

tribes india



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PITHORA PAINTING



The Pithora paintings are the ritual paintings of Rathwa, Bhilala, Naik and Bhil tribes of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. For them these paintings on the walls of their homes go beyond the realm of decorative art - it is an act of propitiation, of

thanksgiving and commemoration of auspicious occasions. Pithora as this form of decorative art is called, has animated figures and makes lavish use of colors.

As with most tribal art all ingredients used for making Pithora paintings are natural. Pigments are mixed with milk to prepare the colors. The pigments are derived from leaves, flowers and other forest produce. Most of these paintings are seen on the mud walls of their huts. The walls of inner rooms are most important and have elaborate, ornate decorations. Unlike with other artistic tribes like Warli, the Pithora painters are without exception, all men.

There is an interesting ritual that precedes the undertaking of the painting, the priest of the community, the Badwa, is sent for

when there is problem in the family. The Badwa suggests a series of propitiating acts which almost always involves the painting of Pithora on the walls of the house. The Pithora Baba is regarded as the reigning deity of the community and his presence and advice is a final dictum for the tribes.



The first wall of the house is considered most appropriate for the Pithora. But the painting is carried out on three walls, so the first wall and the other two walls adjoining it are all readied for the painting. The

walls are first plastered with mud and cow dung by the unmarried girls of the house, a process known as lipna. The painters then proceed with their work.

The Pithora paintings are very colorful and vibrant in nature. The main figures of Rathwa paintings are a series of horses which represent the Pithora Deo and other gods and goddesses of the Rathwa pantheon. Several other mythological characters i.e. Barah Mattha, Ganesh, horse with two faces and human and animal figures engaged in various activities are also depicted.

Fortunately Pithora paintings have come into focus after years of hibernation. Today it is once again seen to be amongst the finest in tribal art.

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