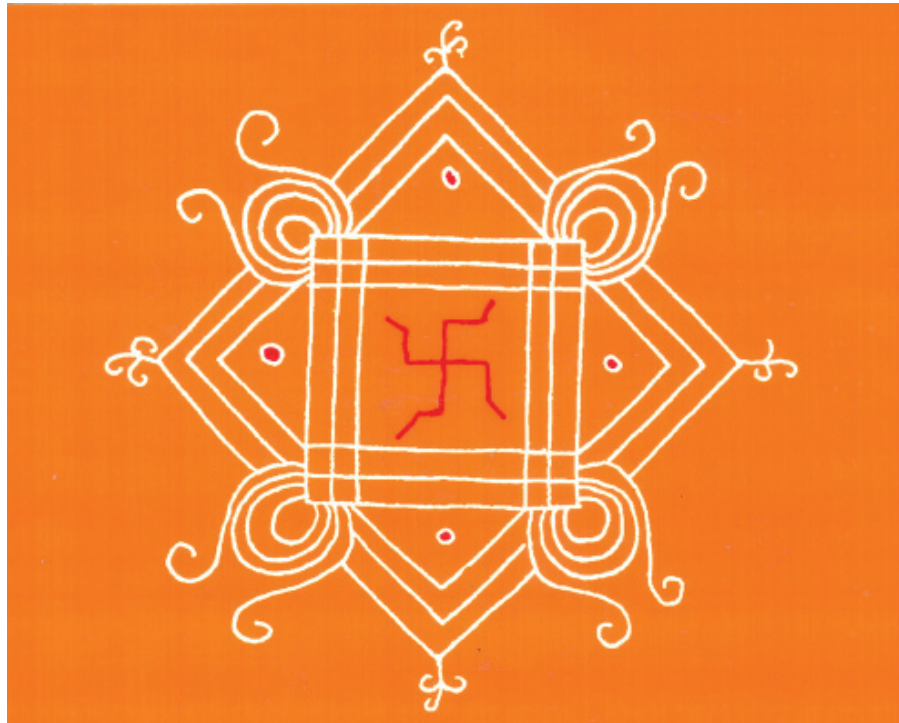
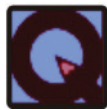


Fig. 5.6: Swastik Symbol



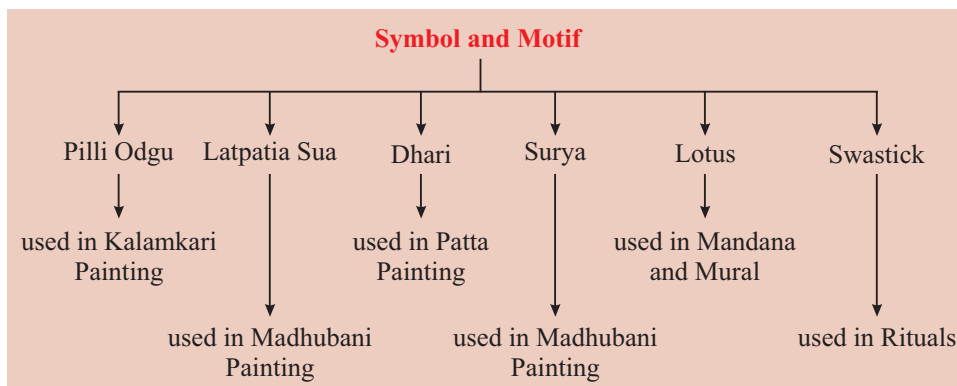
INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.6

Fill in the blanks:

1. Swastik is completely and sign of Indian culture.
2. is found even in the prehistoric age in parts of India.
3. Swastik motifs are mostly found at and
4. Swastik is a symbol
5. Womenfolk never forget to use it in their or in



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



Notes

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner can

- use motifs to create different types of floor and wall paintings.
- illustrate symbols to decorate their homes, temples or buildings.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Mention three major symbols in Indian art and culture.
2. Explain the symbolism of colours in the traditional painting of India.
3. Write the meaning of geometrical symbols in folk art and their presence.
4. Explain the importance of symbols and motifs in Indian painting.
5. What is the relevance of folk symbols in paintings?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

5.1

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Pilli Odgu | 2. Footprint of cats |
| 3. M. Munireddy | 4. Yellow, red and green |

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5.2

1. Parrot
2. Bihar
3. Newlywed couple and their happiness
4. Black, red ink

5.3

1. (ii) Odisha
2. (iii) Jagannath Mahapatra

5.4

1. Traditional
2. Sun
3. Natural
4. Mahasundari Devi
5. Eternal

5.5

1. Folk symbol : Lotus
2. Artist : Unknown
3. Medium : Canvas and colour
4. Size : 8' × 8'
5. Form : Four petal

5.6

1. Auspicious
2. Swastik
3. Mandana, wall painting
4. Auspicious
5. Brata fast, auspicious

GLOSSARY

Celestial : Heavenly

Climber : Climbing plant that grows up