



12

TRIBAL ARTS

Tribal art is visual objects carved and decorated by tribal communities to depict deities, stories and nature. They use local items to do art work. It can be clay, metal, wood, bamboo, cloth etc. They develop the item of their daily use and also design for ceremonial and religious purposes. Tribal art generally reflects the creative energy in craftsmanship of the tribal people. The tribal population are concentrated in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Gujarat and north eastern states like Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura. They are



Fig. 12.1



indulged in making pottery, painting, wood work, metal craft and textile weaving. Tribal art is inherent to them and it is passed from generation to generations. For example, the tribal society of Bastar is famous for wood-carvings, metal products, terracotta items and bamboo decorative pieces. They also earn their living from their art work. Now they are finding platforms to display and market their art products.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to :

- know different types of tribal art work;
- list names of the tribes and their art work;
- explain the kind of tools used in different kinds of art work; and
- describe different designs and motifs used in art work.

12.1 TYPES OF TRIBAL ART

Lets us discuss some basic work done by different tribes from different states of India. Since India is a vast country and tribal population also reside in different states. In this lesson we are discussing in brief about the following tribal arts:

- Pottery and terracotta
- Paintings
- Wood work

- Bamboo work
- Metal work
- Textile work



1. Pottery and Terracotta

Pottery work brings the images of utility and decorative items made out of mud or clay. They are made by hand on spinning wheel. The person or artisan, making pottery in India, is called "Kumhar". After giving desired shape to the mud pot is baked in bhatti at controlled temperature and time, these pots turn red after baking. You must have seen and used some of the following :



Fig. 12.2 Pottery



Notes

- Mitti ka garha, surahi for storing water and keep cool in summer season,
- Puja articles and toys
- Gamla or pot for plant and keep inside and outside homes and offices.
- Serving utensils, plate, sakora or katori, kulhar, jug
- Hand painted colourful home decorated clay items
- Clay hukkas and pipes
- Wall hangings, flower vases, lamps and intriguing animal figures

Recent years cooking utensils like tawa, vessels or bhagona and cooker are found in the market. Advancement goes to the designing of "mitti cool" no electricity refrigerator in pottery. Each piece of pottery is unique because single piece is made at a



Fig. 12.3 Terracotta



time. With learnt skill and practice uniformity and beauty comes. They are cheap and useful. Only issue that they can break easily when mishandled.

Advanced version of pottery is terracotta pottery which was also found during Indus valley civilization. Some of terracotta pieces are masterpieces and are more valuable and expensive. Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, TamilNadu, Maharashtra are famous for their clay work and terracotta pottery. For example- the Aiyandar community in Tamil Nadu is known for their terracotta work. They make huge size of pieces of horses and elephants giving the look of "vahans" of Gods and Goddesses. The tribes of Jhabua and Bastra of Madhya Pradesh are famous for making terracotta pottery. They have created the clay temples called dhabhas which have a small door, wherein the deity is placed along with the fire lamp. Tribal people of Jhabua believe mystical powers in their terracotta objects. Asharikandi of Assam village is another style of terracotta. Clay hukkas are made in Rajasthan community.

2. Tribal paintings

Tribal paintings are intricate work done different types of paper, fabric, stone, walls and other items. They often depict Gods and Goddesses, mythological and legendry stories, sculptures etc. They convey the joy and celebration of the community. Some of the names of popular tribal paintings are shown in table 12.1



Notes

Table 12.1 Tribal paintings from different states

Name of Tribal paintings	Type of pictures	Name of Tribe	Name of Indian State
Pithora Paintings	Chariots	Rathwa, Bhilal and Nayaka	Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh
Phad, Warli, Pithora, Choittora	Folk tales	Local tribes	Maharashtra
Mithila arts/ Madubani paintings	Daily life	Mithila	Bihar
Pattachitra Paintings	Indian mythology Jaganath bhagwan	Local tribes	Odisha
Tanjore Art	Legendary tales of heroic nature	Local tribes	West Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat and other regions
Kalamkari	Puranic deities paintaings	Local tribes	Andhra Pradesh

Kalamkari is done with pen. As the name suggest kalam means pen. Kari means work. Burnt tamarind twigs and iron fillings are



Fig. 12.4 Tribal Painting

used to create motifs. Vegetable dyes (from roots, flowers, leaves and bark) and mineral pigments are used. Gold leaf, ornamental jewels, stones and cut glasses are beautifully used in Tanjore paintings. Palm leaves and tussar silk is used for pattachitra paintings. Worli and Madhubani paintings are done on paper or cloth. Paper is often handmade. Sometimes tribal paintings are done on stone pieces and walls. Tribal art depicts mythological stories, pictures of Gods and goddesses, scenario of mahals, arms and weapons, several types of sculptures, baskets, and household or kitchen objects. Goddess Saraswati, Goddess Durga, Lord Shiva, Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Krishna and Lord Rama, sun and moon, Tulsi plant, apart from floral motifs and geometrical patterns.

3. Wood work

Wood was perhaps earliest material used for carving. Monpa and Khamti and many other tribes from Northeast area particularly Arunachal Pradesh is famous for their wood carving. Their wood



Notes



Fig. 12.5 Wood work

work is named as kumisng. They make masks of yak, deer and lion and decorate them with bright colours. They are also involved making vessels for use. Tribes of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan are indulged in making decorative pieces of window frames, wedding pillars, tobacco cases and pipes. Since tribal people often live in hilly regions use wood for various purposes. Trees like sal, teak and mahua are main source of wood for carving. They use simple tools like Axe, adze, chisel; saw etc. The picture shown is of the wood carving of God of Hill Karia tribe of Jharkhand.

4. Bamboo work

Bamboo furniture of Assam and nearby regions of north east is famous and travels throughout the work. Most of it is made by



Fig. 12.6 Bamboo work

the tribal population. Bastar tribes are skilled in making baskets, hunting tools, table mats, table light, wall hangings fishing traps etc. Gond tribe from Vidhrbha region in Maharashtra has traditional knowledge about bamboo-work. They use stripes and flakes of bamboo and thick bamboo. They can make bottles for carrying oil or toddy. They also use wood to build houses and huts. Sharp knife for cutting vegetables, bows and arrows, etc. are also prepared from bamboo.

5. Metal work

Tribal women folk wear typical jewellery and they make their necklaces, bangles, anklets and headgears and other ornaments themselves. They use different materials including metal. Brass, silver and even gold is also used. The tribes of Arunachal are skilled in using wax moulds to make brass and gold jewellery. The Naga tribes use glass shards and cowrie shells to design necklaces and elephant tusks to make bangles. The tribes of



Fig. 12.7 Metal work

Bastar from Chhattisgarh prepares wide range of metal articles such as Gods and human figures, elephant, deer, bull, horse, lamp shades, hangers, boxes, and baskets in different shapes and sizes. The Angami and Rengma tribes of Nagaland are good blacksmiths and they make exclusive weapons like spears and daos (a kind of broadsword); musical instruments and jewellery with metals. Metal work of Buster is shown below in the picture

6. Textile work

Textiles means cloth used different purposes. It is used to make and wear clothes and dresses, household items and many other decorative articles. Tribal people generally use bright colours, white, black and red colour in their dresses. Tribal dresses are identified by their distinct style and their creativity. Their dresses and ornaments clearly showcase the events and occasions. Since 16th century sari worn by tribal women and turban and shoulder



cloth used by men are dyed with aal (red colour vegetable dye) that is from Bastar in Chhattisgarh and the neighbouring Koraput in Odisha. Spinning and dyeing are two major steps in making cloth that is known to every naga woman. They use cotton fiber. Their tribes such as aomelep su, Lohe, supong are depicted through their dress. They use different symbols which has strong social implications. Worli is another popular art form depicted on clothes and emerged from Maharashtra and Gujarat tribal regions.



ACTIVITY 12.1

Fill the following table:

Tribal arts	Name of the tribal art (one or more)	Name of the tribe	Name of the state	Tools used
Sample	Pattachitra	Saura	Odisha	Tamarind leaf
Pottery and terracotta				
Paintings				
Wood work				
Bamboo work				
Metal work				
Textile work				



Notes



INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.1

Fill in the blanks

1. Aiyanaar community of _____ are popular for making _____ and _____ in terracotta.
2. Tribes of Jhabua believe that _____ has some Godly power so they made temple named _____ with clay.
3. Paintings depicting Jagannath Bhagwan are known as _____.
4. Puranic tales are painted in _____ paintings.
5. In wood carving of Arunachal Pradesh figures of _____, _____, _____ animals are made.
6. Tribes of Rajasthan make _____ and _____ in wood used in building homes.
7. Hunting tools in Bastar tribe are made with _____.
8. Metal weapons are made by _____ and _____ tribes of Nagaland.
9. _____ dye is used in textile fabric since ages.
10. Common colours used in dresses of northeast people are _____, _____ and _____.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

Since different tribal art form from India has now taken a global round hence it is necessary to know some and explore more and more. It may surprise you that Indians tribal people are so hard



working, devoted, creative and close to nature. Tribal art from different states are very popular. Some of creative art are pottery, terracotta, painting, wood work, metal craft and textile weaving. Tribal art depicts their life, their deities, animals, and ceremonial activities. It is passed from generation to generations. You are learning different names of the tribes and their art work, the kind of tools they use in different art work and the kind of different designs and motifs used in art work. Brief discussion is done in the following tribal arts:

- Pottery and terracotta
- Paintings
- Wood work
- Bamboo work
- Metal work
- Textile work

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.10**

1. Write a short note on Pottery and Terracotta art.
2. Prepare a list of any two art of following states :
 - i) Madhya Pradesh
 - ii) Bamboo work
 - iii) Textile art
 - iv) Tribal painting.



Notes

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****12.1**

1. Tamil Nadu
2. Horses and elephants
3. Terracotta and Dhabas
4. Pattachitra
5. Kalamkari
6. Yak, deer and lion
7. Window frame and doors
8. Bamboo
9. Angami and Rengma
10. Red, black and white.