

tribes india



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## WARLI PAINTING



Warli painting get its name from the Warli tribe, inhabitants of Thane and Nasik areas of Maharashtra. Warli painting came to light in the seventh decade of the last century. It is now recognized world over and the famous Warli painter, Jivya

Some Mashe, is regarded as a living legend. Considering its simple, yet vivid expression in form and figures, artist and scholars believe this style of painting could well be following a tradition that originated some time in the Neolithic period between 2500 BC and 3000 BC. This is a very basic art form compared to the vibrant Madhubani or Pithora paintings. The only color used in Warli painting is white, which is obtained from grinding rice into powder.

Traditionally in every Warli tribal village, these paintings are carried out at marriage ceremonies by the "savashinis" married women. The painting is a fertility rite. Trained from childhood with observing other savashinis, these artists are well versed in the conventions of the painting, as well as the cosmic laws that they represent. Several Warli men have also opted to this mode of painting to earn a livelihood.

This art has a specific ritual and social connotation by linking it to the ceremony of marriage the objective is to enhance proliferation of the community. At the

same time this tradition does not fail to incorporate individual sensibility and expression.

Interestingly Warli paintings not only depict mythological characters and deities, but mirror social life with human figures engaged in hunting, dancing,



sowing and harvesting. Usually done on the walls and floors of Warli homes, they come close to pre-historic cave paintings in execution.

Warli paintings today are highly visible and easily recognized in that they are painted on an austere mud base using just one

color, white, with occasional dots in red and yellow. The themes are highly repetitive and symbolic. Several Warli paintings depict Goddess Palghat and often include a horse used by the bride and groom.



The paintings served a purpose for the tribals before civilization reached out to them, drawing figures and diagrams was the only way these non-lettered people could hand down their hereditary knowledge and folklore. It was left to the womenfolk to transmit this heritage. While the women painted, the Dhavaleris (married female priests) sang traditional songs. The walls were first given a thorough wash with wet cow dung, red mud was then smeared over it, giving it a

brownish finish. Women used grass or bamboo twigs and thin rice paste to draw designs. These paintings were repeatedly erased and replaced by new ones at different rituals.

Seldom does one see a straight line in Warli painting. There are triangular humans and animals with stick-like hands and legs, rows of dots and dashes make up straight lines. However, with recent international exposure, the artists have started to draw straight lines in their paintings. Today since Warli men have taken to painting, they often carry out their work on paper or cloth fusing traditional decorative Warli motifs with modern elements like even cars and airplanes.

Prepared by Ms. Jaya Ramanathan for TRIFED.

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**Tribal Co-operative Marketing  
Development Federation of India Ltd.(TRIFED)**

NCUI Building, 2nd Floor, 3, Siri Institutional Area,

August Kranti Marg, New Delhi-110016

Ph. : 26966247, Fax : 26966149

[www.trifed.nic.in](http://www.trifed.nic.in), [www.tribes.nic.in](http://www.tribes.nic.in)

e-mail : [trifed@nda.vsnl.net.in](mailto:trifed@nda.vsnl.net.in)