



## MODULE – 2

Medium, Techniques and  
Styles



Notes

# 6

## IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF FOLK AND TRIBAL ART

Dear learner, in the previous lesson, we learnt about the symbols and motifs used in folk art in this field. In this lesson, we will learn about the Importance and Relevance of Folk and Tribal Art. The word folk is associated with the life of a commoner. People worshipped ‘nature’ as a living force that controlling their existence. Thus different myths and legends relate to gods and goddesses of natural forces. When people suffered from drought, they prayed and worshipped ‘Varuna’, the god of rain. Likewise, ‘Agni’- the God of fire, ‘Pavana’- the God of air, ‘Vasundhara’ - the Goddess of earth were also imagined and worshipped. Even trees, especially the ‘Banyan’ tree and ‘Coconut’ tree, were sacred and worshipped in some tribal sects like ‘Santhals,’ ‘Lodhas’ etc. Peace and prosperity brought changes in the lifestyle and afforded lots of time for art activities



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the four different categories of folk and tribal art, which are divided according to their importance;
- identify different gods and goddesses who are worshipped through this art;
- name the states which are associated with this art;
- distinguish the materials and colours used in these art forms;
- explain different folk and tribal arts according to their importance and contemporary values.

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### Importance and Relevance of Folk and Tribal Art

As these art forms were generally created inside homes, it became women's responsibility to carry forward this art which soon assumed the shape of traditional art. These women started creating art on occasions like festivals, religious functions, marriages and other rituals. Gradually it became the medium of communication. Later this art turned into a decorative form.

According to their importance, folk and tribal art are divided into four categories:

1. As a tool to respect the divine
2. As a tool of communication
3. As a tool for peace and prosperity of life
4. As a tool of decoration

### 6.1 FOLK AND TRIBAL ART AS A TOOL TO RESPECT THE DIVINE

Now, you will learn about the Soura art.

<b>Title</b>	: <b>Soura Art</b>
<b>State</b>	: <b>Odisha</b>
<b>Type</b>	: <b>Tribal Art</b>
<b>Period</b>	: <b>Contemporary</b>
<b>Artist</b>	: <b>Unknown</b>

#### Basic Information

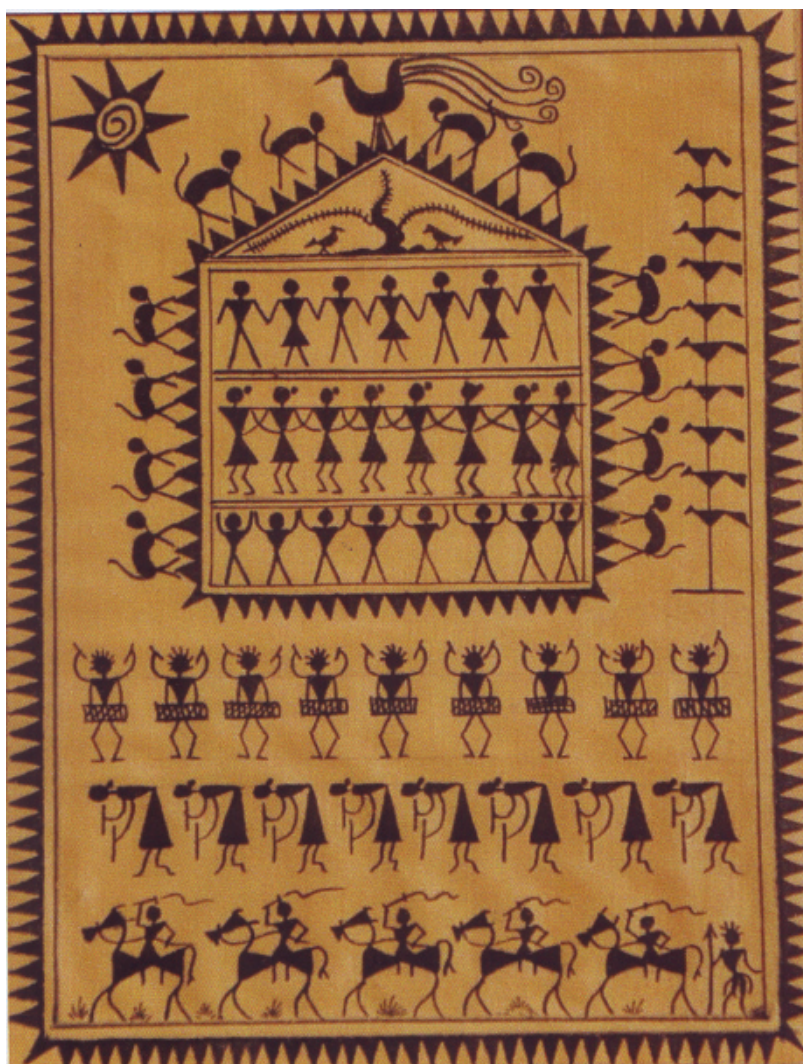
The Soura art is perhaps India's most intriguing and fascinating tribal art tradition. Like many tribal cultures worldwide, the art of Soura draws inspiration and direction from their spiritual and religious beliefs. It is not just an art form but has great utilitarian value. It functions as a means of worship and medium of invocation.

Even though the tribe Soura is primitive, it is one of the most dynamic and colourful tribes of Odisha. They believe that their world is influenced by gods, ghosts and spirits of nature and of their ancestors. These unseen beings are regarded as presiding forces over the various aspects of life, with each force having its sphere of influence.

#### General Description

In this artwork, we will know the general format of the Soura art in the form of a house, like a 'Kothi' (granary) in a rectangular or square shape filled with the dictates. It is filled with compositions of human and animal figures, called 'Ittalam.'

After initial drawing the artist sends that for suggestion from the priests. Then according to the suggestion - the artist adds the necessary items. Thus the painting consists of animate and inanimate objects, indigenous plants, animals, tools, instruments etc. However, some everyday things like trains, cars, and aeroplanes are also introduced due to exposure to the outside world.



**Fig. 6.1: Saura Folk Art**

The painting style varies from region to region, but there are some general similarities. The major pigment of the Saura icon is white, obtained either from rice, ash, chalk or lime mixed with water. These paintings, which function as motif offerings represent of the thoughts and remarkable dramatization of the theological beliefs of the artists. The 'Ittalam' or painting is made for the spirit only, so the painter is sincere and doesn't add at any special effects.

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### Importance and Relevance of Folk and Tribal Art



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1

**Tick the Appropriate Option:**

1. What type of art is Saura?
  - (i) Tribal art
  - (ii) Modern art
  - (iii) Abstract art
  - (iv) None of these
2. Which state Saura people belongs to?
  - (i) West Bengal
  - (ii) Madhya Pradesh
  - (iii) Odisha
  - (iv) Andhra Pradesh

## 6.2 FOLK AND TRIBAL ART AS A TOOL OF COMMUNICATION

Learner, you have learnt folk art as a tool of the divine. Now, you will learn folk art as a communication tool.

<b>Title</b>	<b>: Phad Painting</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>: Rajasthan</b>
<b>Type</b>	<b>: Folk Art</b>
<b>Period</b>	<b>: Early Nineteenth-century</b>
<b>Artist</b>	<b>: Unknown</b>

### Basic Information

You know that folk and tribal art is a medium of communication and entertainment. In the absence of cinema, radio and television, the only source of entertainment in the life of the people was 'Addas' (chatting in a gathering) and describing the 'Puranas' and 'Lok Kathas.' So it can be said that one of the oldest versions of cinema is the scroll or Phad painting. The Phad or long picture scrolls are produced by Phad painters, one of which is described in detail by 'Joshis'. The singers are always a couple known as 'Bhopa' (male priest) and 'Bhopi' (female priest). The man plays on one-stringed instrument while the woman joins him in singing. An important feature is the ritual oil lamp held by 'Bhopa' or 'Bhopi' during narration.

### General Description

The Phad painters produce their paintings for the wandering storytellers, who provide nightly entertainment for village audiences. The classic compositions illustrate stories from famous epics such as 'Devnarayan Ki Phad' and 'Pabuji Ki

Phad.’ The painted themes are built around local legends, especially heroic tales of ‘Pabuji’ and ‘Devnarayana’(Deviji), the local deities.

Other stories from ‘Ramayana’ and the life of Lord Krishna are also painted on Phad to provide entertainment. The image of Ganesha is also very popular.



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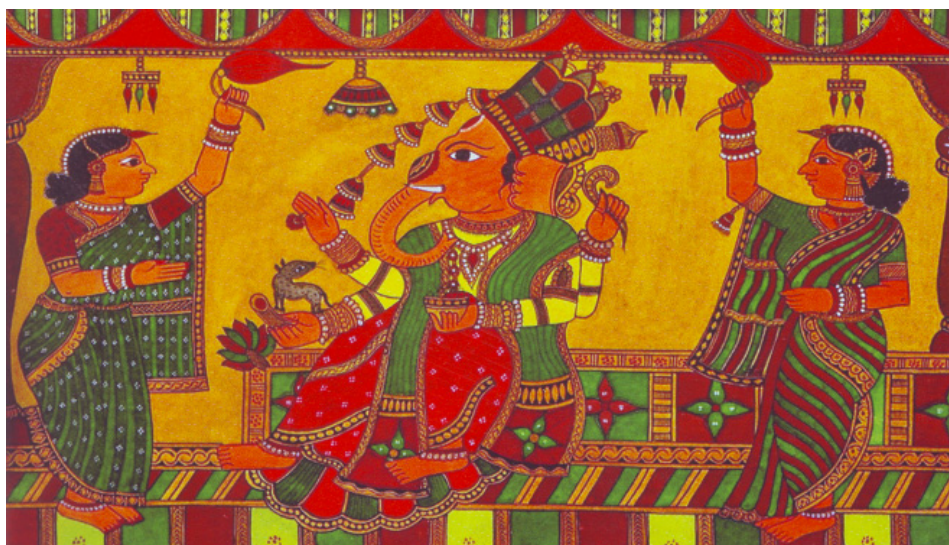


Fig. 6.2: Phad Painting

The Phad may be painted horizontally. Each panel is separated from the other by an imaginative geometrical design. In the present times, many small panels are also painted in the same style, enclosing one or two figures and their tales. The depiction of animals like elephants and horses and supplementary figures such as snakes, birds, trees and flowers are also incorporated. The colour range is very limited and contains only a few basic shades like red, white, black, orange etc. This artwork shows Ganesha in the centre being flanked by two attendants. The colours used are warm and decorative.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

### Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ):

- What are the couple singers known as?
  - Bhopa and Bhopi
  - Dev and Devi
  - Man and woman
  - Actor and Actress
- Which classic literature is associated with Phad paintings?
  - Bapuji ki Phad
  - Phad painting
  - Pabuji ki Phad
  - Bhagwanji ka Phad

### 6.3 FOLK AND TRIBAL ART FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN LIFE

Dear learner now we are going to learn about the Warli painting.

<b>Title</b>	: <b>Warli Painting</b>
<b>State</b>	: <b>Maharstra</b>
<b>Type</b>	: <b>Tribal Art Period</b>
<b>Artist</b>	: <b>Unknown</b>
<b>Collection</b>	: <b>Unknown</b>

#### Basic Information

In India, women's role in ritual life is more important than others. Throughout the country these rituals dominate the majority of domestic ceremonies like weddings, fasts etc. For these rituals, the women have to undergo traditional training from their early girlhood. Warli painting in Maharashtra is a such kind of community creative painting.

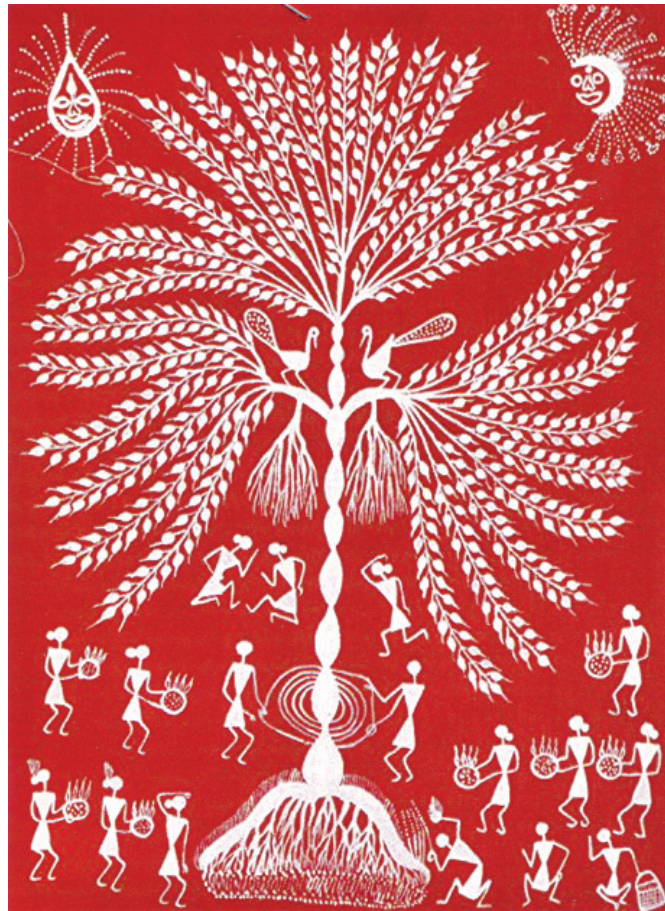


Fig. 6.3: Warli Painting

**General Description**

This painting is associated with the Warli tribes of the Thane district of Maharashtra. It is also solely created in the interior walls of village huts. This painting has a long-standing tradition of ritual painting, mainly done on the occasion of marriages by two three ‘Savasini’ (a woman whose husband is alive) women.

The figures are painted very fine and light on a dark background resulting in a shimmering effect. Conceptually, the figures are given flat shapes of elementary geometric forms of straight lines. The tree symbolises prosperity which is deep-rooted under the ground. Women are shown busy with ceremonial activities, each holding a plate with lamps and other offerings. A couple of peacocks are shown enjoying on the tree branch, and white Sun God and Moon God happily overlook everything.

During a marriage generally over three days, an image of the goddess is also kept covered and later revealed to the bride and groom. This occasion is celebrated with great aplomb and drinking Tadi.



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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3**

1. What type of art is this?
2. Which state is it associated with?
3. What is it locally called in Maharashtra?
4. Who are the prominent painters of this painting?



**ACTIVITY**

Collect photographs of different types of Warli art used in different festivals in your region. Now take an A4 size sheet and paste these photographs. Write a few lines about the different forms of these paintings.


**6.4 FOLK AND TRIBAL ART AS DECORATIVE TOOL**

Now, let us learn about the folk art used as decorative tool.

<b>Title</b>	: <b>Kantha</b>
<b>State</b>	: <b>West Bengal</b>
<b>Type</b>	: <b>Folk Art</b>
<b>Period</b>	: <b>Contemporary</b>
<b>Artist</b>	: <b>Unknown</b>

**Basic Information**

‘Kantha’ embroidery work on cotton cloth is a part of Indian folk tradition. Kanthas were made exclusively by ‘Bengali’ women in their homes, decorated in polychrome with textile materials in the form of threads. Now artists use a new piece of cloth instead of rags. The art of ‘Kantha’ illustrates the village women’s wonderful patience, craftsmanship and resourcefulness. In their creations, we find a combination of a keen power of observation and a profound feeling of sympathy with the movements of nature’s joyous, teeming life (a combination of an intense sense of beauty) and a scrupulous avoidance of luxuriance, sophistication and over-refinement.

In West Bengal, the tradition of Kantha making is represented by village women of Hindu and Muslim communities. People of Bengal (particularly village women) are highly religious, and their gods and goddesses naturally influence them. The Hindu Kantha makers tend to choose from religious motifs, like gods and goddesses, whereas Muslim women restrict themselves to geometrical designs, flora, fauna, etc. From an early age, most of the community women used to make Kanthas in their leisure time, but now it has become limited to a specific section of society.



**Fig. 6.4: Kantha Work**





### General Description

Kanthas are used for various purposes, such as warm body wrap, quilt or bed covers (Sujni), handkerchief (Rumal), bookcovers etc. Apart from these, they are used as gifts for family members.

Nowadays, Kanthas are primarily restricted to embellishing a purely ornamental nature, mainly for saree design. Every detail shows the imagination and creative prowess of those simple country women. Quite often, the object of the loving dedication remains unmentioned by the artist and unknown to the world even though a few women are giving their names to their Kanthas work. Sarees with Kantha stitch are trendy. This silk saree shows the excellent craftsmanship of the artist. Different kinds of motifs are used in this design. Floral, animal, bird and geometrical motifs are rendered in perfect harmony and balance. All types of colour threads are used. Mostly bright colours are used.



Notes



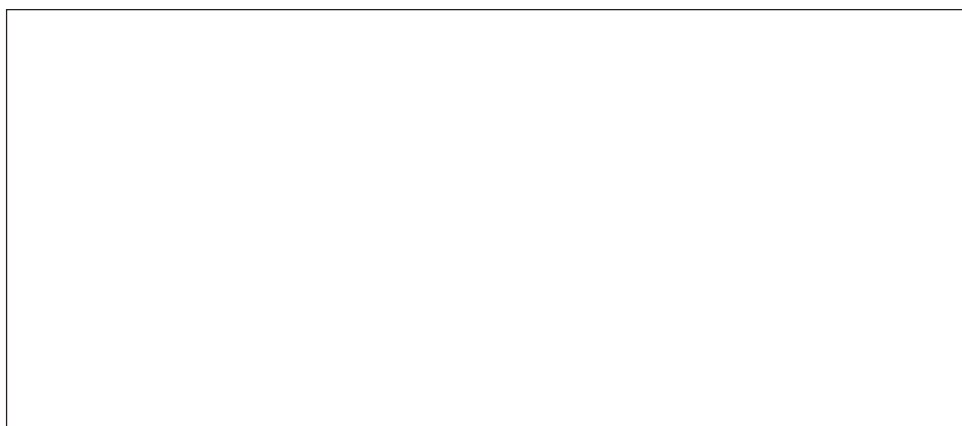
### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.4

1. What type of art is Kantha?
2. Which state does it associate with?
3. What does the word 'Kantha' mean?
4. What are the materials, generally used in 'Kantha'?



### ACTIVITY

You must have seen Kantha stitched dress material. So you draw a beautiful traditional Kantha design on your drawing sheet and decorate the design with motifs.



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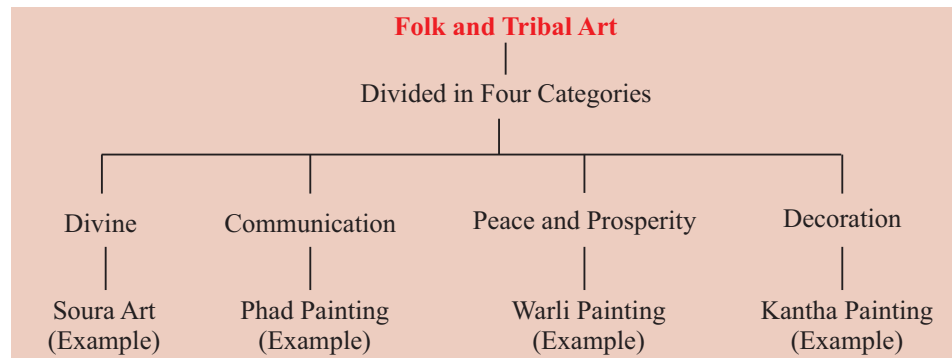


Notes

### Importance and Relevance of Folk and Tribal Art



#### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner can

- use soura folk art form to make different show pieces.
- use Warli art style to design art objects.



#### TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What categories can folk, and tribal art be divided into and give one example of each category?
2. What is Soura art? What is the importance of Soura art?
3. What is Phad painting? How is it used as a medium of communication?
4. What is Warli painting? How is it used as a symbol of peace and prosperity in Maharashtra's Warli tribal community?
5. How Kantha has become a cottage industry in Bengal?



#### ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

##### 6.1

1. (i) Tribal art
2. (iii) Odisha

##### 6.2

1. (i) Bhopa and Bhopi
2. (iii) Pabuji Ki Phad

**6.3**

1. Tribal art
2. Maharashtra.
3. Tree of prosperity
4. Two or three Savasini (a woman whose husband is alive) women.

**6.4**

1. Folk art
2. West Bengal
3. Stitch work embroidery
4. Cotton cloth

**GLOSSARY**

Mastery : Highly skilled

Utilitarian : Designed to be useful rather than attractive

Theology : A study of religion



**Notes**