

GOND CHITRAKATHA


Painted Songs and Stories of
Pardhan Gond Tribe

Swapnesh Samaiya
Toy & Game Design
Guide : Amit Sinha



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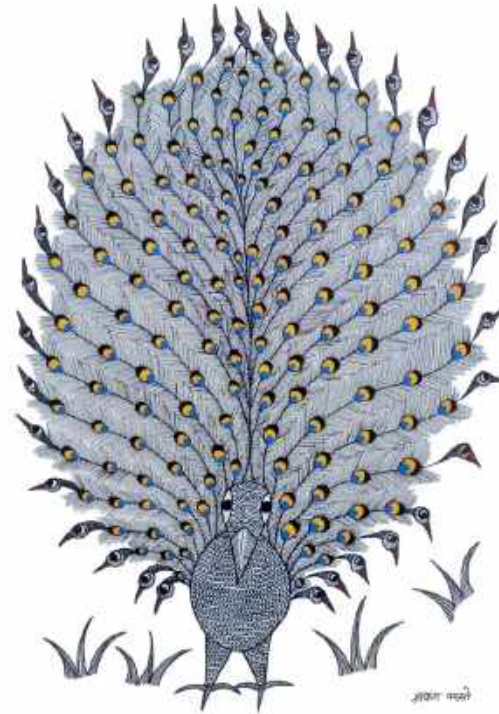
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Swapnesh Samaiya • Toy & Game Design • 2015

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Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude towards all the members of the Pardhan Gond community and the people of the village Patangarh and Garkhamatta who permitted me to take a peek into their life and culture.

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Introduction

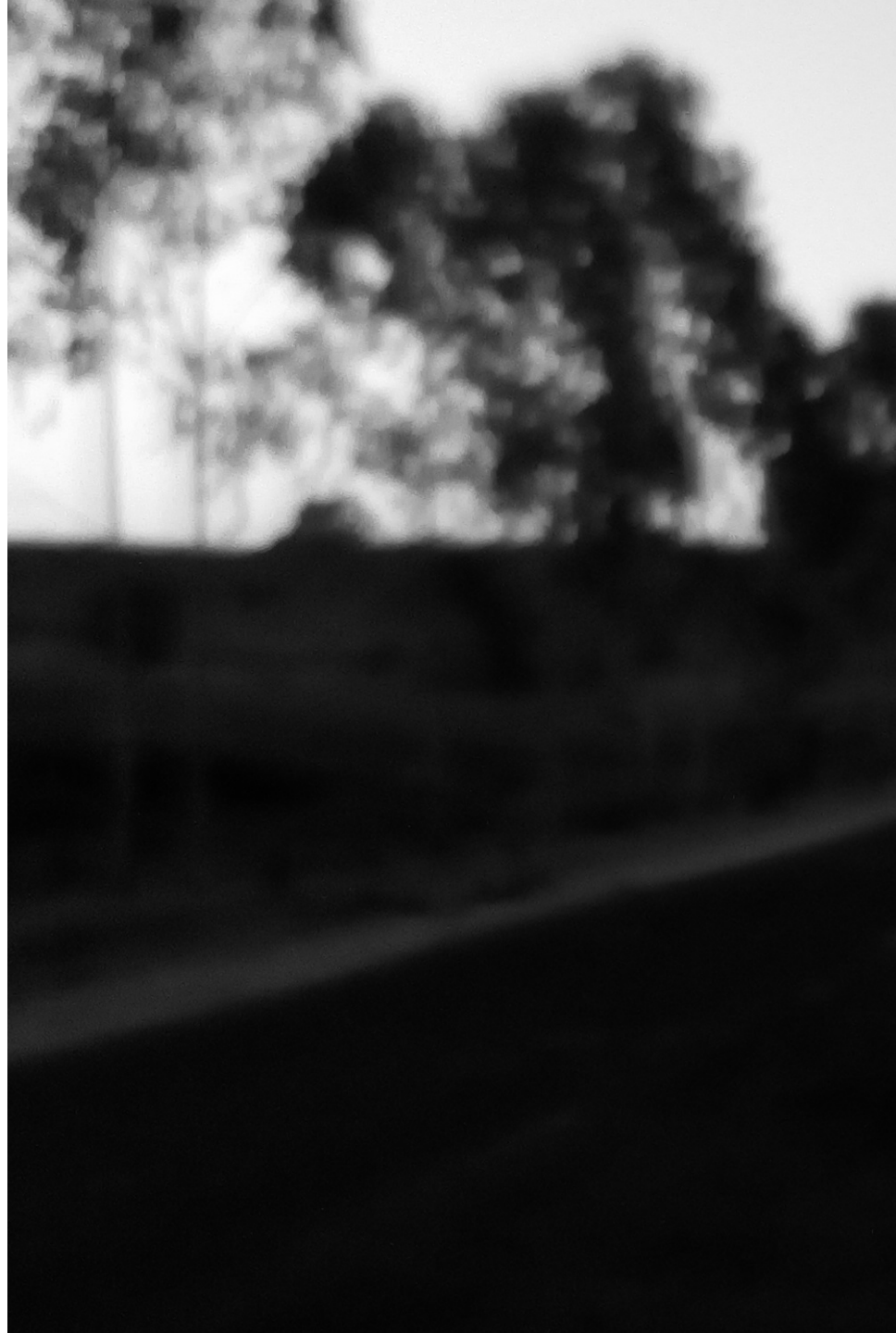
This document is a part of craft documentation course done at National Institute of Design.

It is an attempt to illustrate the life, culture and art of pardhan gonds who live in the small village of Patangarh and Garkhamatta, near Amarkantak in the hilly area of Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh. It touches the relationship of the pardhan gond community with their environment, people and craft in two parts.

First part covers the environment, history and origin of the tribe & sub-tribe, culture and religious belief system. It bring to light the lifestyle, habits and the community they live in.

The second part of the document covers the life, paintings and other crafts of young pardhan artists who still live in the viallge, history and nuances of making tribal paintings, cultural and religious significance of art. And In the end, the user, market and organizations associated with the artefact they make.

Old men, in their moments of leisure impart their traditional knowledge and ideas in the form of folktales and myths.
- S. C. Roy {First Indian ethnographer}







The Art Village

Patangarh



Village Pond across the main road.

Patangarh is a small village in Karanjiya tehsil of dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, It is situated 55km away from Dindori, which is both district and sub-district headquarters of Patangarh Mal village. According to Census 2011 information, total geographical area of village is 535.57 hectares and total population of 866 peoples which includes 409 males and 457 females. This village has 121 children in the age group of 0-6 years. Among them 56 are boys and 65 are girls. There are about 213 houses in Patangarh Mal village.

M.P. state highway no 22 divides the village in two parts one side is a pond, a hand pump and few houses, which fulfils the water needs of the village, other side of the road is a small road which goes upwards in the hilly area to the main village of patangarh. Villagers have to go all the way down across the road to take water from the pond or handpump, which makes the water valuable. The local people refer to patangarh as patan only. Although patan is also another very small village gram panchayat comes under patangarh village.



Women carrying water from the pond.

The region covering narwada valley and satpura plateau is a tribal area where mostly gond, baigha and their sub-tribes lives. The major population of pardhan gond community resides in patangarh, sonpuri which is just next to patangarh and garkamatta which is about 15km from patangarh. The village has a primary school just beside the

main road, and a ration shop from where they buy most of their food supplies.

For the outside world, patangarh is mostly known as the village of legendary pardhan painter Jagan Singh Shyam, or the village where famous British anthropologist verrier elwin stayed from the fourth decade of the last century to the sixth.

Location of Patangarh

22°44'26.7"N 81°28'08.8"E

22.740756, 81.469101

Location of Garkhamatta

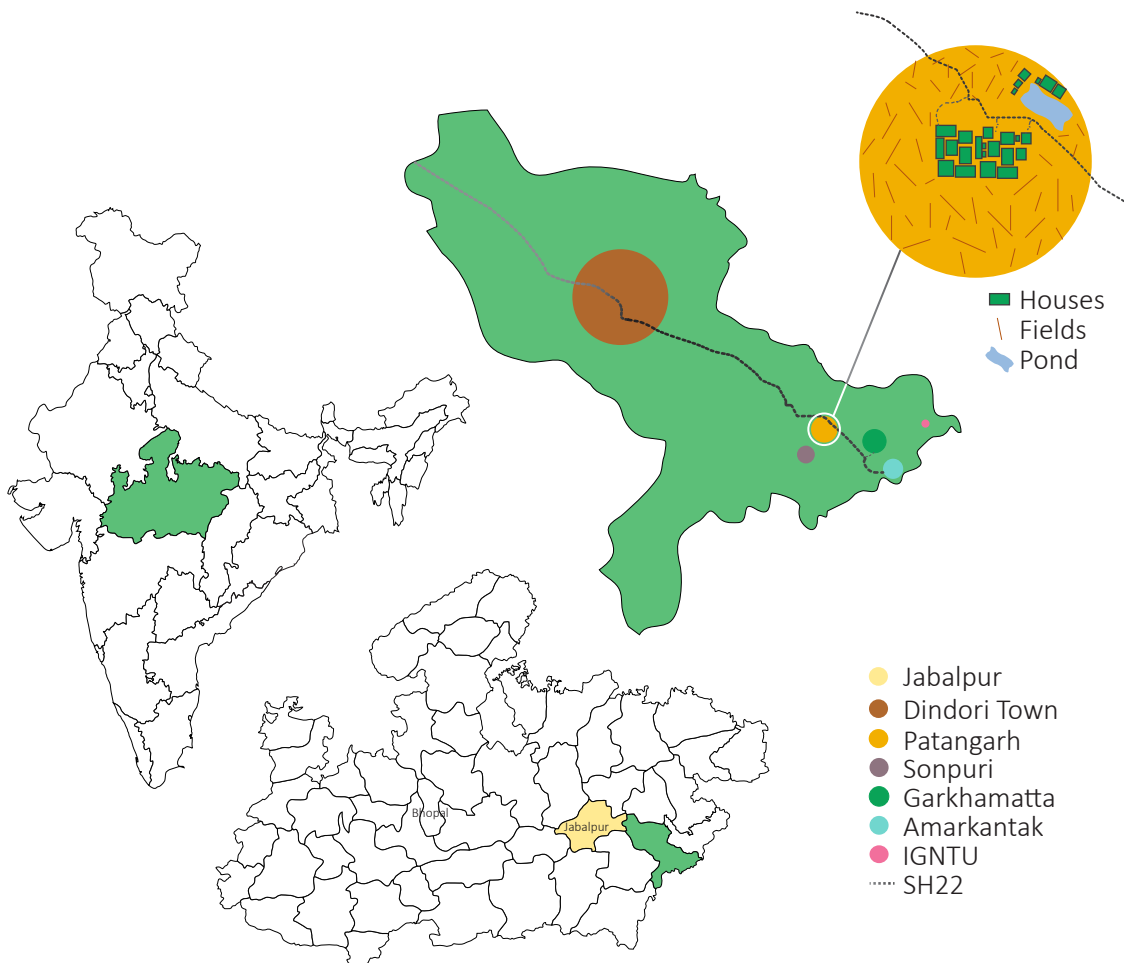
22°44'52.6"N 81°35'23.3"E

22.747949, 81.589811

How To Reach

By Road

MP state highway 22 connects Jabalpur to Patangarh via dindori. Patangarh is around 182km from Jabalpur and 55km from dindori, There are various state transport buses and private luxury buses from Jabalpur to Amarkantak which goes to Dindori and Patangarh.



By Train

Jabalpur, a major western central railway junction easily connects to Mumbai, Delhi, Bhopal and all the major railway stations of India.

By Air

Jabalpur is connected by domestic airlines to Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Pune and Bhopal.



State highway 22, goes to patangarh bus stand



Patangarh Bus Stand



River Stream Near Village Patangarh



Village Patangarh





A mud house in Patangarh



Pond or Talaab of Patangarh



Neighbors houses in Patangarh



Mandir just beside the main road



Ration Shop

Lifestyle

Family



Family Kids
Patangarh. December 2016.

Family is the smallest social unit. The Gond family is an unilateral social group consisted mainly of parents and their children both male and female. Only unmarried daughters are regarded as members of the family. However, in the recent past the joint family system is fast disappearing and individual family system took its place. The Gonds use the term “pari” to express their group. The clan among the Gonds is a unilateral group consisted of family members of which bear the same clan-name. Members of the clan believed that they have been descended from a common ancestor. The clan being patrilineal a man passes on his clan name to his children. A woman keeps her father’s clan-name till she is married. All the same a married woman is not regarded as a member of her father’s clan. It is only the male who automatically takes the patronymic on birth, preserved it till death and transmits it to his children. It’s a permanent feature of the Gond community.[3]

Today at least one member of the family in patangarh is a painter/artist and everything in the village revolves around art.

Clothing And Accessories

The male members of Gond society wore dhotis that came up to their knees, a vest, and shawl over the shoulder and a turban on their head. They wore silver bangles on their wrists, wearing bangles was a sign of good fortune,



Women with her kids sitting outside the house in the wintes of Garkhamatta, December 2016.

a locket around their neck and earrings. The women wore six to eight yard saris reaching to the knees and tied with a belt. The women loved jewellery. The ornaments were not only meant for aesthetic purpose but they were also protective gadgets. Women wear a silver bangle on their upper part of the hand it is called 'Nagmori'. They also tattooed their bodies. Tattoos were seen as true jewellery that remained with the women even after they died and were said to please the Gods. The women believed that tattooing beautified the body as well as made it healthy. However, the aesthetic, cultural and magical values, connected with the traditional dress, ornaments and tattoo marks, are also fast disappearing due to the pervasive interaction with other cultural groups through market centres, town and developmental activities. Partial nudism no longer prevails, and the extensive use of ornaments and tattoo marks in place of clothing no longer exists, as in the past. Now in place of lion-cloth, half-long cloth(lungi) to cover the waist, old fashioned half-shirt, and backless bodice(choli) to cover the torso, modern dresses purchased ready-made from weekly markets and towns are worn. Males wear full-sized long-cloths and shirts and women wear coloured eight yards of long cloth and blouses



Gond Women in Garkhamatta wearing nagori.

to cover most of themselves. The modern type of coats, jackets, sweaters, mufflers and saris are worn as ceremonial dresses of marriages, festivals and fairs. The women admire ornaments made of silver and gold but wear them more sparsely than in the past. Tattooing is neither considered important to decorate the body nor to express religious and magical values. Young girls dislike large number of tattoo marks on their bodies and they get tattooed tribal identification marks on their face and a few marks on their wrists, etc. just to add to their beauty – unlike the aged women on their bodies. Thus, the aesthetic, religious, cultural and magical sense and values, the concepts of beauty and elegance in terms of animism, and simple life, which used to be exhibited through clothing, ornaments and tattooing, have faded from among the Gonds in the dynastic process of change.[3]

Food Habits

Pardhans are non-vegetarian by nature as they always used to hunt for food in the forest, Early in the morning, they brush their teeth with tender stems of the neem tree, which they pick from the tree. They work hard in the farms which demand lot of physical energy which comes from a good healthy, protein full food therefore they take meals three times a day. In the early morning they take heavy breakfast in which usually consist of 'Tej' a kind of khichdi, then they go to the fields work there till the afternoon and then come back for lunch which consist mainly of bhaji's, saag or dal with either rice or roti, they prefer rice over roti, as it is quick to make and easy to eat.



Tuar Dal Plant



Lauki
(Bottle Gourd)



Rooftop of a house in garkhamatta

They cook locally grown seasonal bhajji, usually they prefer 'chane ki bhaji' and 'tuar ki dal', as they have their own farms of it so it is fresh and local, they also grow 'lauki' and 'kumbh-da' on the rooftop which takes a lot of time to grow. They buy basic ingredients like potato and onions from the local market but most of the vegetables they try to grow on their own. Breakfast and lunch they prepare together in the morning only, as women also needs to work either in the fields or in house. When they come in the evening after second work shift, 4-6 people in a group gather to a place and drink 'mahua' (country liquor), they say it

removes all the burden, stress and tiredness of the body and fulfils the mind, mahua is integrated part of the gond culture and life in general, One day in the evening when they all were sitting inside a room drinking mahua, an artist from garkamatta named santosh maravi told me that "other drinks might intoxicate the body but mahua intoxicates nail and hair also that is why we don't drink any outside english alcohol, we only drink mahua, which is the strongest and purest form of alcohol,". After a round of mahua they take dinner around eight in the night which they make fresh in the evening, dinner sometimes may have nan-veg.

In non-veg they eat anything which is available, usually they eat fish, chicken and mutton as a common non-veg dishes as told by a pardhan. A typical pardhan gond thali of a dinner consist of rice with a saag (curry veg/non-veg) and a bowl of dal or bhaji.



Daily meal in a pardhan gond house

Males of the family have the priority of offering the food, female mainly cook and serve, before putting food in the thali, they give a big empty bowl and water to wash hands, it is considered to be a bad habit if you go out, stand or talk much while having food, leaving anything on your plate is considered to be a disrespectful act to the god of food.

They always offer food first to guest, then the family member eats, one day when I was late at night, they waited for me to come, they served me and then only they ate, they knew i am a vegetarian so they kept my food separate and arrange everything they could to make me feel homely and comfortable.



Kitchen with a Chulha

Food Myths And Rituals

They have a ritual of offering of some cooked grains to Chulha Devi who is present in the chulha (stove) and it is only then that the person who cooks serves food to others. If this order is disrupted at a particular place, Chulha Devi, by whose grace taste enters food cooked in the house, becomes angry. If in the process of cooking, the bride (cook) becomes apprehensive, and she tastes the food, then Chulha Devi either turns crooked the hand that takes the food to the tongue, or else disfigures the mouth that had the temerity to taste food before making an offering to Chulha Devi. After that only cooked food should reach members of the household or the guests. They believe that whoever eats in a Pardhan or in another Gond household eats food that has been approved of by divinity. That is why they have Chulha Devi in their kitchen.

A proverb says, 'The Gond considers himself a king as long as he has a pot of grain in the house,' meaning, while he has food for a day or two he will not work for any more.

Mahua Brewing Process

Mahua flowers are brought from the forest or from the local market, keep it in a big black pot for two to three days for fermentation, then they put in on a terracotta stove called 'chullah', the whole setup of brewing 'daru' (the country liquor) as they called from mahua flowers consist of three pot system kept on top of each other, the bottom one contains the fermented flowers, the upper one is full of water and the middle one is empty under which a bowl is kept to store the falling drops of the alcohol. Middle pot is made out of black clay while the other two, top and bottom pots can be of steel or any other metal. All the three pots joints are packed tightly either with an old cloth or with lape (mix of clay, mud and cow dung) so that no vapours will get out of the pots, and create proper pressure. When heat is given from bottom, water vapours also called 'paseena' containing juicy flavour of mahua falls on the bowl. It is then kept in open for cooling, after it get cooled, it is stored in a glass bottle so that they can drink it later. The remaining dried flowers after extracting juice are used for other purposes.



1.1 - Freshly picked mahua flowers.



Mahua flowers kept for fermentation



Villagers drinking mahua in the afternoon



Process of brewing mahua

Transport

They used to use bullock cart for travelling from one place to other while for carrying stuff within village or from fields to village they use something called 'Sikka' which is a bamboo stick with strong threads hanging from both side, in which things like crops, water containers, small animals can be tied, feri wallah also use sikka because they travel from place to place carrying huge amount of stuff to sell. It is not rare to see motorized vehicle in the village, many of the families and individuals now have their own petrol and diesel vehicle, which they use to go to other villages or cities whenever required, usually they prefer public transport for long distance as it is much more cheaper than personal vehicle. Most of the people of the village are co-operative and travel together, provide lift whenever required.



Motorcycle Parked in front of a house in Garkhamatta



Villagers carrying crop straw on sikka



Men going on bicycle

Play



Kids playing with his pulling toy handmade with plastic bottle and caps.



Kid playing with an old bicycle tire by rolling it with a wooden stick and running behind it.



Kids making and eating popcorn using the ashes of crops/wood burn for heating in winters.



A pulling cart made out of old plastic container and cow dung wheels.



Kids playing cricket on the field.

Living Environment

Village

The local group is a distinct social unit. It comprises a number of families, living in a common settlement, tola or village, which perform certain ceremonies, functions for their common welfare. This local group proves to be a bigger unit than the family itself. The people of the local group are helping for one another, villagers serves as an economic, social and religious unit and on all the occasions the whole settlement is found of one or more than one clan or lineage, the whole settlement is bound by a common link of co-villagers. The general atmosphere if the village community is democratic and all the members who constitute it participate on the basis of equality in working out their destinies.

The patangarh village is on a hilly region having most of the land as agriculture farms and animals such as hen, goat, cows and dogs roaming around. Currently a cemented road has been made which goes from the main road up till sonpuri village which is a neighbour village to patangarh. The road, houses and structures in the remote village of garkhamatta are still old and made of mud and stones.

After the popularization of the art of gond painting the patangarh has become a village of importance for government also, as it represent the culture, art and craft of the state, the



government has started given special treatment to this village apart from all the other nearby villages, patangarh has a art centre called “Hast Kala Bhavan” which was open by the state government to promote and train new and emerging pardhan gond artists so that they can pursue it as a profession.



Door of a house made from bamboo.



Garkhamatta Village Road



Women working in field



View of Fields from the village



Garkhamatta Primary School and Ration Shop



House entrance in Garkhamatta

Houses

Most of the houses they make with hands using mud, cow dung, bamboo, clay and other locally available material, structure of the house seems pretty much same as the normal houses in villages with khappara on the roof and low height doors. Gond houses are beautifully decorated with digna and bhittichitra during weddings and other festive occasions. They paint the inner and outer walls of their house with Digna which is the traditional geometric pattern painting and bhittichitra which is a composition of likenesses of animals, leaves and flowers. Vegetable and mineral dyes are used for colour –flowers, leaves, clay, stones, rice and turmeric. Brush are handmade made from a neem or babul twig and a rag. Not all the people in the community know the art of making mud houses and painting; those who

know help others in the making. Due to less time and skills it is not uncommon today to see concrete houses with two to three floors. Although remote villages like garkamatta, still has those traditional mud houses with wood-ed doors and engraving/painting on the walls. The first crop/grains that they harvest from the farm is kept inside the entrance wall of the kitchen while building the house as an offering to annapoorna or chulha devi (goodness of grain), they believe that this protect their kitchen and gives 'barakkat' or prosperity to the kitchen and the family. At the center of the house or outside an 'aangan' is there which provide openness to the house, a small toilet has been built in the back side of the house by the government, but because of water problems the toilet is also not functional, they

need to go out either in the fields or to the river around 1.5kms for excretional activities. They only get the amount of water what's needed as it requires lot of man power to store and bring the water from the source, usually women of the family carry the water and do the arrangement of it for rest of the family.



Women carrying water.



Aangan of a house in patangarh.



Cow Dung stored inside house.



Parasti's father at the entrance of the kitchen.



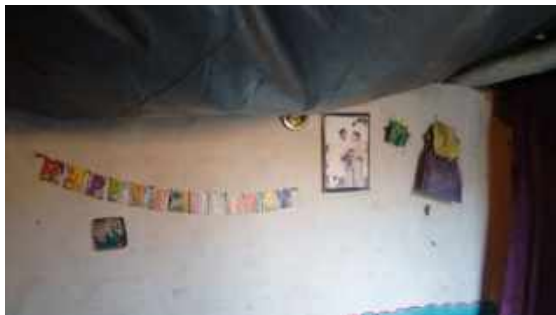
A typical mud house with khappar rooftop and wooden door in garkhamatta.



A woman applying cow dung paste in her house



Outside space where they spend most of the time.



B'day decoration on the wall of a room



Aangan and varandha



A house with a well in garkhamatta



A Painting on the front wall of Chandrakali's house.



Slogans written on the walls



Newly built concrete house with a toilet.



Post office, Patangarh.



A cracked mud wall of a house

Doors



Haat

The haat is a local market, temporarily setup on selected dates at the sub-urban places for the people from small villages to buy and sell all kind of daily supplies goods and entertainment things like vegetables, soaps & shampoo, cloths, handmade accessories, mobile phones, video games and vehicles. Haat has a fixed day for each location and people from nearby villages know when and where the haat will be in any particular day. Small villages also organises haat or mela, which happened once or twice a year, it is a chance for them to proudly present thier things to sell and provide an authentic experience of what they have. Many rides and games are available for children's amusement and entertainment. Handmade toys made out of local materials are also pretty interesting and common to see in a typical village mela, although most of the handmade things even in remote villages are being replaces by plastic Chinese toys and utility products, may be because of easy supply chain or lack of people's interest in making their own stuff with hands.

These market places are colourful and full of excitement, because it is only a one time chance to see, buy or sell stuff in one the these haat, which make it exclusive and people who live in remote villages, don't have easy access to towns or other urban markets so this is the only place to get their daily need things and the only means for entertainment. Haat is one of the main commercial platform for livelihood, many people do this on daily basis, they keep on shifting their shops/stalls from one village to other and sell their stuff, these people are called "feriwala" which means the person who goes from places to place to trade. The nearest weekly haat in patangarh is a village Gorakhpur, which is also a common place for villagers to buy stationary and daily supplies. Kanjariya is the nearest big town market for the villagers of garkamatta and patangarh.

Hast Kala Bhavan

The centre provide training and workshops to the emerging artists of the village who want to pursue the art of painting as a profession, the number of participants in the workshop is tremendously increasing day by day as they can see live examples of successful stories of people who went to places from their own village, which gives them a hope of doing something of more importance then just doing the same old routine business of agriculture and farming. Teachers from city like Bhopal, Indore, Dindori come to take workshop for few weeks to train them. Villagers also organize a gathering of all the artists to show and discuss about their work, especially when someone from outside comes to see the work in a hope that they can sell paintings from the village itself.



Livelihood And Occupation

Agriculture

With the loss of patronage, the Pardhans had to turn to agriculture. As most of them were extremely poor, and did not own any land, they were forced into agricultural labour. Now their stories, their singing, their Bana could no longer sustain them. That is why the Bana became less of an instrument to play, and more of an object of worship. The tradition of patronage might have remained in practice to some little extent, but it was hardly enough to keep alive the fire in the Pardhan kitchens. The Pardhans are having to let go of their Bana. In its place now there is the ploughshare, the ox, hoe, spade, or metallic vessels. There is no practical significance of story-singing any more. Now the primary means of livelihood for pardhans is agriculture, most of the families are engaged in farming which require them to work in the fields all day long and almost all the members of the family work in the farms except kids. However, there is a substantial Gond tenantry, and a small number of proprietors remain, the majority have been ousted by Hindu moneylenders and liquor-sellers.



Men cutting crops in patangarh



Crops kept outside house in garkhamatta



Agriculture fields in garkhamatta

Painting

After the success of Jangarh, many youngster from the villages have started to take painting as a profession to support their livelihood, more and more pardhan of the village and nearby villages are moving from farming to painting, not only they get recognition and respect, they also have a freedom of expression and a means to preserve collective memories, which gives them inner peace and pleasure. Some of them get training from hasta kala kendra while some go to Bhopal to their relatives, live there for few months, do a kind of apprenticeship with senior artist and slowly start practising their own art and develop

their own style, some of them come back to village and work from there even though the chances of getting work and earning is more in the city. All the artist of the village know each other and their fellow/senior artist who live in bhopal, they keep going to Bhopal for showing work, learning new things and getting new work. It is not uncommon in the village to find internationally acclaimed artist sitting outside their house giving form to their ancestor's stories in these colourful paintings.



Artists busy in their routine work .

Hunting And Fishing

The primary occupation of the Gonds in former times was hunting and fishing, but their opportunities in this respect have been greatly circumscribed by the conservation of the land in Government forests, which was essential if it was not to become extinct, when the native shikaris had obtained firearms. Their weapons were until recently bows and arrows, but now Gond hunters usually have an old matchlock gun. They have several ingenious devices for trapping animals. It is essential for them to make a stockade round their patch cultivation fields in the forests, or the grain would be devoured by pig and deer. They also set traps across the forest paths frequented by animals.

Liquor makers/sellers

Brewing mahua and making country liquor is something which gonds have been doing since centuries, but today only few people make it and they sell it to others in the community or in the market. The whole process of making mahua from picking flowers from the forrest, segregation, fermenting, and brewing involves people which makes it a small business in itself. Some people have started doing this as a part time job, earning is not much from it but a act of service to the community which they enjoy.



Equipment used for grain segregation.



1.2 - Women Selling Mahua Drink

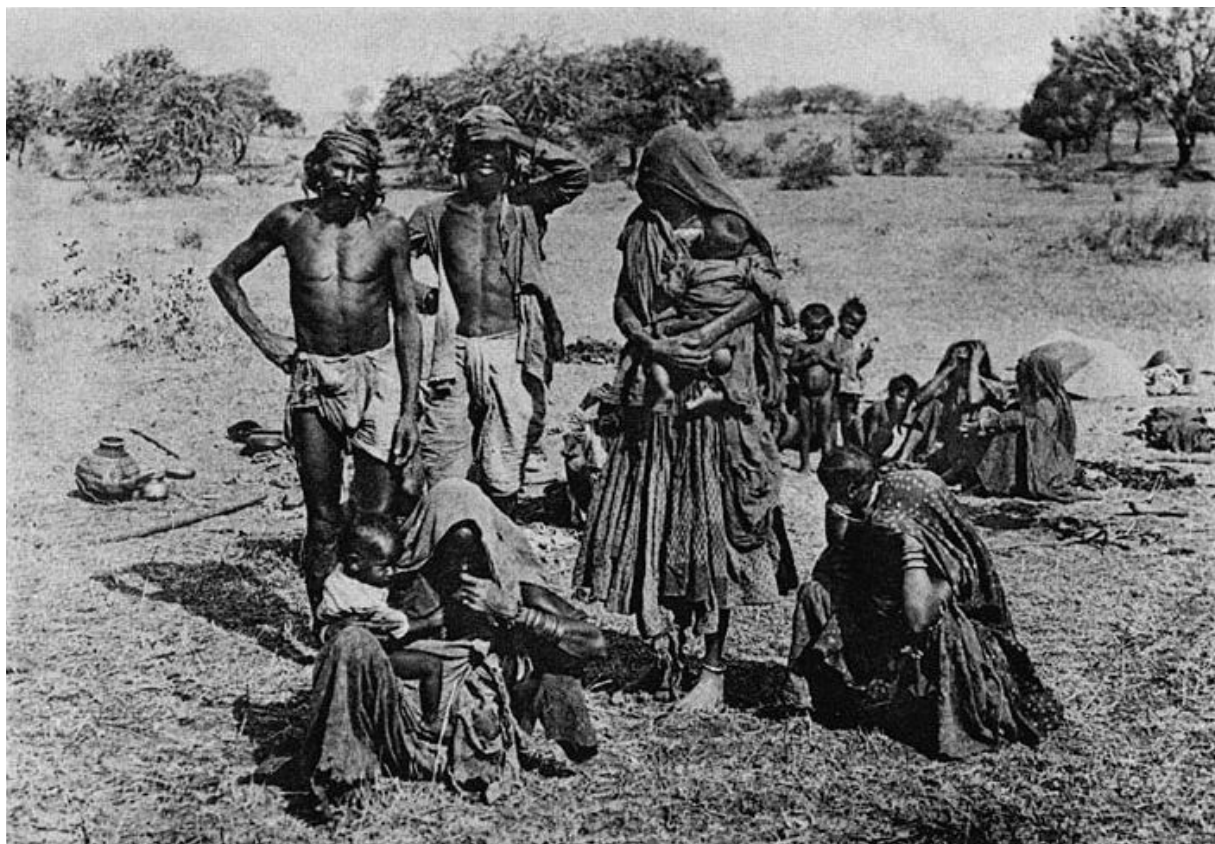
Government Jobs

Families who migrated to town or cities from forest, are in touch with the outside world, they get to know the importance of education in the bigger community they live in, so they encourage their children's to study as like in anyone in the cities, they prefer to go to good government colleges as there is a good provision of reservation for tribes. The major motivation for them to study is to get a government job, as they have always lived a life of uncertainty, a good government job at least give a financial security and a sense of respect in the community. Many gondies are now situated at reputed positions in different government departments. Watching their close ones shifting to cities, it also spark an ambition and dreams in them of becoming like them.

Some people who live and work in the village run local shops and supply daily usage material and provide different services to the villagers.



Local shop at night in patangarh.



2.0 - Gonds on a journey.

Gond Tribal Community

Introduction

The derivation of the word Gond is uncertain. It is the name given to the tribe by the Hindus or Muhammadans, as their own name for themselves is Koitur or Koi which means unclear. However some scholars believe that the word "Gond" comes from the Dravidian expression kond, meaning "the green mountain."

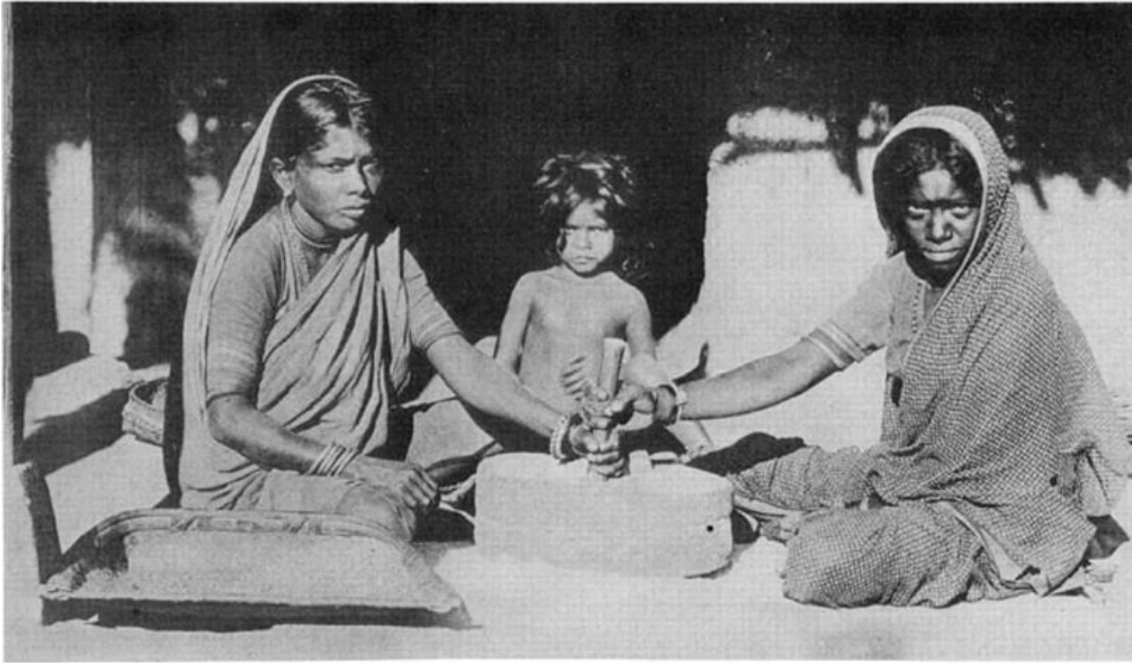
In the Central Provinces the Gonds occupy two main tracts. The first is the wide belt of broken hill and forest country in the centre of the Province, which forms the Satpura plateau, and is mainly comprised in the Chhindwara, Betul, Seoni and Mandla Districts of Mahdya Pradesh, with portions of several others adjoining them. And the second is the still wider and more inaccessible mass of hill ranges extending south of the Chhattisgarh plain, and south - west down to the Godavari, which includes portions of the three Chhattisgarh Districts, the Bastar and Ranker States, and a great part of Chanda. In Mandla the Gonds form nearly half the population, and in Bastar about two-thirds. There is, however, no District or State of the Province which does not contain some Gonds, and it is both on account of their numbers and the fact that Gond dynasties possessed a great part of its area that the territory of the Central Provinces was formerly known as Gondwana, or the country of the Gonds.

With a population of over 11 millions, Gonds are one of the largest tribal group in the world and largest in central india. Even though many gond communities have been fully accepted into the Hindu caste system, have adopted another name and have completely abandoned their original tribal ways of life. This tribe has a share of 13.45 per cent of the total scheduled tribes population of India. They are essentially a primitive tribal community involved in hunting and food gathering, pastoral occupations, agriculture, martial assignments, basic trade and commerce, herbal medicine as well as rulers of Middle India.



A Gond Women Cleaning Rice in Patangarh.

History And Origin



2.1 - Gond women grinding corn.

In the beginning there was water everywhere, and God was born in a lotus-leaf and lived alone. One day he rubbed his arm and from the rubbing made a crow, which sat on his shoulder ; he also made a crab, which swam out over the waters. God then ordered the crow to fly over the world and bring some earth. The crow flew about and could find no earth, but it saw the crab, which was supporting itself with one leg resting on the bottom of

the sea. The crow was very tired and perched on the crab's back, which was soft so that the crow's feet made marks on it, which are still visible on the bodies of all crabs at present. The crow asked the crab where any earth could be found. The crab said that if God would make its body hard it would find some earth. God said he would make part of the crab's body hard, and he made its back hard, as it still remains. The crab then dived to the bottom of

the sea, where it found Kenchna, the earth-worm. It caught hold of Kenchna by the neck with its claws and the mark thus made is still to be seen on the earth-worm's neck. Then the earth-worm brought up earth out of its mouth and the crab brought this to God, and God scattered it over the sea and patches of land appeared. God then walked over the earth and a boil came on his hand, and out of it Mahadeo and Parvati were born.

From Mahadeo's urine numerous vegetables began to spring up. Parvati ate of these and became pregnant gave birth to eighteen threshing-floors of Brahman gods and twelve threshing-floors of Gond gods. All the Gonds were scattered over the jungle. They behaved like Gonds and not like good Hindus, with lamentable results, as follows:

“Hither and thither all the Gonds were scattered in the jungle. Places, hills, and valleys were filled with these Gonds. Even trees had their Gonds. Whatever came across them they must needs kill and eat it; They made no distinction. If they saw a jackal they killed And ate it ; no distinction was observed ; they respected not antelope, sambhar and the like. They made no distinction in eating a sow, a quail, a pigeon, A crow, a kite, an adjutant, a vulture, A lizard, a frog, a beetle, a cow, a calf, a he- and she-buffalo, Rats, bandicoots, squirrels—all these they killed and ate. So began the Gonds to do. They devoured raw and ripe things ; They did not bathe for six months together; They did not wash their faces properly, even on dunghills they would fall down and remain. Such were the Gonds born in the beginning. A smell was spread over the jungle When the Gonds were thus disorderly behaved ; they became disagreeable to Mahadeva, Who said : " The caste of the Gonds is very bad ; I will not preserve them ; they will ruin my hill Dhawalgiri."

Mahadeo then determined to get rid of the Gonds. With this view he invited them all to a meeting. When they sat down Mahadeo made a squirrel from the rubbing of his body and let it loose in the middle of the Gonds. All the Gonds at once got up and began to chase it, hoping for a meal. The squirrel dodged about and ran away, and finally, directed by Mahadeo, ran into a large cave of Mount Dhawalgiri with all the Gonds after it. Mahadeo then rolled a large stone to the mouth of the cave and shut up all the Gonds in it. Only four remained outside, and they fled away to Kachikopa Lohagarh, or the Iron Cave in the Red Hill, and lived there. Meanwhile Parvati perceived that the smell of the Gonds, which had pleased her, had vanished from Dhawalgiri. She desired it to be restored and commenced a devotion. For six months she fasted and practised austerities.

Bhagwan (God) was swinging in a swing. He was disturbed by Parvati's devotion. He sent Narayan (the sun) to see who was fasting. Narayan came and found Parvati and asked her what she wanted. She said that she missed her Gonds and wanted them back. Narayan told Bhagwan, who promised that they should be given back. The yellow flowers of the tree Pahindi were growing on Dhawalgiri. Bhagwan sent thunder and lightning, and the flower

conceived. First fell from it a heap of turmeric or saffron. In the morning the sun came out, the flowerburst open, and Lingo was born. He had a diamond on his navel and a sandalwood mark on his forehead.

He climbed a needle-like hill, and from afar off he saw Kachikopa Lohagarh and the four Gonds. He came to them. They saw he was like them, and asked him to be their brother, then they were freed by their hero, Pahandi Kapar Lingar or Lingo. The ancestors emerged

from the cave in four groups, and this division laid the foundation for the structure of their society. Lingo divided all the Gonds into clans and made the oldest man a Pardhan or priest and founded the rule of exogamy.



2.2 - Gonds with their bamboo cart at market.

The Gond Kingdom

The first historically recorded Gond kingdoms came up in middle India's hilly region in the 14th and 15th century AD. The first Gond king was Jadurai, who deposed the Kalchuri Rajputs to grab the kingdom of Garha Mandla (modern Mandla and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh) between 1300 to 1789 AD. The most illustrious rulers in this dynasty were the iconic queen, Rani Durgavati and Hirde Shah, the first Gond king to adopt Islam.

The second kingdom of Deogarh (Chhindwada in M.P. and Nagpur in Maharashtra) was created by King Jatba in 1590 AD which lasted till 1796 AD. Around the same time as Deogarh, the Kherla (Baitul in Madhya Pradesh to Chikhaldara in Amravati district in Maharashtra) kingdom also came up in 1500 AD and remained for a century. Its first king, Narsingh Rai, who deposed a Rajput ruler, had love-hate relationship with the Rajput and Muslim rulers in his vicinity that attacked his fort due to its geographical accessibility.

However, the Gonds ruled over a large kingdom of middle India for many centuries and had developed their own social, religious, and cultural base during those long years. The document has tried to illustrate the same through social, religious, cultural and artistic aspects of the Gond tribal communities.



2.3 - Gond Raja Chakradhar Singh



2.4 - Old Gond palace at Garkha-Mandla.

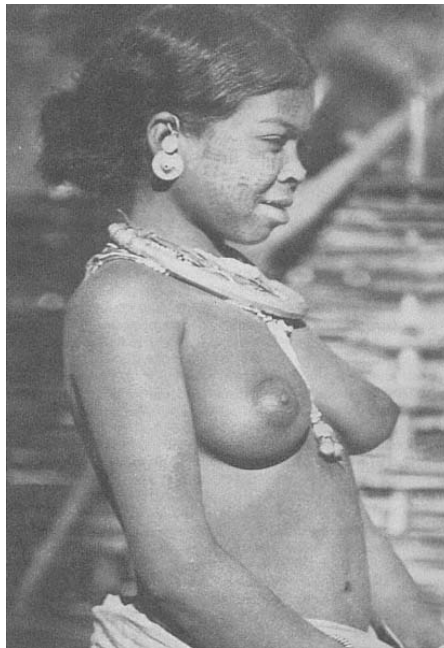


2.5 - Ravi Durgavati fort in Madan Mahel, Jabalpur.

Sub-tribe Community

The gonds are segregated either on territorial or hierarchial grounds. They are spread from mirzapur in U.P. to adilabad in telangana. The different gond tribes are subdivided into Raj-Gonds – the ruler class of the gonds. , Khato-la-Gonds - they take their name from the Khato-la state in Bundelkhand, which is said to have once been governed by a Gond ruler, but is no longer in existence. In Saugor they rank about equal with the Raj-Gonds and intermarry with them, but in Chhindwara it is said that ordinary Gonds despise them and will not marry with them or eat with them on account of their mixed descent from Gonds and Hindus. Dhur Gonds - The ordinary Gonds in most districts form one endogamous group, and are known as the Dhur or 'dust' Gonds, that is the common people. An alternative name conferred on them by the Hindus is Rawan-vansi or of the race of Rawan, the demon king of Ceylon, who was the opponent of Rama. There are several other small local subdivisions. The Koya Gonds Dadve/ Naik Gonds, Mokasi Gonds, Gaita Gonds, Koyas Gond, Amat Gond, Orria Gond, and so on. The Gonds of Bastar are divided into two groups, the Maria and the Muria. The Maria are the wilder, and are apparently named after the Mad, as the hilly country of Bastar is called. The Murias are the Gonds who live in the plains and are more civilised than the Marias.

One of the most popular practice among Gonds of Bastar is the 'Ghotul' system. In this system, the unmarried young boys and girls live together in separately made huts and allowed to intermingle and practice everything they desire. During this period they interact and enjoy themselves by participating in dancing, music, local story telling and sexual intercourse in a drunken mood.



2.6- Hill Maria woman with extensive face tattoo wearing a hollow necklace of white metal and silver ear-rings.

Older members help guide the younger members in how to behave and engage in sexual practices. However, sex is never forced upon the youth if they do not feel ready. If everything is fine and both of them are happy, they can get out of the Ghotul and marry.

Among gonds are several occupational castes such as the Agarias or ironworker, the Ojhas or soothsayers, Pardhans or priests or storytellers and minstrels, Solahas or carpenters, and Koilabhutis or dancers or prostitutes. These are principally sprung from the Gonds, though no doubt with an admixture of other low tribes. They are all independent tribe who have their own social structure in their respected territories. The government has constituted them as one of the 53 sub-tribes of gonds.



3.0 - Bana Player

Bardic Singers - Pardhan Gond

Stories of origin

“The Gonds were seven brothers. They sowed jute in the field. One day they saw a handsome young man galloping on his horse right through their field. The hooves were trampling the jute saplings. They pounced on the young man with their paitharis. The youngest brother was so scared that his stomach got upset. He went to the nearby ditch to relieve himself. The other six brothers chased the horseman. The field was quite big. At the edge of it was a Saja tree. Seeing the Gond brothers chasing him, the horseman went under the Saja tree and disappeared into it along with his horse. The Gonds saw him vanish into the tree. They instantly understood This is our Bada Dev who came riding through our field on his white horse. How unfortunate we are that we could not recognise him Now he is angry with us. He has disappeared into the Saja tree. How do we placate him. Together they began to reflect on this. They erected a platform under the Saja tree, offered raw lentils, sacrificed a white rooster, sprinkled liquor made from Mahua, folded their hands in prayer. Went on pleading But Bada Dev was angry. He did not come out of the Saja tree At this point the youngest brother turned up from the direction of the nullah. He found out what had happened, He said, I'll find a way. It might please Bada Dev. He went and felled a bough from a Khirsani tree. He made a one-stringed instrument from

the wood and playing on it, began to sing. The notes began to resound in the woods. In the song he began to sing praises of the glory of Bada Dev. Listening to the song Bada Dev was pleased and he made an appearance in the trunk of the Saja tree. He blessed the youngest brother by placing his hand on his head, whenever you sing my song playing this instrument, I'll make an appearance. This instrument of yours will be called 'Bana'. Bada Dev accepted everybody's offerings and once again vanished into the Saja tree”.

Since that time, the youngest brother came to be known as a 'Pardhan' and he played the Bana to please Bada Dev. He gave up working on the land; the remaining six brothers decided to take care of his daily needs. The Bana itself (musical instrument), is considered Bada Dev, because unless it produces its sound Bada Dev does not come down the Saja tree.



Big old Saja tree in Patangarh



3.1 - Saja tree as bana
Ram Singh Urveti
In Night Life of Trees

Collective Memory

The Gond communities always paid the necessary price of keeping alive the collective memory. In fact, they had handed over the task of nourishing the collective memory to a part of themselves. The threads of the stories which keep the Gonds together were woven by the Pardhan story-tellers every third year. They would go there and under the Saja tree evoke Bada Dev by playing their Bana for the families of their patrons. And then it would be as if Bada Dev had recreated once again for all the listeners this abundant world in the melodious voice of the Pardhans. Bada Dev can be evoked only by a Pardhan, no one else. He keeps sleeping in the Saja tree till a Pardhan comes and wakes him up.

In turn the Gond patron would give to the Pardhan gold, silver, horses, bullocks and grains. If someone dies in the house of Gond patron, half her jewellery, cooking utensils and clothes would be given to the Pardhan. Having given half the jewellery and utensils to the Pardhan the dead one receives her invisible resting place in an endless story and becomes immortal.

Customs And Traditions

Pardhan will not give up his traditions and customs wherever he goes, wherever he stays in the world. If he gives up his traditions and customs, then he has given up his religion. What is it that is preserved by traditions and customs, or that preserves itself through them, something that does not change with the changing times, as if it lived somewhat

above time but had the capacity to give space to ever new experiences. It has the capacity to expand its ancient syntax while preserving its durability. If this syntax breaks, then, the religion of the Pardhan will come to an end.



Gond Painting on the wall of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak

Culture And Belief System

God And Goddess

The principal deity of the Gond tribes is Bada Dev (Great God) or Bura Deo (Old God).

All-knowing and omnipresent, he created the universe. Everything originates in him, and all beings get absorbed in him after death. Bada Dev is believed to live in a Saja tree (*Boswellia serrata*). Each Gond clan has its avatar of bada dev, who protects all clan members. Bada Dev is believed to protect the Gonds from wild animals and if members of a family meet a tiger, snake or other dangerous animal several times within a fairly short period, they think that Bada Dev is displeased with them and have a special sacrifice in his honour.

It's beyond anyone to keep count of them. The Pardhan waits for some or the other god or goddess at every turning point in their life. Sometimes they think of their gods collectively as Bada Dev.

Village gods

Bhimsen - the god of strength
Ghor Deo - the horse god
Holera, the god of cattle
Ghansiam Deo - a deified prince
Doctor Deo - a deified physician

Special tribal gods

Pharsi Pen - the battle-axe god
Matiya - the god of mischief
Ghangra - the bell god
Chawar - the cow's tail
Palo - a piece of cloth

Other god and goddess

Dulha Dev
Surja Devi
Phulwari Devi
Maswahi Dev
Khairo Mai
Marhi Dev
Dehri Dev
Dhurri Dev
Chulha Dev
Anna Devi
Mahrilin Devi



Temple in Garkhamatta.



Worship of annadevi (goddess of grain) on the occasion of first crop cutting in Garkhamatta.

Marriage And Customs

Gonds typically choose their marriage mates, and a tribal council approves the matches. The father of a groom pays a bride price. Gond weddings include many significant ceremonies. The main part of the wedding occurs when the bride and groom walk seven times around a wedding post. Newlyweds live with the groom's family until it is possible for them to move into a house of their own. Sometimes, Gond matches are made when a groom and bride elope. These marriages must be approved later by relatives and the village council. The council also can approve divorces. A man must not marry in his own sept, nor in one which worships the same number of gods. Inter-marriage between septs which are bhaiband or brothers to each other is also prohibited.

The children of two sisters cannot, it is said, be married, and a man cannot marry his wife's elder sister, any aunt or niece, nor his mother-in-law or her sister. But marriage is not prohibited between grandparents and grandchildren. If an old man marries a young wife and dies, his grandson will marry her if she is of proper age. The most distinctive feature of a Gond marriage is that the procession usually starts from the bride's house and the wedding is held at that of the bridegroom, in contradistinction to



the Hindu practice. It is supposed that this is a survival of the custom of marriage by capture, when the bride was carried off from her own house to the bridegroom's, and any ceremony which was requisite was necessarily held at the house of the latter. But the Gonds say that since Dulha Deo, the bridegroom god and one of the commonest village deities was carried off by a tiger on his way to his wedding, it was decided that in future the bride must go to the bridegroom to be married in order to obviate the recurrence of such a calamity. Any risk incidental to the journey thus falls to the lady. When a Gond girl is leaving to be married, her father places inside her litter a necklace of many strings of blue and yellow beads, with a number of cowries at the end, and an iron ring attached to it. On her arrival at the



Wedding Invitations and Paintings on the walls. Patangarh, December 2016.

bridegroom's house his father takes out the necklace and ring. Sometimes it is said that he simply passes a stone through the ring, but often he hangs it up in the centre of a room, and the bridegroom's relatives throw stones at it until one of them goes through the ring, or they throw long bamboo sticks or shoot arrows at it, or even fire bullets from a gun.

Another interesting superstition about marriage is that, a man thinks he has a right to his sister's daughter for his son on the ground that his family has given a girl to her husband's family, and therefore they should give one back. This match is known as "Dudh lautdna" or bringing back the milk. and if the sister's daughter marries anyone else her maternal uncle claims what is known as 'milk money'.

Divorce is freely allowed on various grounds, as for adultery on the wife's part, a quarrelsome disposition, carelessness in the management of household affairs, or if a woman's children continue to die, or she is suspected of being a witch. Divorce is, however, very rare, for in order to get a fresh wife the man would have to pay for another wedding, which few Gonds can afford, and he would also have difficulty in getting a girl to marry him.

The **remarriage of widows** is freely permitted. However, Among the Gonds of Mandla district, it's almost impossible to find a widow. According to their tradition, if a woman's husband dies, she is married to the next bachelor in the family - even if that is her grandson. If no male is willing or available, the woman is then offered specially designed silver bangles called 'pato' by elders of the community on the tenth day of her husband's death. Thereafter, she is considered married and lives in the house of the woman who offered her the the bangle.

When a grandson marries to his grandmother, it is called the tradition of 'naati (grandson) pato', if the husband's younger brother marries then it is called 'Dever pato'. When a women doesn't want to remarry, she has given the status of a married woman under 'panch pato' tradition. The 'panchs' (village elders) have the power to do so". Usually, there's no physicality in this kind of relationship because of the considerable age gap between the spouses. But even if the two get intimate, the community does not intervene.



3.2 - Gond Samuhik Vivah Sammelan

Festivals And Ceremonies

The festivals of Gonds are not so much associated with religion. Their festivals are in response to the harvest season and local customs. In a whole, their festivals tend to be recreational rather than spiritual. Their festivals are also connected with agricultural cycle. Throughout the year, a number of fairs, festivals and feasts are organised in the village. However, their distribution over a year is rather irregular.

Hareli Festival is the festival of rain. It is observed in the early period of rains. This is mostly celebrated in the month of July-August. Hareli word is derived from Hindi word, 'Haryali' which means greenery as in this season vegetation begins to bloom and there is greenery all around.

Melamadai is a fair that is held after the completion of the harvesting of the paddy crop, when the people are free from their agricultural work and their stores are full with grain. After Diwali this fair is enjoyed daily for a week. The head of the village inaugurates the Mela.

The Holi festival, which corresponds to the Carnival, Holi being held in spring at the end of the Hindu year, is one of the main gond as well as hindu festival. In Mandla, at the Holi, the Gonds fetch a green branch of the semar or cotton tree and plant it in a little hole, in which they put also a pice (farthing) and an egg. They place fuel round and burn up the branch. Then next day they take out the egg and give it to a dog to eat and say that this will make the dog as swift as fire. They choose a dog whom they wish to train for hunting.

In Kunwar(September) the girls take an earthen pot, pierce it with holes, and put a lamp inside and also the image of a dove, and go round from house to house singing and dancing, led by a girl carrying the pot on her head. They collect contributions and have a feast.

Dusshera and Diwali are the other major festivals celebrated with fun and pleasure in the month of October and November.



3.3 - Gondi People Celebrating Hareli Festival



3.4 - Dusehhra in Baster

Songs And Dances

Folk dance and music play vital role in the life of the gonds. It is through music and dance that they keep themselves occupied in the evenings. Folk music and dance give expression to their innermost feelings, their joys and sorrows, their natural affections and ideals, their appreciation of beauty of nature and war. Every season and every socio-religious ceremony has specific songs for it.

On the occasions of their important religious festivals and marriages, they are found dancing and singing whole day and night. Folk dances of the gond tribal communities are popularly called as 'Karma'. Karma is the name of the plant commonly grown in that area. Before beginning the ceremonial dance a stem of the plant called 'Karam Kalla' is buried in the ground and the dancing troupe dance around this plant. Karma can be performed any time of the year. Other main dances of the community are Ri-na, Ri-lo, Re-la, Sela-Danda (saila/stick), Mandari, Hulki, Dadariya and Suwa etc. These were/are accompanied by various musical instruments like, drums, kikir, flute, cymbals and others.

The Saila was once performed with swords. Now these have been replaced by sticks. The Dadariya is sung when the groom arrives and again when she leaves with her groom. It is through the songs and dances the Gonds sought to satisfy their inner urge for revealing their soul. The dance movements are very fast in many forms which keep them physically fit. Even the rhythm played on instruments is of quite high note which regulate their activities. Their songs have rare beauty and deep simplicity. Music and dance had been a tradition since time immemorial. However, now the songs sung in the villages are also composed in the Hindustani-lingua-franca, and the Gondi songs have become little known to the Gonds. The acculturation, led by the dances and songs of cinema and natak-mandalis of the region has resulted in the fast disappearance of traditional songs and dances.



3.5 - Karma Dance, Madla



3.6 - Largest karma dance performed by 3049 people, recorded in Guinness world records.

Linguistic Affiliation

If the Gonds ever had a language of their own, they have lost it completely. Half of the Gonds speak a Dravidian language called Gondi at present, which is more akin to Telugu than to Kannada. Gondi language is spoken by about two million Gond people. Although it is the language of the Gond people, only about half of them still speak it. In the southern parts of Gondavana the Gonds speak a language called Parsi or Parji (Persian), also of the Dravidian family. In the northern regions the Gonds often speak the local language, a dialect of Hindi or Marathi. Gondi writing can be split into two categories: that using non-native scripts and that using native scripts. Gondi has a rich folk literature, examples of which are marriage songs and narrations. The pardhan gonds of north eastern Madhya Pradesh speak hindi and gondi both. They speak gondi within the group and Hindi outside. As there is no medium for them to read and write in their own language, they are being force to learn Hindi or English as the main language of formal communication.

Puberty, Pregnancy And Birth

The first appearance of the signs puberty in a girl is an important occasion. She stays apart for four days, and during this time she ties up one of her body-cloths to a beam in the house in the shape of a cradle, and swings it for a quarter or half an hour every day in the name of Jhulan Devi, the cradle goddess. All this ceremonial is clearly meant to induce fertility in the girl. The Gonds regard a woman as impure for as long as the menstrual period lasts, and during this time she cannot draw

water nor cook food, nor go into a cowshed or touch cow dung. A pregnant woman must not go near a horse or elephant, as they think that either of these animals would be excited by her condition and would assault her. If the woman is fat and well during pregnancy they think a girl will be born, but if she is ailing and thin, that the child will be a boy. If the nipples of her breasts are of a reddish colour they think the birth of a boy is portended, but if of blackish colour, a girl.



3.7 - Gond women holding her child outside the hut.

When a birth occurs another woman carefully observes the knots or protuberances on the navel - cord. It is supposed that the number of them indicates the further number of children which will be born to the mother.

If a woman is childless they say that she should worship Bura Deo and fast continually, and then on the termination of her monthly impurity, after she has bathed, if she walks across the shadow of a man she will have a child. It is thus supposed that the woman can be made fertile by the man's shadow, which will be the father of the child.

On some day from the fifth to the twelfth after the birth the mother is purified and the child is named. On this day its hair is shaved by the son-in-law brother-in law. The mother and child are washed and rubbed with oil and turmeric, and the house is freshly whitewashed and cleaned with cowdung.

On the Sor night, or that of purification, the women of the village assemble and sing. If a newborn child will not drink its mother's milk, they think it is some important male ancestor, and that he is vexed at being in such a dependent position to a woman over whom he formerly had authority.

If an abortion occurs, or a child is born dead or dies very shortly after birth, they put the body in an earthen pot, and bury it under the heap of refuse behind the house. The reason for burying the bodies of such children close to the house is probably, however, the belief that they will thus be born again in the same family.



Kids listening to stories by their grandma in the winters of garkhamatta.

Medicine

Gonds also have a special skill that has been passed down every generation and that is the secrets of the medicine plants. As there are no proper health facilities in several areas, they still follow the traditional system of medicines and use plants and herbs for curing various ailments. Gond tribal community. Gond tribes acquired the knowledge of making medicine from several herbs and plants, which also down the years, have been passed on to the next generation. In fact till today due to the absence of health amenities of the modern times, this Gond tribal community follows the customary medicinal system. Utilization of the plants and herbs are made in order to cure several diseases.

Death And funeral

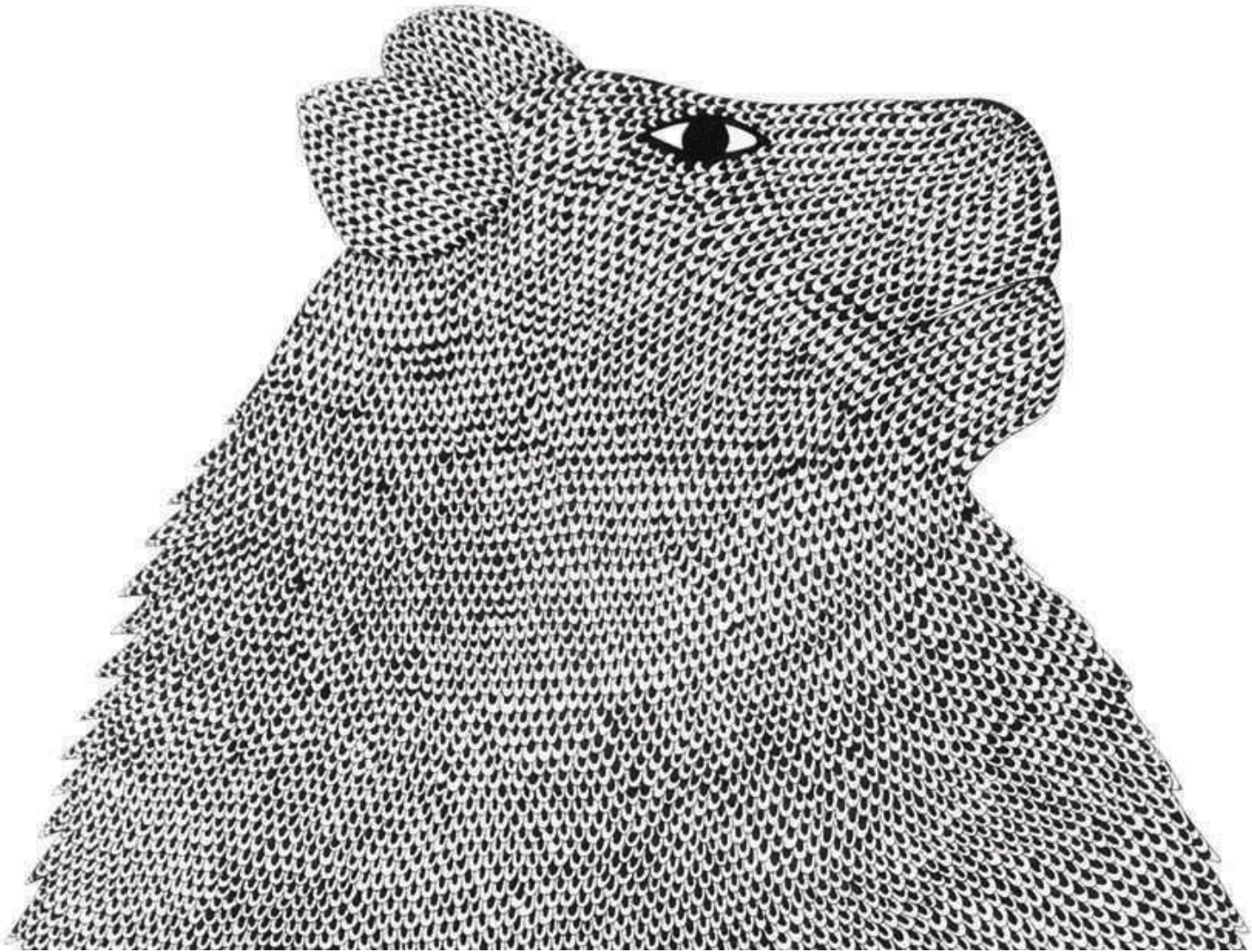
The Gonds had their own concept of death. The funeral rites were part of the metaphysical significance that the death occupied an important occurrence in the birth-life-death cycle. The Gonds believed in life after death. A drum is beaten to announce a death, and the news is sent to relatives and friends in other villages. The funeral takes place on the second or third day, when these have assembled. They bring some pieces of cloth, and these, together with the deceased's own clothes and some money, are buried with him, so that they may accompany his spirit to the other world. The cause of the man's death was determined in the digging of his grave. When piling in the earth removed for the grave after burial, if it reached exactly to the surface of the ground, they thought that the dead man had died after living the proper span of his life. If the earth made a mound over the hole, they thought he had lived beyond his allotted time and called him *Sigpur*, that is a term for a measure of grain heaped as high as it will stand above the brim. But if the earth was insufficient and did not reach to the level of the ground, they held that he had been prematurely cut off, and had been killed by an enemy or by a witch through magic.



Old gond women in patangarh

Children at breast are buried at the roots of a mahua tree, as it is thought that they will suck liquor from them and be nourished as if by their mother's milk. The body of an adult may also be burnt under a mahua tree so that the tree may give him a supply of liquor in the next world. The Gonds often take food on the Spot after the burial or burning of a corpse and they usually drink liquor. On the third day a feast is given. The mourners are shaved at the grave nine or ten days after the death by the brother-in-law or son-in-law of the deceased, and they cook and eat food there and drink liquor.

They believe that the spirits of ancestors are reincarnated in children or in animals. Sometimes they make a mark with soot or vermillion on the body of a dead man, and if some similar mark is subsequently found on any new-born child it is held that the dead man's spirit has been reborn in it.



Chitrakari : Pardhan Gond Painting

Stories of Origin

From Music to Painting

Jagdish Swaminathan, the great painter and thinker of the twentieth century, was of the opinion that it wasn't only the urban art that qualified as art, The tradition of folk and adivasi paintings all over the Indian countryside is just as important. This too is contemporary art. The adivasis are neither the denizens of a backward world, nor are their works the creations of some bygone age. These works belong to the present age. It was in this quest to understand that he sent several teams of young painters to various regions in Madhya Pradesh urging them to collect paintings, sculptures, or visual art of any kind for the newly established multi-art set up of Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal. This was a unique enterprise to rid ourselves of the mental shackles the British had left behind for us.

One team went about this region of mandla to collect works of visual art. During this trip they also visited this village called Patangarh. It was here, in this village, that the British anthropologist Verrier Elwin stayed from the fourth decade of the last century to the sixth. It was perhaps at the advice of the wife of Elwin's fellow worker Shyam Hivale that Swaminathan sent a team especially to Patangarh. He might have had some idea that someone in that village used to make clay sculptures, as



4.1 - Jagdish Swaminathan with Jangarh Singh Shyam and his wife Nankusia in Bharat Bhavan Photograph By Jyoti Bhatt. 1987.

one person lived in Patangarh even in those days and he did make sculptures in clay. They did not find a single painting on any wall, nor a single clay sculpture anywhere in Patangarh, a village that sprawled over three or four hills. They were about to leave in disappointment. It was evening. The trees in the street cast long shadows on the ground. All at once leader of the team Vivek happened to glimpse something, in the dappled sunlight filtering through

the shadows of those trees a few yellow lines lit up. In those lines, a figure seemed to be emerging. An extraordinary yellow Hanuman carrying the Sanjivani Mountain on the palm of his hand was seen shimmering on a wall. Vivek was instantly struck by that picture. When he made inquiries, he found out that the painting had been made by a boy whose name was Jangarh Singh Shyam. He did odd jobs as a labourer sometimes, lugging dug-out

soil, he did whatever he was asked to, always, never said no. Those were the days of extreme poverty, Sometimes, Jangarh along with his few friends, taking all the village cattle, would go to the river for an entire day. They let the animals graze, they bathed in the river, tossed about in sand. Jangarh would sit playing on his flute all by himself. Jangarh was a Pardhan after all. On certain occasions, after he had his rolling spree, Jangarh would marvel at the impressions of his own body printed in sand. He would try to complete the picture as parts of the body that did not leave clear enough impressions, he tried to draw with his finger. Then he would show it to others and ask for an opinion. Jangarh then started to take his pictures from the sand to the wall. That time only the team happened to meet him. Jangarh was the only such painter in the village. Not a painter, perhaps, but a 'potential' painter he surely was. In those days, apart from him, none of the other Pardhans painted. And why should they have painted? They were musicians after all, even though their music had slipped into silence for lack of patronage. That social texture in which the Pardhan instrument Bana could be heard, wherein their song found a resonance, had come apart now.

The music, the song, the narrative they used to create under the Saja tree, runs in their blood to this day. Overflowing with these narratives strung in the music that is hundreds of years old, Jangarh Singh Shyam accompanied the team to Bhopal. 'Firstly they gave him paper and colours and asked him to make something. Amazed, he went on looking at the colours.

He touched them the way he touch clay.' Having left Patangarh, Jangarh now came to Bhopal. The boy who belonged to a family of bardic-singers had now landed in a world of colours.



4.2 - The interiors of the Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, painted by Jangarh Singh Shyam.



4.3 - Jangarh Singh Shyam "Magiciens de la terre" Centre Pompidou, Paris. 1989
Photograph By Prakash Hatvalne.



4.4
Jangarh Singh Shyam, 1989
Gouache on paper, 182x122 cm
Collection Fondation Cartier, Paris



4.5
Jangarh Singh Shyam, 1997
Screen printing on paper accented by hand, 70x54 cm

Jangarh became acquainted with the art of painting, and his dormant creativity began to assume a new form. Now it turned in the direction of another artistic expression. This was a strange transformation. The time-old creative urge was shaping up into something new. And this something new was painting. Having begun with filling out his own figure in sand, he moved on to paint the walls in the countryside of Patangarh, and the moment he found the conditions conducive to his art, a wonderful school of art came into existence. This school of art is named as 'Jangarh Kalam'.



4.6 - Jangarh Singh Shyam at work in Bharat Bhavan



Jangarh's old house in Patangarh. December 2016.



Painting on the door of Jangarh's old house.
Patangarh, December 2016

This was a unique occasion for the transformation of the Pardhan musical tradition into the art of painting. Jangarh is the first milestone on this path of transition. It was he who now began to portray the Gond deities, the plants and trees, the rivers and springs along with the Bana, in the absence of song. He now began to outline on paper and canvas that entire world which was being sung in the Pardhan tradition for hundreds of years. Now the deities were waking up in colour, throbbing in lines, and went peering through dots. A few years ago on 6 July 2001 the inventor of Jangarh Kalam and its great practitioner Jangarh Singh Shyam when he was only 39 years old committed suicide in Japan, the reasons for his taking his life are still not clearly known, though the Indian artistic community was quick to blame the owner of the museum in Japan.



Statue of Jangarh Singh Shyam
Patangarh, December 2016

Legacy - Successors of Jangarh

Other than propelling the now varied and vibrant school of 'Jangarh kalam', Jangarh is also duly credited for being the harbinger of new perspectives, talent and stylistic innovations within that school. He introduced his extended family to his studio and artistic practices in Bhopal. His house in Professors Colony became a hub for several Pardhan Gond artists who migrated to the city hoping Jangarh would show them the way. Some of them further extended the style to sculpture as well, notable among whom are Gangaram, Ram Kumar Shyam and Sukhnandi Vyam. Some other Gond artists who have carved a niche for themselves in painting are Ram Singh Urveti, Bhajju Shyam (author of the much acclaimed London Jungle Book), Rajendra Shyam, Suresh Dhurve and Narmada Prasad Tekam. After Jangarh's death, Nankusia Bai his wife continued to work at Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. Her independent creations have been exhibited in Dubai, Japan and Sri Lanka. In 2002, she was presented a state level award by the Madhya Pradesh Hasta Shilpa Vikas Nigam. Jangarh brought his brother-in-law Subhash Vyam and his wife Durgabai Vyam to his house in Bhopal.



4.7 - Bhajju Shyam
The Miracle of Flight

Today, Durgabai has emerged to be one of the most well-known Pardhan Gond artists with many books to her credit, most of them published by Tara Books, Chennai. In 2011, Subhash and Durgabai co-authored *Bhimayana*, the graphic biography of B.R. Ambedkar with Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand published by Navayana, New Delhi. Jangarh's nephew Venkat Raman Singh Shyam has also developed his distinct style and gone on to achieve international fame after working as Jangarh's apprentice in Bhopal during his early years. Rajendra Shyam also family member of jangarh, learnt the art while he was working in Bhopal. Rajendra Shyam, depicts the Gondi tales in great detail on his canvases. His paintings are dense in their treatment and there is perfect symmetry. As a child, Rajendra was drawn to digna and bhittichitra, with his sisters and their mother. Jangarh's daughter Japani Shyam was given the Kamala Devi Award in 1999, at the age of eleven. She works on motifs of animals and birds and visual examinations of rituals.

His son Mayank Shyam, also an artist, has moved away considerably from the first-generation iconography and style of Gond art and focuses on geometrical patterns. He participated in his first group exhibition called *Primal Force* (2006) at Kolkata's CIMA Gallery at the age of 19. His works were also included in the Indian Contemporary Art Auction at Sotheby's, New York. In 2006, Mayank was conferred the state award by the Hasta Shilpa Evam Hathkargha Vikas Nigam in Bhopal.



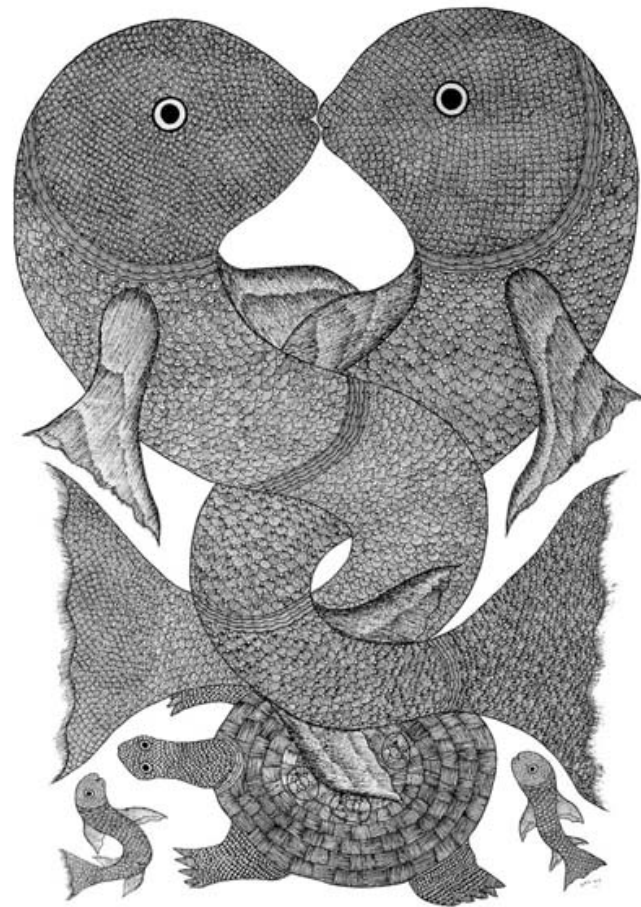
4.8 - Durga Bai making paintings in her house.



4.9 - Wild boar and Piglets
Rajendra Shyam



4.10 - Artwork from the book ' Between Memory and Museum'
By Durga Bai Vyam.



4.11 - Fish making love perched on a tortoise
By Subhash Vyam

Future Pardhan Artists

This chapter unfolds the work of young and emerging pardhan gond artist from the small village of Garkhamatta and Patangarh of north-eastern part of madhya pradesh. These artists do not have any special studio or a working space, most of them make painting as a part time job and some full-time, even then somehow they have maintained a balance between the tough life of village, livelihood and their passion for painting, they have kept their work alive while living in a small village without much support for art. Not much attention is been given to the local artist who couldn't migrate to the cities or by choice living and working from ground village, although their work by any inferior then the famous internationally acclaimed artists. This village has plenty of talented and emerging artists; almost everyone in the village is trying their luck in this profession, but only few get to the heights they desire. Further headings document the work of pardhan gond artists who have shared their stories and work with me while my stay in the village of Patangarh and Garkhamatta.





Santosh Maravi

He lives in a small remote village named Garkhamatta near Amarkantak, as a child he did not know much about this craft until one day his cousin maternal uncle Jangarh singh shyam bring some people from manav sangh-ralaya bhopal to visit his village. That time he did not know about the art and had just thought them as some people who do work in Bhopal museum, he has never been out of his or nearby villages untill then, few days later when he started enquiring about Jangarh singh and the art of painting which finally lead him to Bhopal in 2002, he went there as a guest for few days and got introduced to some of the very famous pardhan artists including Durga bai, who is his maternal aunt. He started understand the scenario while helping other artist in the making of the painting, he worked with Durga bai for 3-4 years where he learned the details of work and slowly also started making his own painting, at the same time he became friend with Mayank Shyam, who is a son of Jangarh singh Shyam, he learned with him and continued making paintings and one day he sold one piece of his art to a French man at very high price, which was a dream come true for him as he always used to see other artists work getting recognised and getting out. He came back to his village for a



workshop organized by Manav Sanghralaya for school children's of Navodaya, he worked there as a teacher, one of his painting is still installed there on the wall. Since then he has been painting, now he is a full time artist and has his own clients and people who purchase his paintings directly, he had been to jagrati yatra, which is an annual train journey through India which promote social awareness and entrepreneurship among youths. Now he is been working as an artist since last 10-12yrs. He proudly says 'When someone ask me what do I do, I say go Google Santosh Maravi gond artist, you will get all the information'. As all the other gond artists, he also gives his credit and respect to the conveyor of gond treasure to the world Jangarh Singh Shyam. "Jangarh is the origin of it, he sowed the seeds for all of us and these are all the branches of the tree and continuously we are growing in all the direc-

tions, this cannot be hidden from the world anymore" maravi said. He says 'I like this art more because through my work I get a chance to meet new people, places and things which I have never been able to otherwise and this gives me immense pleasure and joy'.

Maravi lives with his family, an eight year old girl and a 5 year old boy, his wife and parents. His wife is from patangarh, she grew up seeing art around her. She help in the work and also take care of the house.

He is currently working on paintings for ceramic plates, a designer has seen his work in an exhibition and then signed him for the project, this is his third time working for the same client.



Painting material and tools.



An article about maravi on news paper.



Santosh Maravi and his wife with his Painting.



Maravi's unique signature of is inspired from the form of lantern which can be seen in repetetion in the painting .



Front wall of maravi's room.



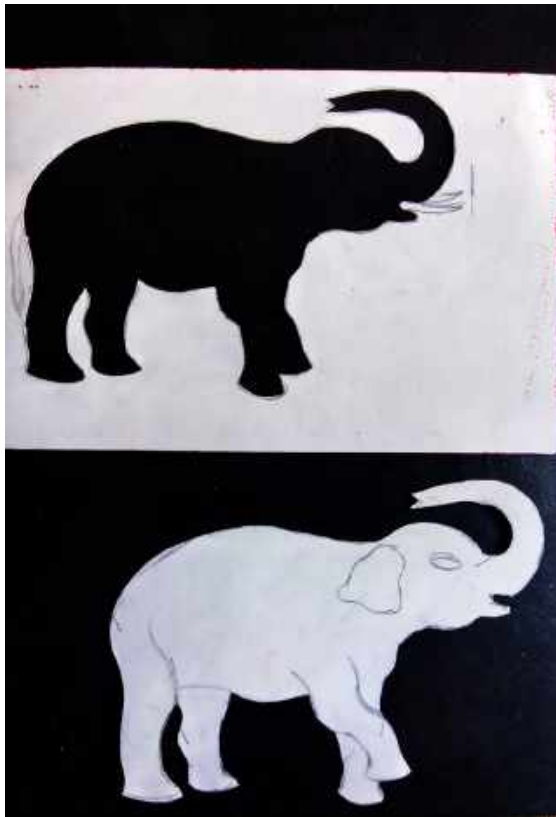
An old painting of maravi's brother, natural colours on cotton fabric.



Elephant Walk
Acrylic and ink on canvas
By Santosh Maravi



Tree of Life
Acrylic and ink on canvas
By Santosh Maravi



Paper cut-out used for tracing on plate.



Maravi's wife filling colours on painting on ceramic plates.



Maravi with his work on ceramic plates



After showing a sample to the client, they receive orders for large number of pieces to be painted, blank plates get delivered to them in the village by the customer, they start by applying base colour on it and then keep it in open to let it dry, after it get dried, a rough sketch of the painting is drawn using paper stencils, stencil comes handy for sketching the same drawing again and again, after the sketch is done, colour is filled into the the painting and then kept for drying.

Shravan Paraste

He is a 24 year old young emergent artist lives in Garkhamatta with his maternal grandparents, during day time he work in the farms because he has to support his family and himself financially and there is no other means of livelihood for him than agriculture, since last two-three years he is involved in the craft of weaving stories in colours before this he used to work for other artists while he was learning, he is so heartily and deeply into his work that in just one year he has many paintings of high quality in his account, which he planned to show it for the first to the outside world though IGRMS in Bhopal, which provide a platform for tribal artists to showcase and sell their work they buy paintings in bulk from local village artists and sell it to outside world. He completed his high school while learning to paint and then quit study and decided to work full time, he learnt painting under durga bai and subhash vyam and also clay work with Sukhnandi Vyam, now he has developed his own style and slowly trying to make his work different, because he believes that he should have a uniqueness in his work as there is no paint to make art just for the sake of making money, one should have a unique name and style of work, otherwise people in village also can make money, but even the richest men in



Shravan's house - Aangan

the village will not be known to outside world as the artists are known. Everyone these days have smart phones and they make network on the internet, which he cannot do as he does not have any smart phone nor does he know to operate one, his other plans also include opening a shop in village once he earn some money, because there are lot of things for which villagers have

to travel to town to buy, which can easily be made available in the village if a proper shop will be there.

I haven't met anyone like shravan in my life before, he sit in the corner of veranda of his house surrounded by lot of different things lying down, grains and other household objects and do his painting, which to my surprise are way good then any one could

expect from the surrounding like this, so neat and clean with a new modern thinking and approach, his passion can be easily seen in each detail of his work. No one has seen his work till now; he went to Bhopal few times and keeps working from his village only. He left studies after high school as he told he could not find any meaning in taking it forward. As he shared his story he told that he used to like painting from childhood, but he realized that he could peruse this as a profession when he drew some sketches on his school note book and his classmates and other people appreciated and encouraged him to draw more often. Since then he is trying his hand on painting and now has become an artist.



Shravan's house - outside.



Shravan's working space in the veranda of his house



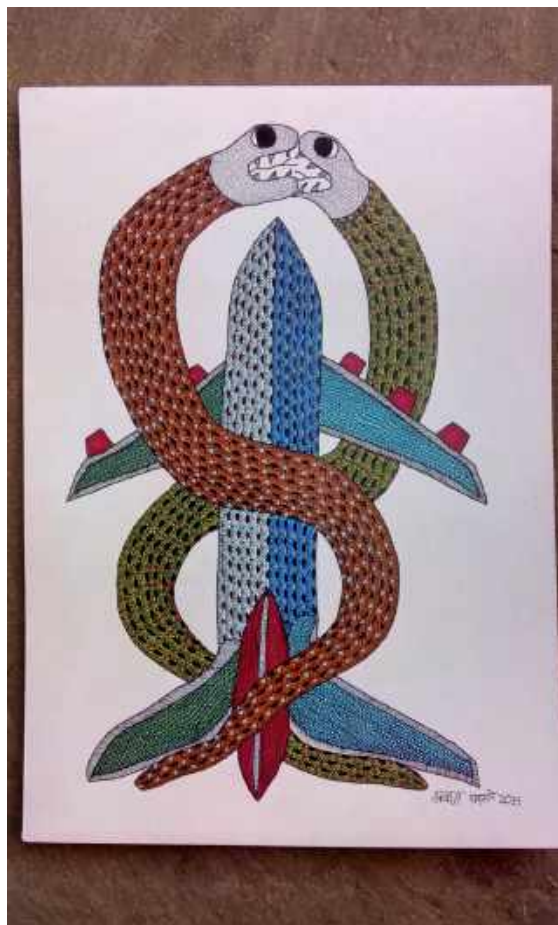
Shravan Paraste in the winters of Garkhamatta



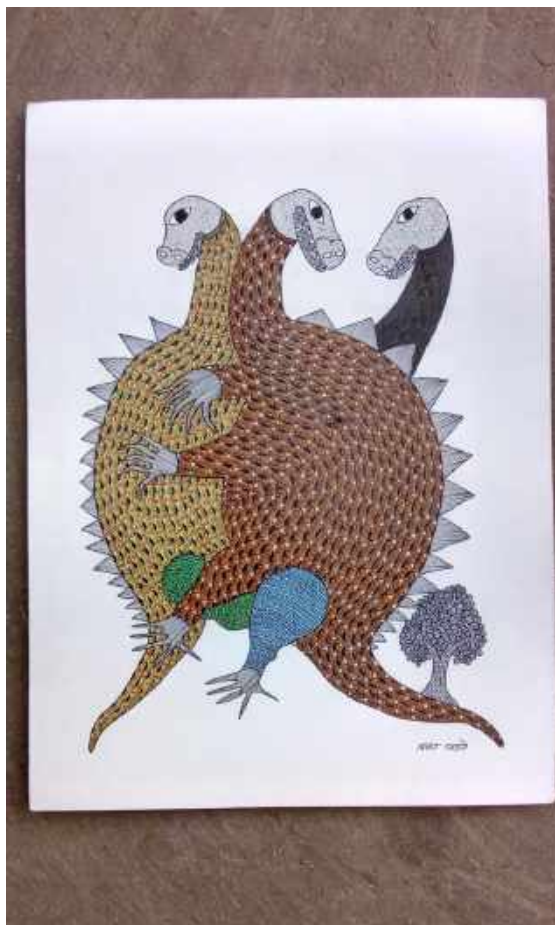
House full of rats
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Lord Ganesh with his rats
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Two snakes wrapped around an aeroplane
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Three Dinosaurs
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



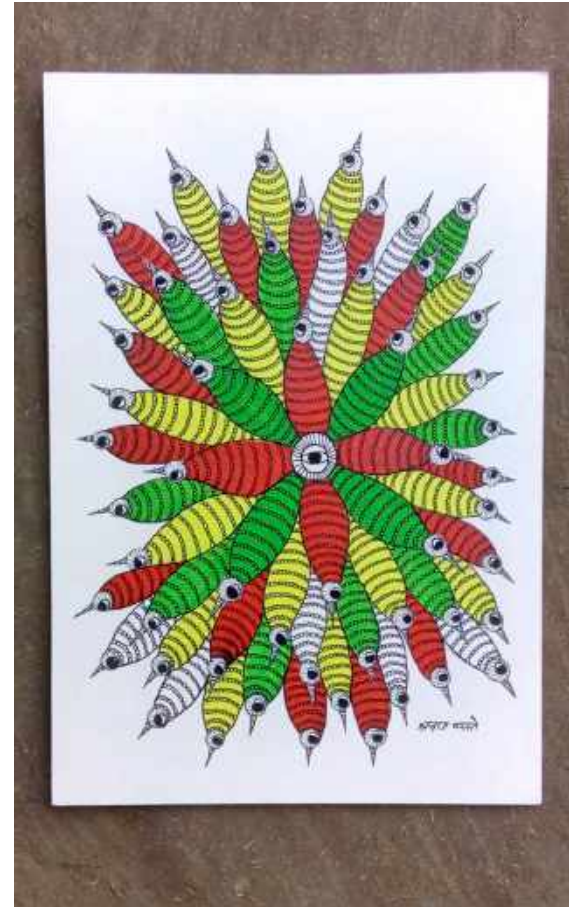
Multiple faces
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Rabit playing on a tree
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Cock Clock
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Birds
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste



Under Water
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste

Shivlal Urveti

Shivlal gives all his credit to Jangarh for who he is today, 'only because of him, we all are being able to tell our stories to the world, he is not less than an incarnation of god sprit for all of us' he said. His subject of painting is mostly forest stories which he grew up listening to. I met him as I was just roaming around the village, went a little inside and suddenly saw a man sitting on ground with a big canvas and some paint lying down, which after spending some time in the village was not a new thing for me. He very gently told me about his work and family, next day he also took me to some other artist's home, while sharing the stories of the evolution of it and the current scenario. He is one of the most humble men I met in the village. He lives in a single room self-made mud house with two kids and wife in the corner side of the village patangarh, members of the family help him in the making of the paintings as well as in the farm.

He works for IGRMS (Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya) also known as National Museum of Humankind at Bhopal. He collects and goes to tribal museum in bhopal once in three month, they select most of it and buy it, and they transfer the payment to him after a week or so. All artists who work with IGRMS

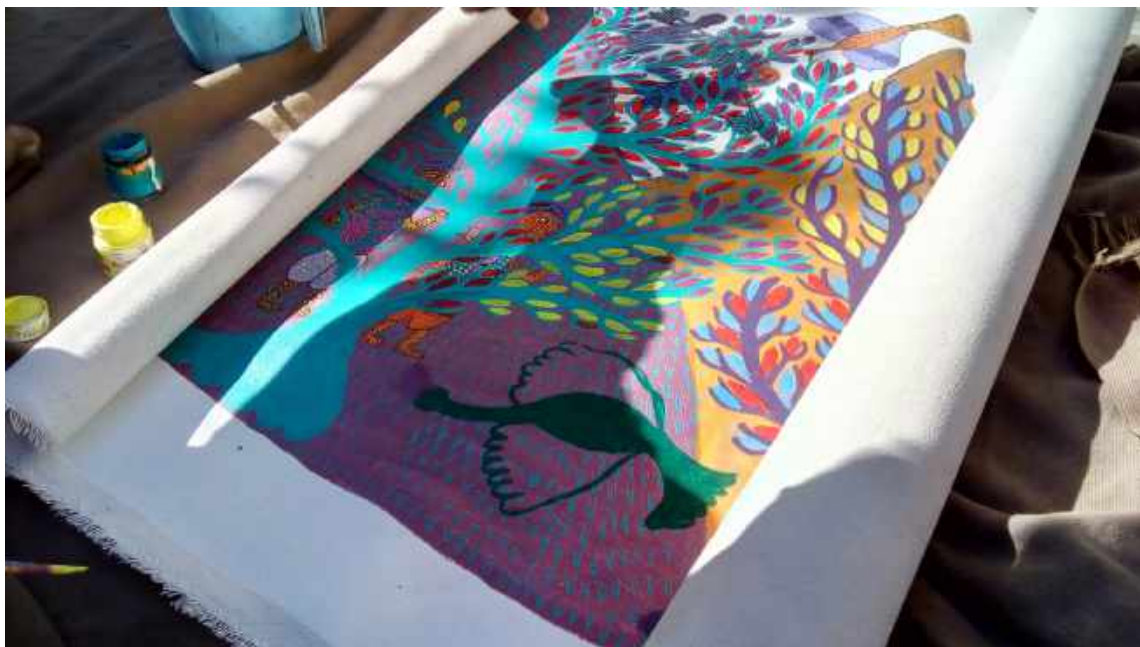
need to register with them and create account on which all the record and transactions happens. He is very much satisfied with the work he is doing, as he is not very ambitious, he enjoys what he does and lives a significant life in the village with his family. Sometimes he also does commission work independently; Whenever he gets it, he had exhibited his work independently as well as in a group in many places.



Urveti's workspace in the aangan of his house



Urveti with his painting



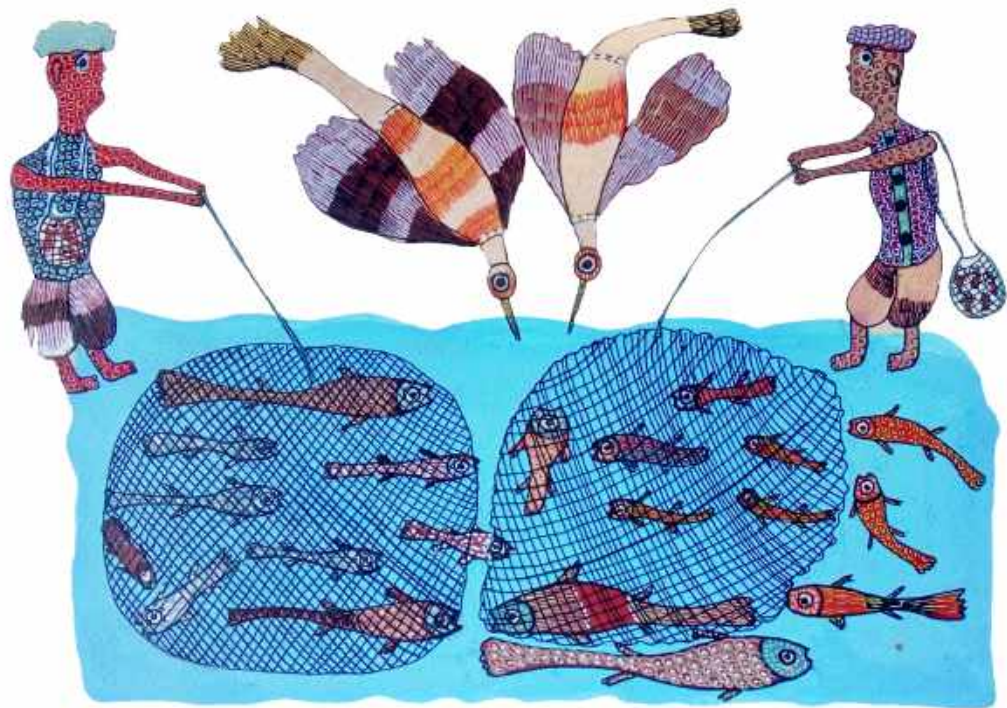
Urveti's painting on canvas in the making.



Samoooh
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shivlal Urveti



Community of Birds
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shivlal Urveti



Fishing
Acrylic on sheet paper
Shivlal Urveti



Urveti's paintings depicting some of the work of daily life of gonds.

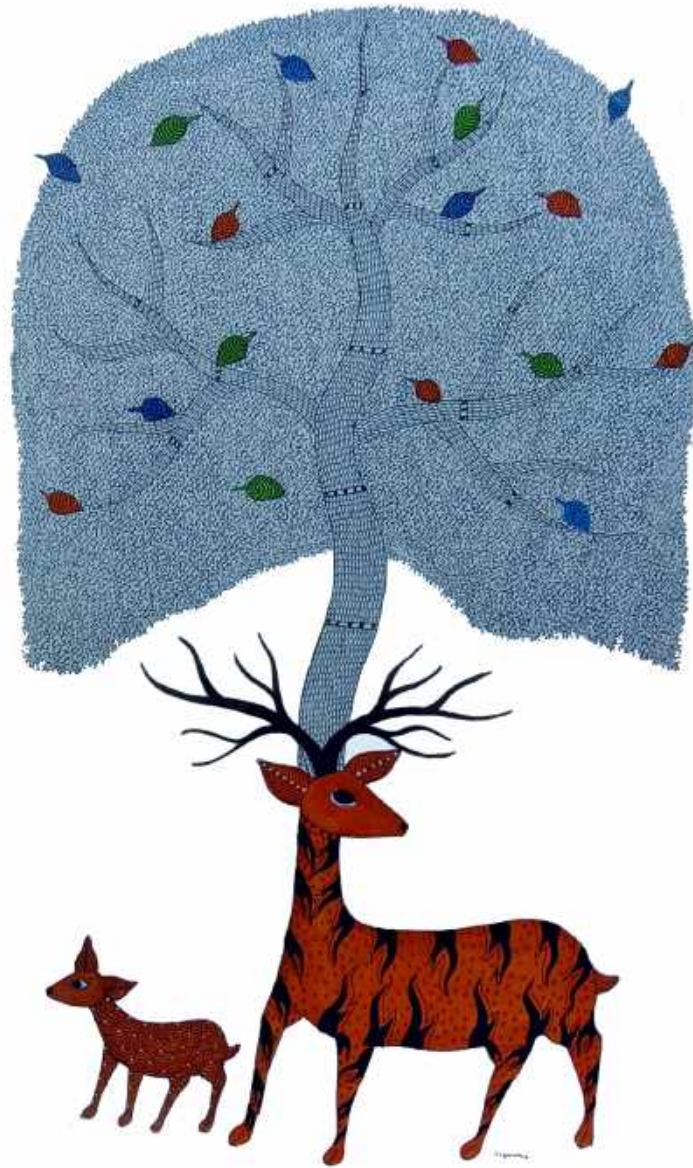
Ram Kumar Shyam And Family

Ram kumar is amongst one of the artists who work with wood and make sculpture along with the art of painting which now considered to be a common profession in the village of Patangarh, wood working and sculpting he learnt from his guru Basant who is his sister's husband. Ram kumar Shyam is the family member of well-known gond artist Bhaju Shyam, and nephew of Jangarh Singh Shyam. He did not take a proper training from any artist, learnt the art of painting just by observing other people's working. He like to explore different mediums, methods and materials to express, rather than being bounded only by painting on sheets and canvas, he believes art is everywhere, you just need an eye to see. Wild animals, trees and forest are some of the subjects which he likes to give form in his paintings. He has created many artefacts from daily use objects such as aeroplane made out of Bottle Gourd shell, a devil face made out of pumpkin shell and combining shells of different vegetables as the body part.



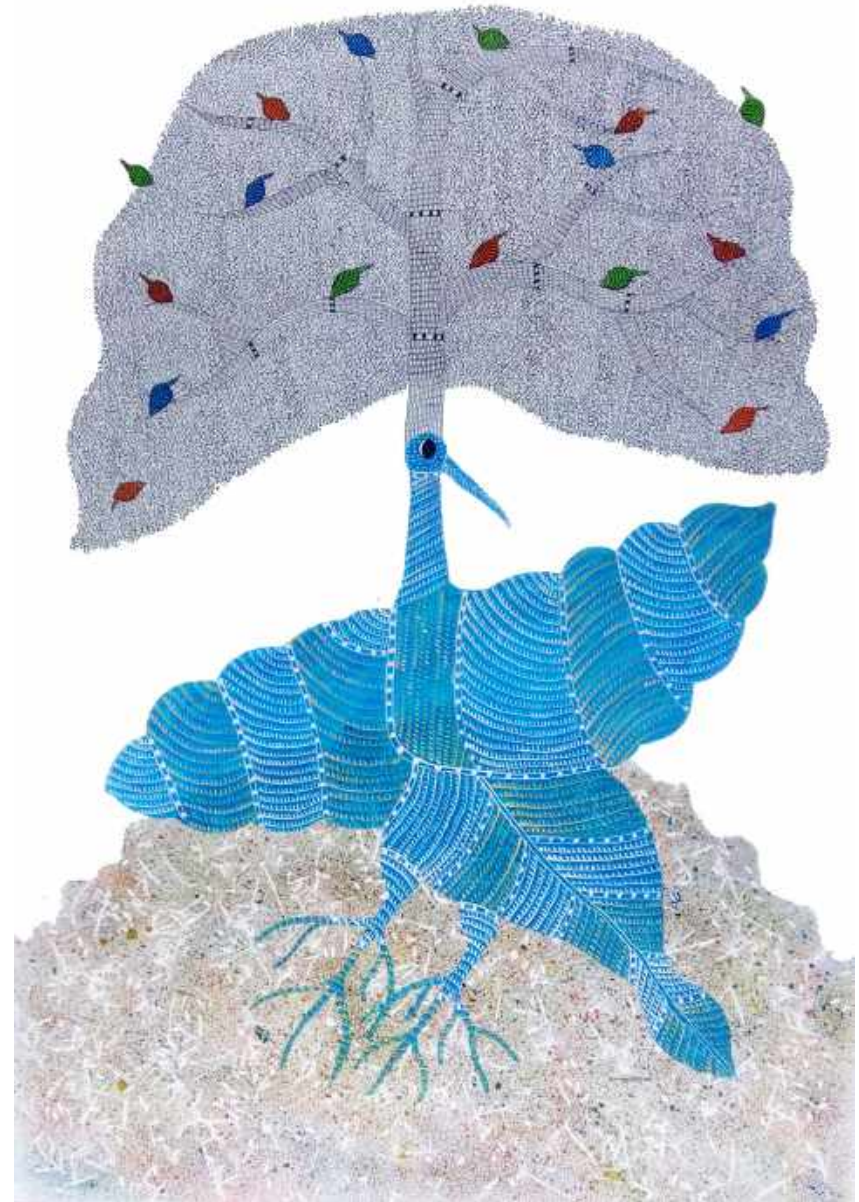
His wood sculpture are rare piece of art which he created using only simple hand tools, because of the limitation of good quality teak wood available in the area, he does not make much sculpture these days, he has made many scuptoers on different subjects including man face, gods, deities, women body, objects etc. He carved a women body from a small piece of teak wood sometime back, which he gifted to me as I was leaving the village. It is not just a carved piece of wood, the beauty and aesthetic of these sculpture are incomparable as they emerge from a strong believe, craftsmanship and culture which makes it valuable. He has been working since last 15 years; he stopped practicing sculpting because of the problem of transport and unavailability of proper wood.

He also makes mud house and is the master in working with mud as a material, earlier he has created many artefacts with mud. Now painting is the only means of livelihood for Kumar, as he does not do farming anymore. His wife also paints and shares the work equally. Kumar's work goes to Kanha Museum of Life and Art and Kanha Earth Lodge, a high class resort in kanha national part, they have installed many gond tribes artefacts including ram kumar's work, although his work in kanha is not regular, only twice or thrice he gets a chance to work for them.



Barhasingha
Acrylic on canvas
Ram Kumar Shyam

Kumar's house is right in front of famous saja tree of patangarh, where the shrine of Bada Dev are installed under the tree. He lives with his nuclear family in one house which is connected with houses of other families. Other members of the family are also involve in the art of making painting, some of them including his brother santosh shyam, his relative meena moti and his wife, she makes dhigna paintings on festivals, they are also an independent artist themselves. He says "most of my work revolves around god and goodness and gondi culture, as oppose to many tribal artist who are incorporating modern and abstract art into their work these days".



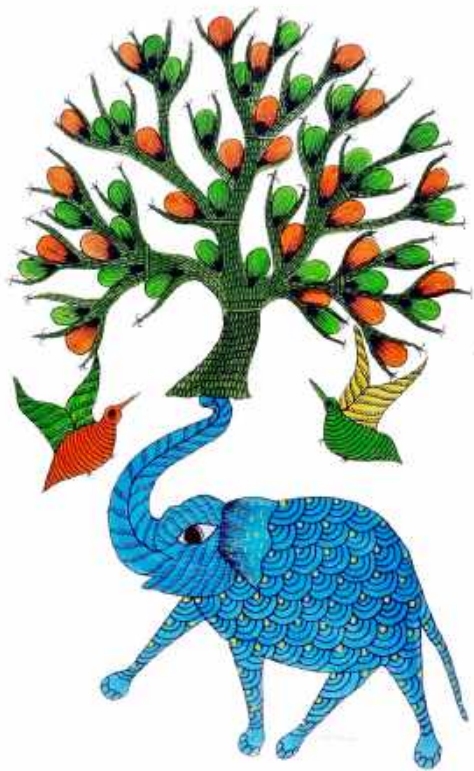
Blue Bird
Acrylics on canvas
Ram Kumar Shyam



Three Little Birds
Acrylic on sheet paper
Ram Kumar Shyam



Dream Big
Acrylic on sheet paper
Ram Kumar Shyam



Elephant dancing with birds
Acrylics on sheet paper
Ram Kumar Shyam



Attack
Acrylics and ink on sheet paper
Ram Kumar Shyam



Tools and Material used for painting



Wood carving hand tools.



Man Face Wood Sculpture
Teak wood carved with hand tools
Ram Kumar Shyam



Wall Mounting Candle Stand
Teak wood carved with hand tools
Ram Kumar Shyam



Standing Women
Teak wood carved with hand tools
Ram Kumar Shyam



Sculpturs made by painting on different shells of Bottle Gourd, pumpkin and other vegetables.

Meena Uikey



Meena Uikey, family member of Ram Kumar Shyam showing her painting of Lord Ganesh

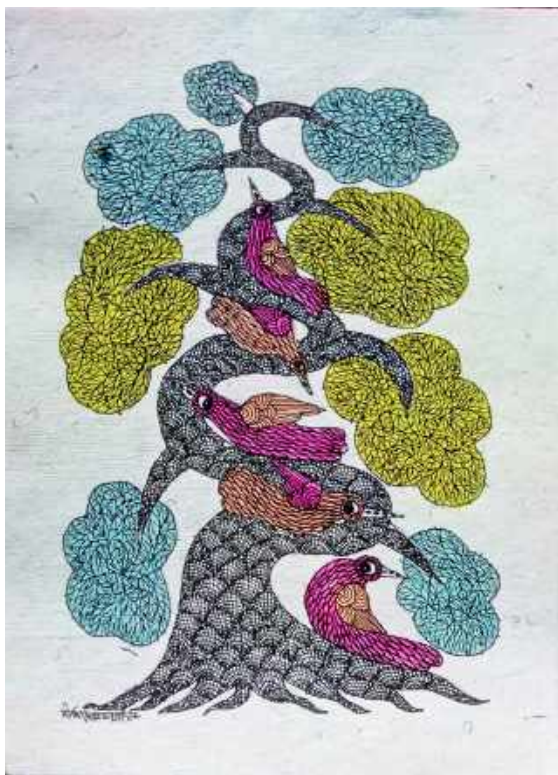


Sher-Cheeta
Acrylic on canvas
Meena Uikey



Co-exist
Acrylic and ink on canvas
Meena Uikey

Santosh Shyam Moti



Acrylic on Sheet Paper
Paintings of Santosh Shyam Moti
family member of Ram Kumar Shyam

Santosh Parasti

Paraste lives in the village of garkhamatta with his parents, he has started painting 6-7 years ago but left it for few years in between, he also work with clay with Sukhanandi Vyam, a well-known gond artist who work with wood and clay, he has been to many places with him for work. When he was in high school, he went to Bhopal to his uncle Suresh sigh Urveti who is also an artist, from him he learned the art and stayed in Bhopal for one year to learn the details. Then he came back to village and completed his schooling and stopped to study further to support family, as the only source of income for them was farming, which is not enough and certain. They prefer to study only when there is a chance to get a government job which he did not have any hope to get, so he decided to work instead.

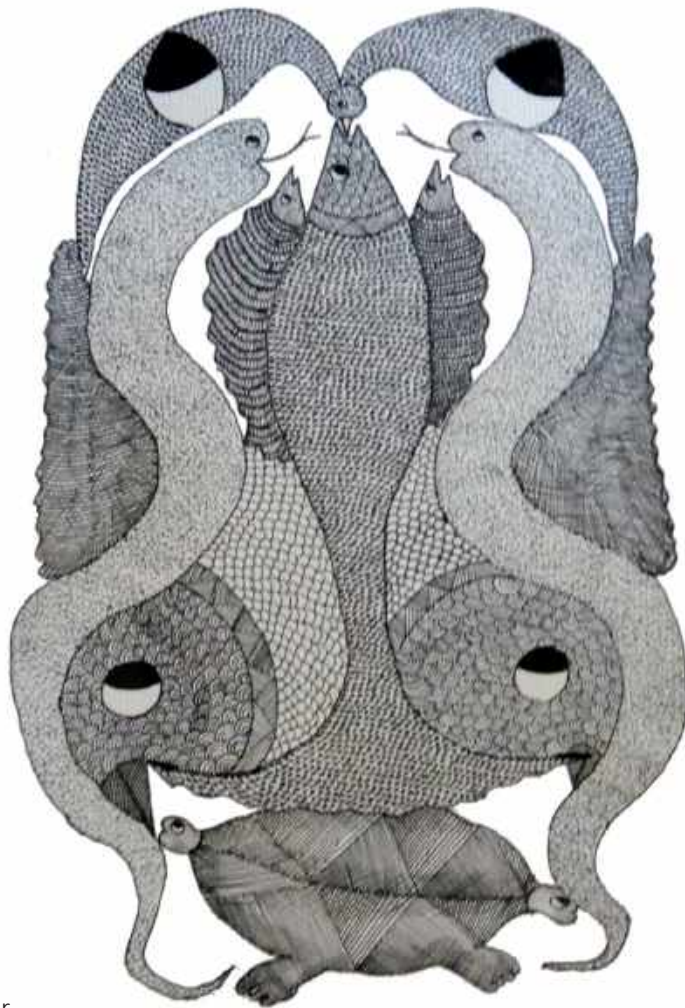
He began painting along with the clay work which he was doing, he started painting because of his passion and also for financial help, also painting for them is a most respected and rewarded profession. He aspire to take this as a profession, till now he has sold many paintings, now he is working on a black and white series of art work in which he is trying to depict bada dev and other formless things from his imagination onto paper, most of his paintings are black and white, ink on paper. He plans to



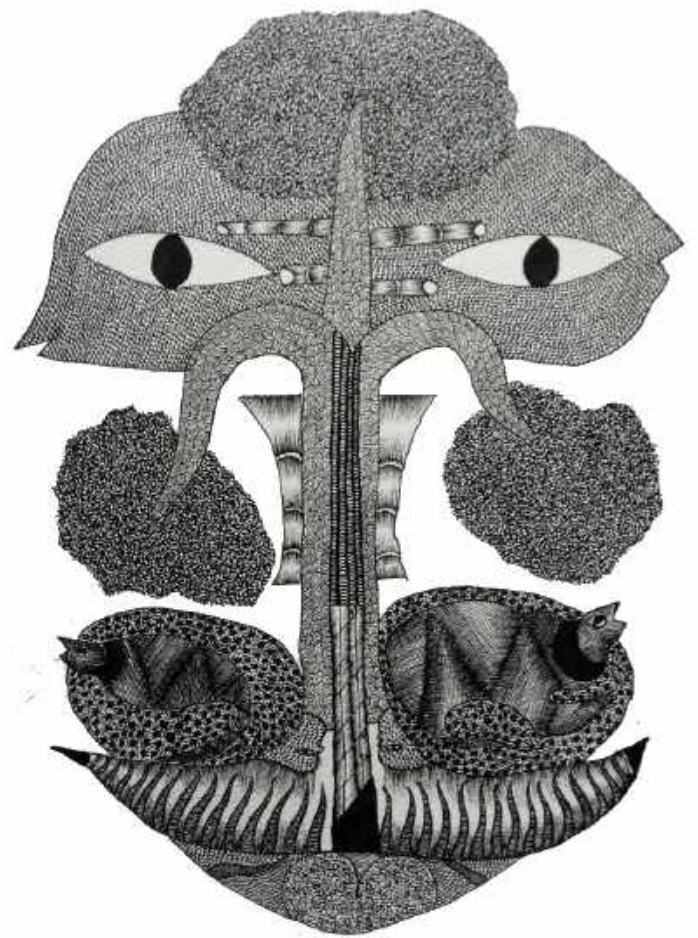
Santosh Parasti with his family.

make at least 40-50 sheets of this series and looking for curators to exhibit his work, so that it reaches out to more and more people. During my stay in the village Garkhamatta, I stayed at paraste's home, they believe 'The guest is equivalent to God' and also I was an outside for them, they provided me the best hospitality they could, they don't eat food until the guest eats it. Sometimes when I used to come late at night, they will be waiting for me

to have food and then only they will have. As I am a vegetarian, they arranged a separate food for me, and did everything they could to make me feel comfortable and being at home.



Ink on Sheet Paper
Santosh Parasti



Rajendra Kushram

Rajendra house is just beside the main road in the village of Patangarh, before he used to write stories in gondi language as a hobby, he wrote more than 30 stories some of which are worth a size of a novel, once he gave his stories to an organization who promised him to publish his stories but as he told they did not give him any credit or royalty for it and used the content for their profit, which disheartened rajendra and he then stopped writing, his subject of the stories come from his own experience of the village and forrest as well as from the myths and magic's of gond which he has seen and listened to from his ancestors. From writing he shifted his medium of story-telling through paintings as he saw a new wave of completely new art form emerging in the village, now it has been years since the time he has been painting, many of his cousins are in Bhopal practising the same art including his sister Kamli Kushram and brother Puroshottam Kushran, most of the time they exhibit their work collectively, he just came from an exhibition in Kochi, where he showcased his and all of his cousins work together, currently he is working on a project of which he got order from a textile designer from pune.

He is painting on a fabric of a sari, which is going to be sold in handmade shops in the cities or probably someone's personal collection. Along with sheets and canvas he work with different materials and products, he has given graphics/paintings for 1700 begs for Mrignayani Emporium (retail store of handicraft by state government). He is partially handicapped by one leg because of which he could not move fast, so most of the work he does from home, sitting in his veranda. The favourite subject for his paintings is bird and trees.



Rajendra Kushram in his house aangan.



1



2

1. Rajendra's house entrance. 2. Painting on sari fabric.



3. Kushram Painting on fabric with acrylic.



Affection
Acrylic on paper
Rajendra Kushram



In Line
Acrylic on paper
Rajendra Kushram



Collective Rituals
Acrylic on paper
Rajendra Kushram



Womens at work
Acrylic on paper
Kamli Kushram



No Birds Land
Acrylic on paper
Kamli Kushram



Churning
Acrylic on paper
Puroshottam Kushram

Prabhakar Trikam

Another young pardhan artist of Patan, loves to draw sitting outside his mud house, is trying to develop his own style of representation by experimenting with colour, texture, lines and dots. We went to his houses while they were in search of mahua which they usually drink in the evening, after coming back from work .



Trikam sitting outside his home and painting



Acrylic and ink on sheet paper by Trikam



Dancing Peacock
Acrylic and ink on paper
Prabhakar Trikam



Shikar
Acrylic and ink on paper
Prabhakar Trikam



Scorpion
Acrylic and ink on paper
Puroshottam Kushram

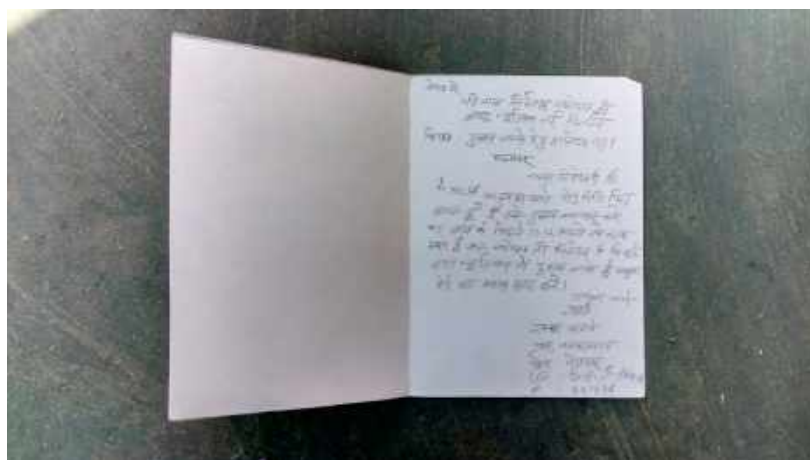
Dwarka & Tapsiram Paraste



Dwarika Paraste's Parent with his paintings



Acrylic and ink on sheet paper
Tapsiram Paraste



Dwarika Paraste's Letter to director of craft museum, Delhi.
Regarding getting a space to exhibit his work in the craft mela.



An old Painting on the wall of paraste's house.

Chandrakali Pushram

She was born in a pardhan gond family, she has been practicing the art since past many years along with all the daily work of home and farm, she lives in one of the few concrete cemented house in the village just down the line from

main village towards highway. She works for different market and clients; she is working on miniature paintings which then computerized into a graphic for ceramic cups. One can see the big paintings on canvas hanging onto the

walls of her house and beautiful visuals of peacock on the outer walls of the house.



Chandrakali in the aangan of her house.



Workspace on the terrace of her house



Chandrakali's framed painting



Work in progress
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



Work in progress
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



Work in progress
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



Plant Nurturing
Acrylic and ink on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



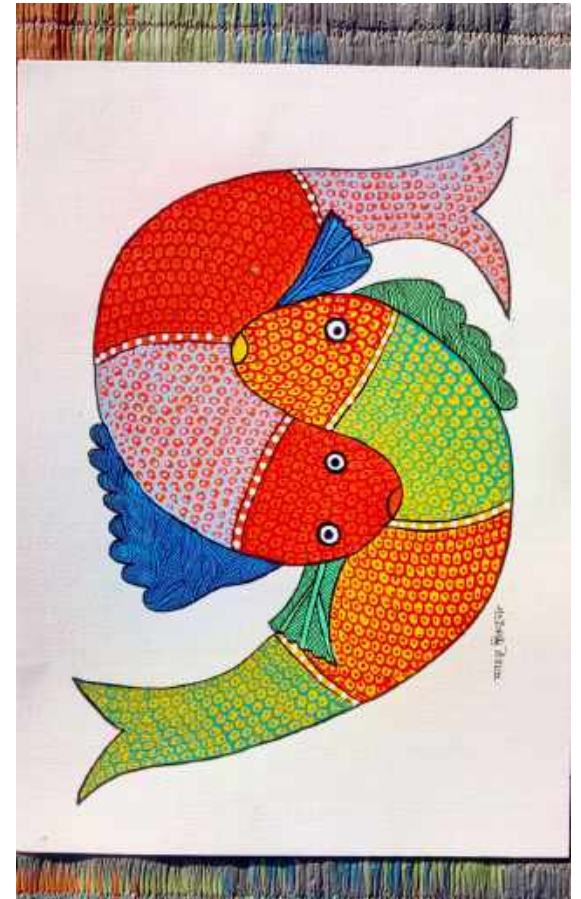
Flying Birds
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



Shell
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



Belonging
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram



Fish
Acrylic on sheet paper
Chandrakali Pushram

Making of a Gond Painting



Art ingredients of santosh maravi

Tools

Rotring pen – Earlier they used to make their own pen from a bamboo stick but now they have started using rotring pen as most of the famous artists in Bhopal use it and it doesn't require to make everything from starch, it is available in the market, which they get from Bhopal as they keep on going to Bhopal for selling their art work. These rotring pen comes in different sizes which makes it easy for them to draw very integrate detailing with a 0.1mm nib size as no other handmade tool can be used to get very fine thin lines. The size of the nib may vary from 0.1mm to 1mm as the requirement of the line width. Most of the artists use local rotring pen as it is much cheaper than the actual pen, "although the quality is not that good and it sometimes leaks also but it cost one tenth of original one that is why we use it", said one artist.

Brushes – They use normal paint brush which they source from the cities like Bhopal, Jabalpur or Dindori, most of the art supply they source from Bhopal, whenever they go once in few months, sometimes one person get material for other colleagues. Big brushes are used sometimes to paint the whole canvas first and then make drawing on it. Small brushes are used for filling colors in patterns.

Materials

Base

Generally A3 size cartridge, bond or ivory sheets and different size canvas are used as a base to paint, these sheets they get in a roll, which then they cut according to their requirement. As they live in an environment where chances of getting the white sheet dirty is high, so they need to keep it safe in a folder or inside a package so that their work will look neat and clean, which is what sells the most. The material somehow only demands the artist to respect it and keep it with gentleness, which becomes behaviour of an artist which again shows in his work.

Colours

Before they used to derive colors naturally from objects such as charcoal, coloured soil, plant sap, leaves and even cow dung. More specifically, yellow from Chui mitti which is a type of local sand, brown from Gheru mitti which is another type of sand, green is readily procured from leaves while the colour red is obtained from the Hibiscus flower.

Originally, natural colours were used for painting. Nowadays because of non-availability of natural colours and the easy availability of alternative colours, the artists have begun to utilize poster and acrylic colours in their work. Black and white colours were not generally used, but now they are also being used in ink.

Now they use acrylic, poster and water colours in their paintings, which they get it from the market. In the terms of colours, what distinguish the tribal from other modern arts even when they both use the same material and tool is the choices of colours pallet, although they don't have any formal training in art. Just by intuition and trying only they learn.

Pardhan artist use a combination of very vibrant and tribal colours, they say no other community can paint like us, this is our gift from god, even if you get trained in gond art and practice it for years, you won't be able to bring the aesthetic. This clearly express the cultural identity while the material is same for all. As in the age of information, what makes us unique is our culture. As also in the definition of tribal art, very specific style of colouring is only considered as tribal art, few tribal artist who went slightly off into modern and fine art are not considered as tribal artists and their art cannot be represented or sold under government certified tribal art.

Style

The artist's work with inherited conventions, the Pardhan Gond style is unmistakable and characteristic. At the same time, each artist brings something unique and individual to this expression of shared heritage. One of the distinctive elements is the use of 'signature patterns' that is used to 'infill' the larger forms on the canvas. These infill patterns are distinctive identifying marks used by the Gond artists and every Pardhan Gond painter has developed his or her own signature style. These signature patterns make the paintings stand apart from any other work of art, and it is said that not anyone except pardhans can make it. The imaginative use of the dots and lines imparts a sense of movement to the still images.

There are various explanations for their existence, and one of the most intriguing one traces it to tribal tattoo designs. Artists are also inspired by symbols from day to day life, for example a motif that represents dry, cracked earth or the intricate and delicate patterns made by the cross-section of cut lemon.

Subject

Their subject matter extends from myths and folklores to images of daily life - not only from what exists but also much that is drawn from dreams, memory and imagination. Numerous Gods and Goddesses, strange and exotic birds, flying snakes, tigers, dogs and cattle, breathtakingly beautiful trees and several other entities who inhabited the age old songs of the Pardhans – these are just some of the wonderful and fabulous subject matters of Gond art. What is amazing is that all of these originally existed as notes and lyrics and nuances of their story telling musical traditions, and have gradually evolved and manifested on the canvas in vibrant colors and in an inimitable, distinctive style.



A farmer under a tree waiting for the rain to come
Acrylic and ink on sheet paper
Shravan Paraste

Process

Paper and canvas are the new medium of storytelling for the pardhans. The artist first selects a story from their rich culture of folklore. After visualising the dominant concept of the work, a rough pencil outline is made for the narrative.

Once bright acrylic colours have filled the larger forms drawn on the canvas or paper, small 'signature pattern' motifs evocative of tattoos or elements of nature are drawn or 'infilled'. A rich visual narrative imagery thus evolves from juxtaposed forms from the folklore.



A basic sketch of the painting



Tracing pencil sketch and filling colours.



Artist mansingh filling the sketch with his signature pattern.



Artist filling acrylic colours with paint brush.



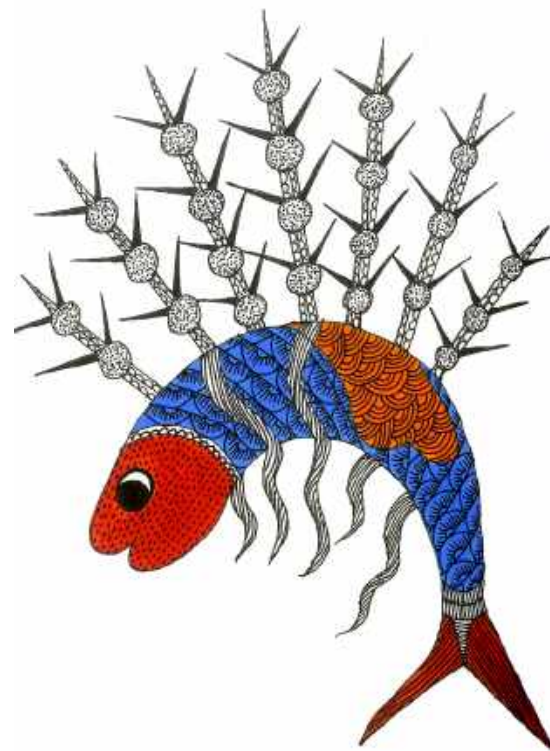
1



2



3



4

1. Pencil sketch on blank paper.
2. Tracing pencil sketch with fine ink pen.
3. Filling acrylic colours with brush.
4. Final painting with signature pattern.

Cultural significance

Gond art comes with the belief that a good image brings good luck. This inherent belief led the Gonds to decorate their houses and floors with traditional tattoos and motifs. According to the Gond belief system, each and everything whether it is a hill, river, rock or a tree is inhabited by a spirit and, consequently, is sacred. So the Gond people paint them as a form of respect and reverence. In the eyes of a Gond artist, everything is sacred and intimately connected to nature. Thus, the unique oral narrative tradition of the Gonds is reflected in their paintings as well. The work of Gond artists is rooted in their folk tales and culture, and thus story-telling is a strong element of every painting. However every artist today has a personal style and has developed a specific language within these narratives creating a richness of aesthetic forms and styles. However, while a majority of Gond paintings do take inspiration from nature, it isn't the only source of inspiration. They also showcase images from the daily lives of the tribe and abstract concepts like emotions, dreams and imagination. The artists express their faiths and beliefs, world view, their visual expression and sense of identity, both as a collective, and as individuals.

It is not just a form or colour which makes the painting, for an artist and also for the community, it is their identity and significant a part of their culture, it is directly related to the god of bada dev, which still in many paintings can be seen, as pardhans used to evoke bada dev sitting under saja tree and sing the songs and recite the stories offering to bada dev and many other god and goddess, the paintings also do the same, it's just that the music has been replaced by visuals and bana by paint and canvas. They gonds always give the importance for collective memories, so much that they have given this work all together to pardhans to keep the memories alive, which is what pardhans are doing in the form of paintings.

Evolution

Circumstances have changed the way they paint, the gonds now paint on paper and canvas, using a pallet of commercial colours. Yet remarkably, even though many of them no longer live in the old way, their imagination is still linked to the forest. The tree is at the heart of it, providing not just shade, shelter and nourishment, but also a rich imaginative universe of narratives and beliefs.

As their art is opening up to the outside world, the world is taking it to the next level with different designs, material and techniques which is also slowly changing the artist and the community and the intent with which it was originated, it is moved from just an expression of an individual or a community to a design element which is commercial, it is now being done on the basis of need and demand of others, most of the artist work either on the contract basis or to sell their art work to government organizations, it is rare to find artists who work just for the delight of expression or for the cultural values as collective memories.

New Medium And Material

As this tribal art goes places, outside people are demanding it on different mediums and materials. The art is now being changed in-shape to become graphics for product packaging, patterns on textile, digital typeface, prints on bags, ceramic products, wooden boxes, illustrations on cloths. Artists collaborate with different designers and studios to make such things. Artists are getting more and more work which bring new challenges and experiences for them also, big studios and designers from India and abroad are approaching these artists from the village to work for them on a contract basis. They ship the material to the artist home in the village and they paint on it and ship back then it gets polished and sells at a high price in the national and international market.

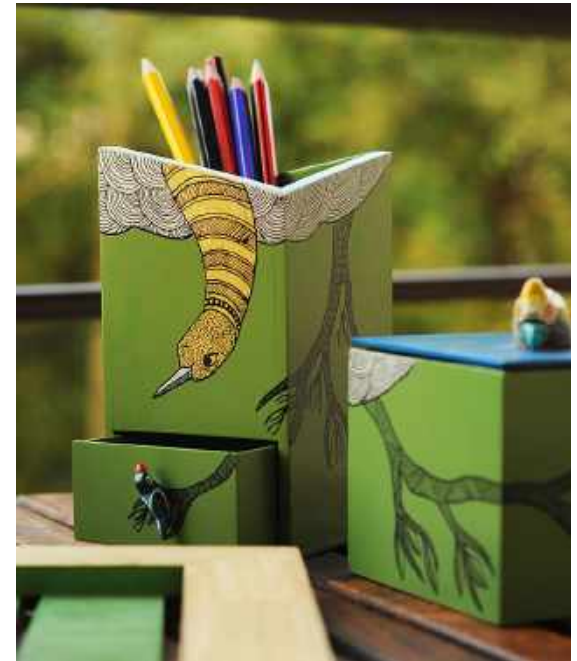
Since the inception of pen, paper and canvas in the process the requirement of raw material is usually fulfilled by the market, artists get the material like paper sheets, canvas, pens, colours and other stationery from Bhopal.



4.12 - Rajender Shyam illustration on a bag



4.13 - Painting on a Cookie box



4.14 - Painting on a Pen-stand



4.15 - Gond art used for product packaging

Other Crafts

Digna And Bhittichitra

They make ground and wall their canvas and use limestone or charcoal as medium to make various decorative paintings. These are not just mere decorations, but also the instant expressions of their religious sentiments and devotions. Themes of the Gond paintings are based on the local festivals like Karwa Chauth, Deepawali, Ahoi Ashtami, Nag Panchmi, Sanjhi etc. Horses, elephants, tigers, birds, Gods, men and objects of daily life are painted in bright and multi-coloured hues. For every occasion a new painting or mural is made.

Digna is usually painted on the floor in front of the house during a marriage ceremony, as marriage is an affair of three to four days with different functions and rituals each day, digna represent different day of marriage ceremony, the first day is represented by a particular style of digna so is the second and third day, which communicate to the neighbours and villagers which day of the marriage is today.

Bhittichitra is a relief work made out of mud and natural colours on the walls of the house, usually these handmade murals are made during construction of the house.



Bhittichitra on the entrance wall of a house in patangarh.



Digna Painting by Ram Kumar Shyam's Wife



Digna Painting by Ram Kumar Shyam's Wife

Wood Sculpture

Pardhan gond's craftsman started this tradition of giving shape to Sagoan(teak) wood using few very basic hand tool, and generation through generation this art is being practiced by many pardhan's along with the painting. Not many craftsman are left in this form of expression, To name a few Gangaram, Ramkumar, or Sukhnandi, they sculpt a fragment of flowing time in a piece of wood. Some of these artists are now giving form to their narratives through sculpture. Sculpted deities, birds and animals, and heroes and heroines, as if, come to a moment of repose from the flowing current of the narratives. Their postures seem to have a flow that suggests their next move.

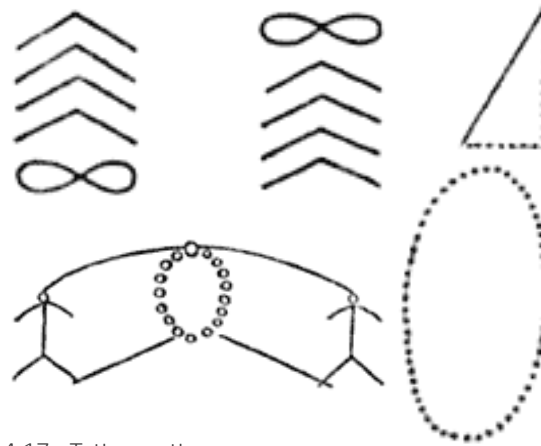


4.16 - Wooden Sculpture by Sukhnandi Vyam.

Tattoos

Another form of creative expression for Gond is the gudna or tattoo. Images of the sun, moon, birds and various elements are traced on body parts in the belief that the wearer carries the gudna to the next world. Some think that the dots in Jangarh's paintings and in the painters who came after him are sourced from Tattoos, as there is a lot of use of dots in tattoos. As the Gond-Pardhan believes, tattoos are the permanent human ornaments, especially women's, and it is only when they have been checked that a dead person is allowed entry to heaven.

Traditionally, Gond and Kolam women wore meagre clothes which left a good part of their body exposed to sun. Much of bare skin used to be covered with tattoos, or 'kohkana' in Gondj, which gave the individual a decent look. Tattooing on the back, waist, arms and face was done during infancy of the girl child. The practice continues to this day but the size of the tattoo is much smaller.



4.17 - Tattoo patters.



4.18 - Tattoos being applied on Baiga women by the women of the Gond tribe.



4.19 - Gond Women showing tattooing on backs of their legs.

Folklores

Shiva and Mahua

The story talks of one of the many earthly travels undertaken by Shiva, the Lord of Destruction, and therefore of new beginnings (in the Hindu pantheon, the trinity of creator preserver and destroyer is represented by Bramha Vishnu and Shiva) While walking through a forest, lord Shiva was tempted by the shade of Mahua tree and longed to rest a while. As he settled himself under the tree, tired and thirsty as he was, he happened to see some water that had collected in one of the hollows of the tree. Now, the Mahua fruit is well known as an intoxicant. The hollow in the tree also contained some over-ripe mahua fruit and when Shiva drank of it, he quickly became mildly and pleasantly inebriated. The 'water' tasted delicious - cool and sweet and scented by the mahua fruit, and soon Shiva was drinking from it again and again.

As his intoxication grew, Shiva went from babbling like a parrot (lost control over his tongue!), to becoming aggressive and intimidating, like a tiger, and then finally lost all control and rolled in the dirt like a boar, grunting and growling without a thought to his standing or position. It is an interesting tale, and not just at one level...it cautions one of the dangerous effects of over-imbibing

alcohol, persuading you to consider that if Shiva himself was reduced to an animal, what chance have you, a mere mortal, to have dominion over yourself when under the influence of intoxicants.



4.20
Shivji and Mahua
30" X 48" Acrylic on Canvas
By Rajendra Shyam

Udata Hathi

According to Gondi folklore, the winged elephant was used by Gods and Goddesses in heaven, to transport them from place to place. One day, when the Lord was resting he told the elephant to take a break. The elephant decided to fly to the earth. Upon reaching the earth, he was delighted to find fields of sugarcane and banana trees. As soon as he started eating the sugarcane the villagers came and tried to scare him off. But the elephant would not move. They then called the Lord and asked him to intervene. The Lord was displeased with the Elephant and asked him never to go to earth again. A few days later, the Elephant went back to Earth to eat the sugarcane, he had loved



the lush forests and the bananas. The villagers were upset, they asked the Lord to help. The Lord was furious and told the villagers to organize a feast and the Elephant was invited to join the revelry too. After enjoying a hearty meal and the Mahua wine the elephant fell asleep. While he was asleep, the Lord cut off his wings. He gave one to the Banana tree and one to the Peacock. From that day the Peacock has a beautiful Plumage and the Banana tree has large leaves.

4.21 - Udata Hathi
36" X 48" Acrylic on canvas
By Rajendra Shyam.

4.22 - Ganja and Mahua
Venkat Raman Singh Shyam

The marriage of desire and intoxication

According to legends, the ganja plant and the mahua tree are husbed and wife, they were human beings once, lovers who could not marry because they came from different castes. Refusing to be separated, they went deep into the jungle and took their own lives. They were reborn as plants on the spot where they died. Seeing the beauty of their love, Shankar bhagwan, the creator, named them Ganja and Mahua, cannabis and alcohol.



The Peacock and its Ugly Feet

According to Gondi folklore, God resolved to create the universe in all of fourteen days. Over the first seven days, he fashioned the earth below and the skies above, and colonized the space between them with all the creatures, plants and beings we see today. God desired that the universe be a place of beauty and grace, and so decided to spend the next seven days crafting a masterpiece creation of unsurpassable majesty, which he would adorn the universe with. After much thought, he finally decided upon the design of the creature we know as the peacock.

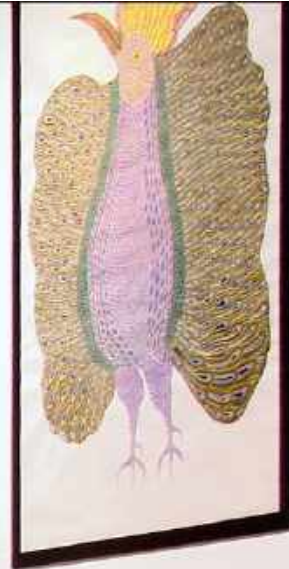
It was tedious and time-consuming work, three and a half days were spent on just the creature's peerless, resplendent feathers. The making of the body, covered with a shimmering plumage which dazzled the eye, took yet another three days. When the body was almost done, to his horror God saw that he had only half a day left in which to forge his new creature's feet. Racing against time, God now worked with a reckless haste and his craftsmanship suffered. He managed to finish just as the fourteenth day was ending. The faultiness

of these last parts of his creation showed – the feet were both ugly and ungainly. But they looked even more repulsive and out of place when seen on a creature of otherwise matchless beauty.

However, like all things, even these ugly feet served a purpose – they kept the vanity of this prized creation of God reigned in. Now whenever the peacock unfurls his feathers and struts about, swelling with pride at his own magnificence, the sight of his ugly feet humbles him, and at times even brings him to tears.



4.23 - Peacock and its ugly feet
36" X 48" Acrylic on Canvas
By Rajendra Shyam



User, Clientele And Market

Organizations

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkatnak

The only university of its kind in south asia, provides research facilities in tribal art, tradition, culture, language, medicinal systems, customs, forest based economic activities, flora, fauna and advancement in technologies relating to the natural resources of the tribal areas. The walls and complexes of the university are painted by gond artist from all over the area, they had invited all the local tribal people in the construction of the university which showcase tribal art and craft. The entrance walls of the campus are painted by many gonds artists from different villages including Patangarh and Garkhamatta. I went to see the painting with two artists from Garkhamatta, Santosh Maravi and Santosh Paraste, they showed me the work they have done on the walls along with all the other artist paintings, they feel proud to be a part of this institute and feel good about people from their community getting national and international exposure because of the university and getting a chance to do higher education.



Painting on the entrance wall of the university.



Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal

IGRMS or National Museum of Humankind or Museum of Man is an anthropology museum located in Bhopal, to present an integrated story of the evolution of man and culture with special reference to India. The museum provides tribes a platform to showcase their art and craft through exhibitions, workshops and installations happening at the museum, most of the Gond artists register themselves with the museum and give their paintings to the museum either to exhibit or to sell to the outer public through museum shop. Artists who work with clay and mud often make mud house and clay installations in the museum.



5.1 - Replica of village houses in the museum.



Tribal Museum, Kanha

The Tribal Museum features articles made by the Baiga and Gond tribes. The museum intends to conserve the tribal way of life, their culture and art. Pardhan artists including Ram Kumar Shyam work here at the museum on contract basis.



5.2 - Tribal Museum in Kanha.

Exhibitions And Collaborations

Gond Art Animation Workshop

In 2012 Four Gond artists with 14 animation students from NID over a period of two weeks worked together to explore the possibility of converting the tribe's rich oral tradition into lively animation film, The cartoon film was a part of the "Tales of the Tribes" collection of animated folktales from the India produced by the Adivasi Arts Trust.

Tara Books

Independent publishing house giving international voice to marginalized art and literature through their commune of artists, writers and designers collaborating on unusual, often handmade books. They have collaborated with many gond artists on different picture books projects including famous artist such as Bhajju Shyam, Durga Bai and Ramsingh Urveti. They publish the unheard and rare folklore in the form of beautiful picture books, illustrated by tribal artists. Some of this renowned many award winning works include :

The London Jungle Book – Bhajju Shyam
Signature: Patterns in Gond Art – Bhajju Shyam
The Night Life of Trees – Durga bai, Ram Singh Urveti, Bhajju Shyam.
Alone In The Forest – Bhajju Shyam
That's How I See Things – Bhajju Shyam
Bhimayana - Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is a graphic biography of Ambedkar by Durgabai Vyam, Subhash Vyam and writers Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand.



5.3 - Signature, A book on different paterns in gond art published by Tara books.

Independent Artists - Many artists of Jangarh Kalam are now held in high prestige. They are constantly invited to various places for work. Apart from private collections, their works are now found in art collections of various galleries both home and abroad. Through exhibitions they get their independent commission work which either they do it from village or go to the field and work.





Conclusion

The course of craft documentation has been an incredible journey for me personally, as i was always curious to know about the gond tribe, their culture, lifestyle and art. The course allowed me to go into the craft setting and experience the process of transformation from songs and stories to tangible painting, it enhanced my understanding of communities, their lifestyle, culture, traditions, and the environment they live in.

The pardhan gond art has seen many changes in medium, material, techniques and rituals. Now it is no more just a religious or cultural ritual to be performed, it's intend and values have changed from a pure expression of storytelling to client requirement and market. If Ganesha is what they want, how can they let the Pardhans make an image of Bada Dev. They no longer do it for the gonds, they work with people from varied field of life.

Today when almost all old tribal art form and traditions are dying, pardhan gond art is making a unique identity. "when information is same what differentiate us is the culture" holds true with the living art of pardhan gonds.

It's in the nature of art that the moment one
talks about its purpose, it begin to appear
small.

- Jangarh Kalam





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Image Caption, Credit & Source

Captions

page.2,3 -	Bhitichitra on the entrance wall of a house in patangarh, Dec'16
page.4 -	Shrine of Bada Dev under the Saja Tree of Patangarh, Dec'16
page.5 -	Dancing Peacock Painting by Shravan Paraste
page.9 -	Road to Patangarh
page.10 -	Toilet in the backyard of a house in patanarh
page.56 -	Sher (Tiger) Ink on Paper by Bhajju Shyam
page.69 -	Saja Tree of Garkhamatta representing the branching, roots and origin of jangarh kalam with rays of hope for future
page.70 -	Family of gond pardhan artist Santosh maravi in his house
page.86 -	Ram Kumar Shyam busy at work.
page. 124 -	Jangarh singh shyam solo show, in paris 2010
page. 130 -	View from top of the village hill in patangarh, December 2016
page. 133 -	On the way to patangarh. Dec'16

Credits

4.10,5.3	Tara Books
4.18	IICD, Jaipur
5.1	Bhargav Padiyar

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