

# TIMELESS TRADITIONS

Folk and tribal art of India | 2 Mar - 31 Mar, 2025



*Timeless Traditions* celebrates the diverse and vibrant folk and tribal art of India, showcasing the dynamic traditions and enduring legacies of artists whose practices have been passed down through generations. Featuring indigenous art forms such as Gond, Warli, Bhil, Kalighat Pats, and Mithila paintings, the display offers a window into the unique cultures of regions like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar, and Bengal. Often overlooked in contemporary art spaces, these timeless traditions continue to resonate with modern relevance. Through intricate patterns, symbolic imagery, and the use of natural materials, these artworks reflect a deep connection to the land, community, and spirituality of the regions they represent. They serve as both a record and a living testament to the resilience and creativity of their creators.

In celebration of International Women's Day, this exhibition features a special showcase of important women artists, including Mangala Bai, Bhuri Bai, and Lado Bai, who bring forth the vibrant traditions of Baiga and Bhil art; as well as, Japani Shyam's captivating Gond art and Baua Devi's stunning Mithila paintings to honour their practice and legacy.

This exhibition invites visitors to explore not only the aesthetic beauty of these indigenous art forms but also the stories, philosophies, and ecological wisdom embedded in them. It is an opportunity to rediscover the richness and relevance of India's folk and tribal arts, and to engage with the cultural narratives that continue to shape the artistic landscape of today.

text by Sonam Jha

# BAIGA ART

The Baiga community in Madhya Pradesh follows the popular tradition of 'godna' or tattoo art- in the contemporary nomenclature- as an essential practice in the tribe, mostly by women. The patterns have remained unchanged over the years and would prevail all over the body as a marker of belonging so much so that the women would feel incomplete without it. For a female, these markers were to etch important events in her life, starting at the forehead when she turned 9 years old, moving to the arms, legs and chest between puberty, marriage and child birth. The process used to occur amongst the women in the recesses of the forest for privacy and use kajal to ink, bamboo sticks and needles to etch and warm water and cow dung to heal. Decades ago this was a necessary practice, but it has dissolved over time.

Shanti Devi was amongst the in the community to reappropriate the practice and safeguard it on other media like paper and canvas. She would draw a silhouette of a body and transfer the patterns in a monochromatic, indigenous way. Her daughter, Mangla Bai Marawi takes after her to carry the tradition forward and bring it to notice in the world. Newer approaches in recent times including synthetic colours, paint brushes and cloth, have influenced the contemporary renditions of this art practice

# MANGLA BAI

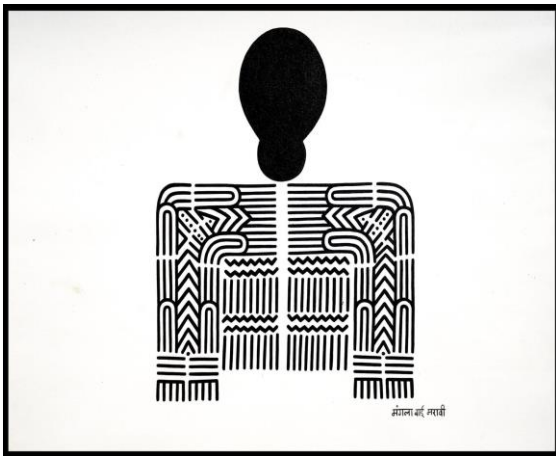
Mangla Bai Marawi belongs to the Baiga tribe in Madhya Pradesh that is well known for its practice in 'godhana' or tattoo art. She is the daughter of Shanti Bai, a well-known tattoo artist from Dindori village in Madhya Pradesh. Following the footsteps of her mother, she transfers tattoo art onto paper and canvas in an attempt to preserve and revive this culture. The patterns in this form of art are very geometric and trace an entire body with special emphasis on symmetry. In the Baiga community, they believe when a member of the tribe steps into adulthood, crafting tattoos on the entire body unifies their flesh, blood and bones and brings them closer to the feminine and masculine forces in nature. The patterns traced may vary based on the sub-divisions within the community. This innovative style of preservation has also become a dependable source of income for her family and has drawn attention to a defining characteristic of the Baiga.





मंगला बाई मरावी

Mangala Bai Marawi  
Untitled  
Acrylic on canvas  
64 x 33.5 inches  
INR 3,25,000/-



Mangala Bai Marawi  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 28 x 24 inches, each  
 INR 1,50,000/- each

## BHIL ART

Bhil art is form that adds to the rich oeuvre of indigenous art in Central India. Bhils are the second largest tribal community of India mainly residing in parts of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. In the centuries old tradition, the Bhil folk would paint their clay walls with sticks, twigs and natural dyes to create fascinating frescoes in their unique, instinctive way to convey their state of mind and experiences. To look at a Bhil painting is to look inside their homes. A Bhil painting consists of eccentric colour combinations that always seem to work. Large, lifelike figures of people and animals are filled with even-sized dots, much like the pointillism technique of the West. More recently, images of buses, scooters, etc. owing to the technological advancement are also seen represented in the works. Some artists from the community, like Bhuri Bai, Laado Bai, Ram Singh, amongst others have exhibited exhaustively and their works are famous in the international art collection circuits.

# BHURI BAI

Bhuri Bai is one of the first contemporary Bhil artists. A traditional painter, her interaction with the Indian modernist Jagdish Swaminathan at Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal steered her artistic merit in the contemporary direction. This composition is stark in form and colours, yet successfully conveys the vibrancy of life forms. The characteristic dotted colouring technique brings to mind the western pointillism movement. Each speck and dot as if impregnated with life force which brings alive the animals on the canvas. The egg-like white dots interspersed in the painting symbolically resonates the fertile element that permeates in this composition. Staying true to the bhil visual arts, her compositions imbibe her interactions with the modern world and her extensive exposure to arts from other regions and traditions, both nationally and internationally.





Bhuri Bai  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic on Paper  
 Framed Size: 36.5 x 26.5 inches, each  
 INR 90,000/- each



Bhuri Bai  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic on Paper  
 Artwork Size: 36.5 x 26.5 inches, each  
 INR 90,000/- each





Bhuri Bai  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic on Paper  
 Framed Size: 36.5 x 26.5 inches, each  
 INR 90,000/- each







Bhuri Bai  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic on Paper  
 Framed Size: 36.5 x 26.5 inches, each  
 INR 90,000/- each







Bhuri Bai  
Untitled  
Acrylic on Canvas  
Artwork Size: 48 x 36 inches  
INR 1,90,000/-





Bhuri Bai  
Untitled  
Acrylic on Canvas  
Artwork Size: 56 x 36 inches  
INR 2,40,000/-

# LADO BAI

Lado Bai was born in Jhabua village, Madhya Pradesh and moved to Bhopal to work as a manual labourer at Bharat Bhavan. She started assisting Bhuri Bai when she met with artist J Swaminathan, who introduced her with the opportunity to transfer her work on paper and canvas and encouraged her to work with Adivasi Lok Kala Akademi. Quintessential to the Bhil community that she belongs to, her works portray spirituality, animism and ritualized depictions of Pithora (a local god). Her art also depict stories that were narrated to her by the family elders and she continues to create with the faith that the gods will be pleased with her art someday.

Apart from India, her works have been shown in France and the United Kingdom as well. In 2017, she was felicitated with the Master Ojas Art Award at the Jaipur Literature Festival in India.





Lado Bai  
Untitled  
Acrylic on Canvas  
60 x 88 inches  
INR 7,50,000/-





Lado Bai  
Untitled  
Charcoal & Mud on Canvas  
64.5 x 61 inches  
INR 3,50,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS



Lado Bai  
Untitled  
Charcoal & Mud on Canvas  
63 x 35 inches  
INR 2,20,000/-





Lado Bai  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic on Paper  
 Artwork Size: 11 x 15 inches, each  
 Framed Size: 16 x 20 inches, each  
 INR 45,000/- each



# GOND

The Gond community in central India, primarily found in Madhya Pradesh, is among the largest tribes in the country. 'Gond' comes from the Dravidian expression, 'Kond' that means 'the green mountain'. The tribe is known to date back almost 1400 years and have been practicing the quintessential flora-fauna friendly technique and symbolism in their art work since time immemorial. In the early 1980s, Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal attempted to establish a common ground for art practices in India and as a part of it J Swaminathan encouraged many artistic communities including Gond artists and to provide a platform to them.



# JAPANI SHYAM

**Japani Shyam** is the daughter of the famed Gond artist Jangarh Singh Shyam. Her artistic exploration delves into the meaning and Significance of flora and fauna in Gond art. The imposing form drawn in white is speckled with birds that add a dash of colour and electric movement to this otherwise solemn canvas. The activities of the birds are rather palpable, some are perched on the branches, while others are fluttering midflight and some others are judiciously building their nests which hang heavy from the branches. The simple depiction has been elevated to a precious moment in time, which captures the celebration of life in nature.



Japani Shyam  
Acrylic on Canvas  
72 x 47 inches  
INR 2,50,000/-  
2018

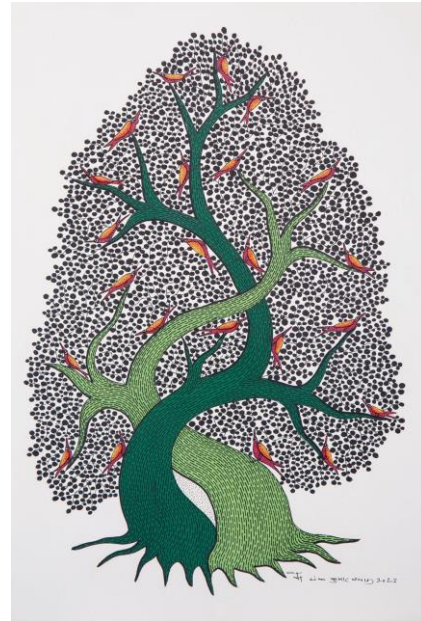
# MAYANK SINGH SHYAM

Mayank Singh Shyam, the son of Jangarh Singh Shyam has already created a space for himself in the world of art. Twenty one year old Mayankh was featured in the book 'Freedom' sixty years after Indian Independence (published by Art and Heritage Foundation. 2007), alongwith Rabindranath Tagore, Paramjit and Arpita Singh, Jamini Roy and other contemporary artists. He had got the state award (2005-2006) for master crafts, persons and weavers.

One of Mayankh's motifs is the modern city which he portrays in his own distinctive style infusing it with a Gondi ethos. He has developed a distinct way of making birds which can be called "Mayank's birds". He has been using black most often, because he feels it is easy to draw the viewer's attention with a lot of colours but more challenging to do it with black alone.

Another motif of Mayank Shyam is the BAIGA Community, which draws him like a magnet with their knowledge about the World of nature, their sense of detachment about the material world, their songs and dances. Mayankh is making a series of paintings on the BAIGAS, one of the branches of Gond Community.





Mayank Kumar Shyam  
 Untitled  
 Acrylic & Ink on Paper  
 20.5 x 27.5 inches, each  
 INR 84,000/-, each  
 2023

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS





Mayank Kumar Shyam  
Untitled  
Acrylic & Ink on Paper  
35.5 x 28 inches  
2023  
INR 1,55,000/-





Mayank Kumar Shyam  
Untitled  
Acrylic & Ink on Paper  
35.5 x 28 inches  
INR 1,55,000/-  
2023

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS



# WARLI

**Warli paintings** come from a tribal community along the foothills of Sahyadhri mountains in the Thane district of Maharashtra, India. Primarily practised by the women of the community, the Warli style was not recognised as an artform until the 1970s, even though it has been in practice since centuries. It performs the social function of recording important events and transmitting local stories pictorially, amongst its most striking features are the exuberant, swirling geometric patterns inspired by nature, like circle for the sun and the moon, triangle for trees and mountains and square for sacred enclosures. With the brown mud walls consisting of cow dung as a background, the figures and motifs were contoured by the austere white paint, however the practice has now shifted contemporary media like treated canvas and paper. Warli art consists of clear cut lines, is relatively minimalistic, secular in subject and highly imaginative in composition. One of the most celebrated artists, Jivya Soma Mashe, also known as the master of movement and geometry, was the first man to take on a female-dominated tradition. In his work he captures the constant cyclical movement of life and is inspired by folklore and other stories narrated to children. His sons, **Sadashiv Mashe** and **Balu Mashe**, whose works are featured here, carry the tradition forward have shown with various galleries across the world.

# BALU JIVYA MASHE

**Balu Jivya Mashe** is a Warli artist and also the son of the renowned Warli artist Jivya Soma Mashe. Their community is a largely agricultural one and the tradition is to paint the mud walls of houses especially during harvest season and auspicious occasions. A largely female oriented activity, it has been taken up by the men of the tribe in a commercial sense of the practice. Balu's pictorial style is rooted in the tradition of Warli with intricate, rhythmic forms representing the complexities of the world around him. The artist has exhibited alongside his father and elder brother, Sada Shiv Mashe.



Balu Jivya Mashe  
Fishermen  
Acrylic and Rice Paste on raw canvas  
71.5 x 52 inches  
2025  
INR 5,90,000/-





Balu Jivya Mashe  
Wedding Chowk  
Acrylic and Rice Paste on raw canvas  
48 x 60 inches  
2025  
INR 4,25,000/-





Balu Jivya Mashe

Fishermen

Acrylic and Rice Paste on raw canvas

47 x 36 inches

2025

INR 3,25,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS





Balu Jivya Mashe

Fishermen

Acrylic and Rice Paste on raw canvas

43 x 36.5 inches

2025

INR 3,25,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS



# HAZARIBAGH

## **Khovar Paintings**

Khovar is the marriage art of the tribals and scheduled castes of Hazaribagh living in hill villages and agricultural valleys. Khovar or the comb-cut art is done during the marriage season (May-June). This technique consists of applying a ground coat of manganese black earth and letting it dry, after which a wet slip of white Kaolin earth is applied and cut or scraped off in various designs or motifs with a plastic or bamboo comb, or with the four fingers of the hand. The under layer is of a stark contrast with the upper layer, usually black and white. Khovar art is intrinsically similar to great wall painting traditions and trace itself to the prehistoric rockart of Hazaribagh. The upper valley of the river Damodar in Jharkhand is almost exclusively the last remaining stronghold of Khovar art in the eastern India.

## **Sohrai Paintings**

Sohrai is the harvest art celebrated during the winter season (Oct.-Nov.) by almost all tribes in Jharkhand. and is the sister festival in the great seasonal calendar which coincides with Diwali. The great Sohrai tradition of painting is painted with red, black, yellow and white earth colours and crimson from haematite (iron oxide), and using cloth swabs or chewed twigs of the local Saal forest tree used for brushing their teeth (called datwan) by the villagers. Many of the designs may be compared with prehistoric rock art and pottery markings and prehistoric seal motifs from Harappa. Sohrai is intrinsically similar to great wall painting traditions and trace itself to the prehistoric rockart of Hazaribagh. The upper valley of the river Damodar in Jharkhand is almost exclusively the last remaining stronghold of Sohrai art in the eastern India.



Hazaribagh  
Natural earth ochre colors on cloth  
Artwork Size: 44 x 54 inches  
INR 1,60,000/-



Hazaribagh  
Natural earth ochre colors on cloth  
Artwork Size: 40 x 56 inches  
INR 1,60,000/-



Hazaribagh  
Natural earth ochre colors on cloth  
Artwork Size: 38 x 56 inches  
INR 1,60,000/-



# MATA NI PACHEDI

**Mata Ni Pachedi** is also known as the Kalamkari of Gujarat for its aesthetic semblance and similar use of pen made out of bamboo. 'Mata ni Pachedi', literally means 'behind the Mother goddess'. Relevant patterns and motifs are employed on cloth that are used as a backdrop to the idol that is worshipped. The practice began when the members of nomadic Vaghri community were discouraged from entering temples. They resorted to creating their own shrines with paint, mineral colours and block prints on cloth. The goddess occupies the center while mountains, animals, trees, rivers and natural flora and fauna surround it.

Even though the use of colour was limited in olden days, in recent times, Mata ni Pachedi paintings are available in many hues and have gathered the attention of collectors from around the world. This form of artwork equates to a subaltern or alternative narrative where a community rises to develop its own rituals having been excluded from the mainstream. The need to preserve the likes of such endangered artforms is crucial. Artist Sanjay Chitara who takes after his father to carry the tradition forward, belongs to one of the last families still practicing this style.

# SANJAY MANUBHAI CHITARA

**Sanjay Chitara** hails from the capital city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat. He was born in 1978 to the Vaghri community, into a family that has been upholding the tradition of painting the Mata ni Pachedi from more than 10 decades . As a young boy, he grew up seeing his father paint and was fascinated by the block prints and mineral colours used on cloth. He started painting at the age of twelve, as his father's assistant.

Derived from the Kalamkari style of paintings, the method involves drawing on a cotton cloth with a stick made from a date plant using natural dyes. The motif of an austere goddess is usually at the centre, with details of mountains, animals, trees, rivers and natural flora and fauna immersed in it. Originally, the cloth composed of only two colours – red and black, and was hung behind the holy idol of the goddess. Today, a Mata ni Pachedi painting has become a collector's delight for display, and fashioned in many-hued variants. Chitara and his kin are among the five families in the Vaghiri, or Devi Pujak, clan to practice this art form, which has been passed down the generations for 300 years.

The colour mediums in painting this work of art are all natural and made from natural products. Yellow is derived from mango or turmeric, orange from the henna plant, blue from indigo, black from iron water and so on, through a carefully designed, meticulous process. Black and brown are prominent colours. All colours have a symbolic religious significance. The process involves treatment of the cloth and application of different colours in different stages and is a long and detailed one. Sanjay received the National Award from President Abdul Kalam in 2000, while his brother Vasant received it in 2001 and his father Manubhai received the National Award in 2004. In 2009, Manubhai received the Shilp Guru award for master craftsmen from the President of India.





Sanjay Manubhai Chitara Untitled  
Mineral and vegetable colors on cloth  
57 x 82 inches  
2023  
INR 3,00,000/-





Sanjay Manubhai Chitara

Untitled

Mineral and vegetable colors on cloth

53 x 78 inches

2023

INR 2,85,000/-

# TRADITIONAL BRONZES

**Bhuta** in Sanskrit means spirit. Set in an ancient, pre-Hindu folk tradition, **Bhuta masks** are used for worship in the Tulu Nadu region of Karnataka. It involves a religious ceremony called bhuta kola, where an oracle or a priest channels the invoked spirit via performance, who then interacts with its audience by answering questions or solving quarrels. A similar custom called, Theyyam, is practised in the North Malabar region of Kerala where ritual objects, metals masks and ornaments are placed in a sthana after the ceremony and offerings are made. The masks are usually carved in wood or sculpted in bronze. The bhuta representation is primarily in totemic forms of Panjurli (pig or boar), Pilichamundi (tiger), Nandikona (bull) bhutas, or portrayals acquired from the Hindu pantheon, like, Shiva's attendants or ganas and Maisandaya, a deity in the form of a bull, worshipped by agrarian communities. Bhuta ceremonies vary across regions and involve a highly charged atmosphere where ancient narrative legends or Paadannas are recited by a woman of the community. The thick metal alloys of the masks make them resistant to the elements of fire, water, and air. This ritual is believed to provide protection against invaders and robbers, elements of fire, storms, flooding, drought, disease and to assure the fertility of the soil, livestock, and human experience.





Varaha Mask

Bronze

Height – 26 inches

Width – 13 inches

Thickness – 3.7 inches

Late Period

INR 2,30,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS



Varaha Mask

Bronze

Height – 13 inches

Width – 13 inches

Thickness – 4.5 inches

Late Period

INR 2,00,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS





Varaha Mask

Bronze

Height – 12 inches

Width – 13 inches

Thickness – 3.8 inches

Late Period

INR 2,00,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS





Varaha Mask

Bronze

Height – 11 inches

Width – 9.8 inches

Thickness – 4.3 inches

Late Period

INR 2,10,000/-

GST, SHIPPING, CRATING AND INSTALLATION EXTRA AS PER ACTUALS



Breastplate  
Bronze  
Height – 26 inches  
Width – 18 inches  
Thickness – 5.6 inches  
Late Period

INR 3,20,000/-

This stunning antique tribal piece is known as a **Breastplate**, exquisitely hand etched and sculpted from bronze. It has been used in many south Indian ritual performances. It features detailed neck adornments. A rare collector's piece. Approximately 30 to 40 years old. It is beautifully decorated with intricate patterns. Big enough to guard jewels & secrets. This type of bronze breastplate worn by Male dancers in Kerala to take on the female form. The plate is modeled as a bejewelled female torso with exposed breasts. The body is encircled with a scroll and leaf border. The bronze has developed a wonderful aged brown/dark green patina with patches of cuprite with possibly some residue of previous color. The breast plate was worn by dancers to impersonate a female goddess during rituals.





Bull Head, Bronze , Height – 16 inches, Width – 9 inches , Late Period, INR 2,00,000

This **bronze Bull Head**, a precious collectible is a Maisandaya. Maisandaya also referred to as Nandikona is the divine spirit of a bull worshipped as a part of the Bhuta Kola. It is worshipped usually by the agrarian communities of the Tulu land (Parts of South Karnataka and North Kerala) as a gesture to thank its contribution to the agriculture. Maisandaya is believed to be a voiceless spirit.



# MADHUBANI

Rooted in its ceremonial character, Mithila (Madhubani) paintings were made by women as daily and cyclical rituals— to celebrate weddings or to commemorate important festivals and household events. These paintings, which were initially done on walls and later, through Governmental intervention transferred to paper, symbolized prosperity and fertility, becoming catalysts of acts of worship, community building and generational wealth.

The region of Mithila extended from the northern border of India-Nepal till the South of Bihar including districts of Madhubani, Darbhanga and nearby regions. Mithila people could recite the whole epics in their native language through the oral learning traditions, even without formal training. Scenes from Indian epics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Gita Govinda* can be observed repeatedly in Mithila paintings, along with various depictions of gods and goddesses— as the artists were most familiar with these subjects. They adorned their gods with their own choice of colours, stylised floral motifs, headgears, earrings and crafted diverse figural representations.



Anmana Devi  
Untitled (*Raas*)  
Pigment on paper  
Artwork Images: 22 x 30 inches  
INR 1,85,000/-





Chandrakala Devi  
Untitled (Gajlaxmi)  
Pigment on paper  
Artwork Images: 17.2 x 15 inches  
INR 1,85,000/-





Hira Devi  
Untitled (*Vishnu and Laxmi on elephant*)  
Pigment on paper  
Artwork Images: 30 x 22.1 inches  
INR 1,00,000/-





Bacchi Devi  
Untitled (*Five headed Shiv*)  
Pigment on paper  
Artwork Images: 28.1 x 22.1 inches  
INR 1,00,000/-





Ginni Devi  
Untitled  
Pigment on paper  
Artwork Images: 30 x 22 inches  
INR 80,000/-





Unknown Artist (Att. to Baua Devi)

Untitled (*Nag kanya*)

Pigment on paper

Artwork Images: 29.5 x 21.4 inches

INR 1,85,000/-

For inquiries, please write to us [art@thequorumclub.com](mailto:art@thequorumclub.com)

