

# Tribes in India : Their Socio-Economic Development through Art

**Dr. Archana Rani**

Head and Associate Professor, Visual Art : Drawing and Painting Department, R.G. (PG) College, Meerut

**Dr. Himanshu Agarwal**

Associate Professor, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, D. N. College, Meerut

(Corresponding Author)

Paper Code : JCT-A19-AR-HA

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.26703/JCT.v14i1-12>

Web Address : <http://www.jctindia.org/april2019/v14i1-12>

Archive : <https://ideas.repec.org/a/jct/journal/v14y2019i1p82-82.html>

<http://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:jct:journal:v:14:y:2019:i:1:p:82-82>

Similarity : 12 percent



**How to Cite:** Rani, A., & Agarwal, H. (2019). Tribes in India : Their Socio-Economic Development through Art. (H. Agarwal, Ed.) *Journal of Commerce and Trade*, 14 (1), 83–82. <https://doi.org/10.26703/JCT.v14i1-12>.

## Abstract

*Tribes are the keeper of nature. About 92 percent of the tribal community in India lives in dry, forested or hilly areas. They primarily depend on Agriculture and Minor Forest Produce (MFP) to sustain their life. The central part of India, The middle belt and the north-eastern states are the main adobe of tribal community in India. Tribal arts of India are deeply rooted in tradition and have evolved their own techniques and characteristics. Different Tribe arts are increasingly recognized as a independent art forms having distinct aesthetic beauty. All the art factors that give a distinct individuality to an artistic creation like composition, line, colour, texture and rhythm. In this research paper socio-economic development of Tribes in India through art has been analysed in depth. A special approach should have been formulated by the Indian Government with protection and integration of tribes as its principal objective of all-round development of tribes.*

**Keywords :** Tribes, Socio-Economic, religious, Painting, Commercialization, Preservation.

**Classification-JEL :** D 63, F 43, I 15, I 25, J 11, J 15

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The English word 'Tribe' has come from the Latin word 'tribus' which signifies a particular Type of common organisation which is in line with societies. (Gupta, 2008) Tribal population is found in almost all parts of India. Indian Tribes are very much dependent on forest for their day-to-day needs, including food, shelter and medicine. Tribes are the keeper of nature. About 92 percent of the tribal community in India lives in dry, forested or hilly areas. They primarily depend on Agriculture and

Minor Forest Produce (MFP) to sustain their life. The central part of India, The middle belt and the north-eastern states are the main adobe of tribal community in India. (Agarwal, 2018)

The tribal people people living in far flung areas dependent or rich bio-cultural resources have always been curious in exploring the plant resources of their immediate nearby area in order to sustain their traditional livelihood system (Singh, et al., 2008). Tribal Art is the visual art and material culture of indigenous peoples. These arts are often

ceremonial or religious in nature and sometimes it is a medium of livelihood in forest or hill.

Tribal arts are not for the sake of art, but a very important part of tribal life. These arts are the reflection of their cultural, religious environment. These arts are thus closely related to their other customs like music, drama and dance. Whatever the ceremony, they draw on the walls. At the same time, the environment being festive and everyone being happy, there is dancing and singing, which is immediately reflected in the painting.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PAPER**

The objectives of this research paper is to study the religious customs and traditions of the Indian tribes through their arts.

The significance of present paper arises from the fact that tribal cultures, traditions and paintings need to be preserved.

This present study was carried out by the study of tribal art of various states, such as odisha, Bihar, Maharastra and Madhya Pradesh.

## **3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ART**

Tribal economy is the best development model and needs to be replicated anywhere in the country. Thus, the traditional knowledge system has to be revised through organizing forums where people having expertise in these different traditional skills are invited Handicrafts, rural and community-based industries, and subsistence economy. Traditional activities of the people concerned, such as fishing, collection of MFP, shall be recognized as important in the maintenance of their cultures and development. The government should ensure provisions for tribal people to deal with emergencies/ disasters created due to environmental degradation like recurring drought of forest produce, sand casting, floods and ailments like infections and vector borne diseases, Facilitate support price for minor millets and lentils produced in the

tribal belt to encourage continuation of such crops in production, Promote sustainable small-scale livelihood-oriented bio-energy initiatives which can provide improved access to sustainable and affordable energy services, enhance livelihoods for rural people and increase their resilience to the effects of climate change, without negative impact on food production and the environment. (Agarwal, 2018)

## **4. TRIBAL ART**

Tribal art has grown and prospered on its own foundations in the lap of nature. So, the life of the tribals continues to be natural and unsophisticated. On the other hand, civilized person has got entangled in mechanisation, artificial existence and a pseudo culture, which are quite devoid of the genuine human sensibility. Tribal art has evolved its own technique, and stands deeply rooted in the tribal ceremonies and beliefs. Tribal art, therefore, portrays life in this pure and unadulterated form. That why it is being accorded a respectable position in the world of art.

### **a) Characteristics of Tribal Art**

Indian Tribes live in forests: acute poverty is their companion; faith in rustic magic, nature worship, illiteracy and backwardness are common to all tribals, residing in any part of the country. They live in huts and are half naked; their livelihood is agriculture in the forest clearings and they survive on the natural commodities which are easily available there. Their innocent, simple and unsophisticated religious beliefs are almost identical. Escape from illness, worship of spirits, gods and goddesses, invocation for fulfilment of desires, are the common beliefs and are expressed in different ways in different circumstances.

Indian Tribe creates art for various purposes like wedding ceremony, memorials for the dead, prevention of disease, protection in a crisis, agricultural prosperity. Besides, they paint their houses solely for decoration. (Rani, 2015)

Naturally, their paintings include various incidents and objects which take on a symbolic significance. Moreover, all objects, including animals, flowers, leaves, etc. are drawn in a decorative form.

Thus, the aesthetics in tribal crafts in perhaps partly to satisfy man's innate desire for beauty and partly for the emotions it evokes. Symbols and styles are worked out independently and technique does not receive much attention. So, in tribal art there is complete absence of light and shade. In a way it simplifies the process of painting, but realistic effect becomes secondary.

Like contemporary art, figures do not overlap each other. The painting shows all objects complete and drawn at the same level like a child's drawing. There is no border or frame in his wall paintings. In one painting a viewer will find various stories and incidents and absence of horizon. Painting is created with symbolic adornment. (Jain, 1984) Many times the lines of human figures drawn give an impression of decoration or border design. Instead of facial expressions and detail, the decorations found are geometrical, very simple and easy to draw. (Kumar, 1984)

Actually, the shape and size of the objects in a painting is dependent on availability of space in a painting, instead of their proportional size and shape. And that is why many a time it so happens that a human figure drawn is larger than that of an elephant. The sparrows or birds sitting on a house are many times larger compared to the house. Tribal artist does not give any importance to reality. So, perspective, rules of composition and the use of light and shade. Mixing of colours are absent. Tribal artist describes his inner feelings, emotions, myth in a very simple and expressive way. Tribal art was born to express one's feelings, beliefs and ceremonies. But, when a contemporary artist draws a painting, he divides space with the best of his ability, uses perspective, own shapes and tonal values of colours.

Tribes Art influence on Contemporary Art : Modern art was born in the early nineteenth century when the era of realistic art had almost ended. It had become easy to show the outer manifestation of the world with the help of the camera. Since the goods were delivered by a sheer mechanical device, artists started losing interest in realistic art and as a consequence seeds of modern art were sown.

Modern art developed in two main directions : One is some artists, instead of painting the realistic outer world, started painting only to express the inner self. Thus impressionism, expressionism and surrealism came into being. The second direction gave more importance to the fundamentals of art, such as colour, line, form, texture, solidity and composition. (Mahawar, 2011) The composition received greater attention than the subject. Colours were used for their own sake, lines were being considered as lines and not as part of the shape. Thus were born cubism and abstract art.

A closer inspection at the development of modern Indian art before independence, however, reveals that, many artists at the beginning of the modern art movement derived their themes mainly from Indian mythology and religion along with conscious incorporation symbols and themes from tribal art. (Santra, 2011) Taking inspiration from tribal art styles, they aimed at intense simplifications and abandoned the natural in favor of the abstract or the geometric. They ignored perspective, used color for its own sake or for symbolic purposes and had freely distorted and modified the human form. Artists like Nandlal Bose juxtaposed folk art with classical content in such a way that it exuded spiritualism. (Ganguly, 2015) Whereas sculptor Ramkinkar Baij integrated elements of Santhal tribal art and life into his own work and enhanced them by an understanding of Western expressionism. Ganesh Pyne's haunting fantasies draw viewers into surreal landscapes where history, reality and folklore intersect, Whereas Lalu Prasad Shaw and Jamini Roy drew inspiration from

Kalighat Pat and Santhal, often depicting pleasant and quiet scenes from their own life. Logen Chowdhury successfully married traditional imagery with the zeitgeist of contemporary painting. (Meena, 2003)

Many other contemporary artists who used tribal element in their paintings were Almelker, Gulam M Seikh, J. Swaminathan. Many established and young artists also inspired by Indian Tribal art and one can see the reflection and glory of tribal arts in their art works. Thus, Indian artists were lucky enough to perceive and probe tribal art because India has been treasuring her characteristic traditional folk art since ages. Some artists who are born and who have spent their childhood among the tribals are fully drenched in the colours of primitive art. (Taradatt, 2001) They have from time to time derived inspiration in various forms from the rhythm, colour composition, dance movement, music, sculpture and paintings of the tribals. (Gupta C. S., 2008)

In short, Modern art has brought simplicity and spontaneity in painting. Consequently, disorganization of forms was adopted and geometrical shapes which already existed in tribal art, were introduced. As has already been said, many modern artists have derived their inspiration from tribal art. Madhvi Parekh is the example of it. That is what accounts for the similarity between the two. In the evolution of modern art, the most significant fact was the artists' endeavour to depart from the bonds of tradition and advocate the unfettered flow of thoughts and ideas. (Bhasha Research & Publication Centre, 2012)

#### **b) Preservation of Tribal Art**

Tribal art is a heritage that needs to be preserved and promoted first of all recognition of the artists may be ensured. There are many artists who could never come up to the limelight due to want of recognition and their artistic know-how will also die along with them to popularize the arts, programmes such as cultural exchange, cultural exhibition may be organized

through which the people will uphold and spread their culture and they will also learn about other's culture.

Tribal art should be preserved in different documentations like photographs, audio-visual documentation like— coloured slides, short movies. Artists and artisans work should be exhibited in museums and art galleries.

The ministry of Tribal affairs is the Government body that handles tribal affairs under varied department. They carry out scientific techniques to preserve the exotic tribal heritage in India. (Kashyap, 2015) In Madhya Pradesh, Tribal Museum of M.P. art and Crafts is established. In every state there should be Tribal Museums to exhibit the tribal art of that state. Different tribal arts of India should be the part of syllabus in UG, PG Colleges, Universities and institutions of Design, Fashion and Textile. Today, we see many books in tribal arts of India, but more books should be written about them specially statewise. Art galleries and museums should promote these arts and publish Monograms, Cards, books for public and students. (Thakur, 2014) Therefore, these are the few steps that can be taken to ensure the preservation of heritage and culture of tribal people from various parts of India.

#### **c) Commercialization of Tribal Art**

Tribal art in India apparently has a great potential in the international market, because of its traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity. The Tribal paintings bear distinctive colourful designs, which are treated with religious and mystical motifs. (Chakraverty, 2018) Tribal art is not restricted only to paintings, but also other art forms like pottery, ornaments, home decoration items, cloth making and many more. But, The Tribal art in India is under valued. The Tribal artists are based for their livelihood on their artworks only. Therefore, the less price for their arts can not support their family, upgradation and development. Moreover, the less price also

demotivate them to indulging the art works. There should be a consensus to pay them the true value for their work, so that they can happily live with their family.

## 5. Conclusion

A special approach should have been formulated by the Indian Government with protection and integration of tribes as its principal objective of all-round development of tribes. Due to the many flaws, the Draft National Policy on Tribal should be replaced as soon as possible, by an appropriate National Tribal Policy is meaningful and adhered to, policies of other departments and ministries such as some aspects of the economic policy would necessarily need to be revised. (Agarwal, 2018)

India has some many diverse art forms that reflect the country's rich traditional heritage. However, due to the problems faced by tribal communities, such as loss of land and integration into mainstream society, the future of Indian tribal art is a concern. The number of

artists in dwindling, as tribal folk culture has deteriorated and become neglected.

Fortunately, the Indian government and other organizations are making an effort to preserve and promote tribal art. Commercialization is important for survival of tribal art but with the advancement of commercialization, tribal art is bound to lose its spirit and vitality and will just remain as a artifact instead of a creative art. Tribal art is a major source of inspiration to contemporary artists, Indian as well as Western. Its highly inspiring qualities are originality, simplicity and the force of expression. The Tribal art of India is very ethnic and simple, and yet colourful, vibrant enough to speak volumes about the country's rich heritage.

---

## References

1. Agarwal, H. (2018). Socio Economic Development of PVTGs in India : Problems and Solutions. In D. Bhowmik (Ed.), *Developmental Issues of Tribes* (1 ed., pp. 92-105). New Delhi: Shandilya Publications.
2. Bhasha Research & Publication Centre. (2012). *Tribal Arts in India – The National Inventory of Tribal Museum*. Vadodara: Purna Prakash Publications.
3. Chakraverty, S. (2018). *Early Rock Art and Tribal Art in India*. New Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation India Pvt. Ltd.
4. Ganguly, W. (2015). *Indian Folk Jewellery*. New Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation India Ltd.
5. Gupta, C. (2008). *Indian Folk and Tribal Paintings*. New Delhi: Roli Books.
6. Gupta, C. S. (2008). *Indian Folk and Tribal Paintings*. New Delhi: Roli Books.
7. Jain, J. (1984). *Painted Myths of Creation, Art and Ritual of Indian Tribe*. New Delhi: Mapin Publishing.
8. Kashyap, K. K. (2015). *Folk Painting of Mithila*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
9. Kumar, P. (1984). *Folk Icons and Rituals in Tribal Life*. Delhi: Abhinav Publications.
10. Mahawar, N. (2011). *Bastar Bronzes– Tribal Religion and Art*. Delhi: Abhinav Publications.
11. Meena, J. S. (2003). *Adiwasi Tribes of India*. Delhi: Adhyayan Publisher.
12. Rani, A. (Ed.). (2015). *Folk Art of India*. Meerut: Visual Art : Drawing & Painting Department, R. G. College.
13. Santra, T. (2011). *Folk Arts of West Bengal and The Artist*. New Delhi: Niyogi Books.
14. Taradatt. (2001). *Tribal Development in India*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
15. Thakur, M. R. (2014). *Himachal Ki Lok Kalyan aur Aasthaya*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.