

# REDEFINING THE FOLK ART - WARLI PAINTINGS IN INTERIORS

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**Abstract:** Warli paintings are a folk art tradition of painting which existed in India since times immemorial. These paintings are an example of multiplicity which resides in Indian paintings. Warli painting of India brings information to us regarding life and communication which existed in the days of old. Warli painting in India is very unusual and stand apart from other folk and tribal painting so India. The warli paintings and their art form are analogous to the pre-historic cave painting in its finishing. Their themes are not mythological, colours are subtle and sensuality is not mirrored in any of these paintings. They are rather simple and soft origin of warli paintings. The largest tribe found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai is warli. Warli art was first discovered in the early of the seventh decade in the past century. As no records of the accurate origins of this art are found, it may belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. warli paintings in India vividly express every day and societal events of the warli tribe of Maharashtra. These paintings represent the embellishment of the walls a village homes. It was only through these paintings that the legends were conveyed to the people. The purpose of this project is to do a study about the Warli paintings and its history to understand it better and incorporate Warli in the interiors. The study inclines towards the design of the elements of the interiors through explorations of Warli paintings.

**Index Terms - Folk art, Warli, Craftsmen, Interior.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Warli art is one of rich traditional folk-art practised and preserved by tribal communities in India. Warli art is found in northern outskirts of Thane and Palghar district of Maharashtra. Tribal communities named Warli, Malkhar Koli, Kathodi, Kokana, Dhodi follow this art-form as it is an integral part of their culture. Roots of this art can be found in the 10th century. Similar paintings of 500 and 10000 BC are found in rock shelters of Bhimketka, Madhya Pradesh.

Warli art is ancient, highly repetitive and symbolic in nature. It follows the visual style and contains repetitive elements. Warli artists are now also changing its expression form just paintings to products of consumer value as Warli art is becoming popular among modern society. Warli art is visual representations of the lifestyle and culture of a tribal community. It carry-forwards the values, traditions and knowledge from one generation to next, In the form of paintings on mud walls of huts and temples. Warli art in the form of paintings is internationally appreciated art form but very few people know about the lifestyle and culture of tribal depicted in these painting of Warli art.

## II. HISTORY OF WARLI PAINTINGS

Warli art resembles prehistoric cave paintings, according to the book on Warli 'Painted World of the Warli' by Yashodhara Dalmia, roots of Warli can be found back to 2500 to 3000 BCE. Its visual resemblance to the cave paintings points to its prehistoric origin. Warli art is a form of such preserved and practised art by the tribal community as it becomes the part of their traditions and hence this art form propagated from one generation to the next generation. In the late 1970s, an artist Jivya Soma Mashe started practising Warli art on an everyday basis and not only as part of rituals. His exceptional talent and work in Warli soon got national and international recognition. He received the Padma Shri award for his contribution towards Warli painting. He introduced Warli to the world as an art form and inspired much tribal youth to practice Warli as commercial art. Now tribal youth identified the potential of their traditional art and started using its benefit for the development of their community. Even formal government-approved courses and training of Warli is now available in this area to empower youth and create new Warli artists.



Figure 1 - Warli art in the Past and Present scenario

## III. WARLI PAINTINGS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Warli painting has a very basic graphic vocabulary like Circles, Triangles, Squares & lines. Straight were are not part of traditional Warli art, in old paintings, these lines are made up of series of dots now artists are using straight lines. Elements of Warli painting represent members of community and nature and events depicted in Warli paintings are part of their social life. There are some common patterns in Warli art like 'Lagnacha Chauk', it is a traditional painting for the marriage ceremony. Repetitive visual elements include Tree of life, Tarpa dance, Baarisi festival and Peran.



Figure 2 - Warli Paintings depicting Holi and Harvest Festival respectively

Warli painting never uses religious iconography such as figures of gods and religious symbols. It represents nature as a god and talks about human dependence and association with nature. Warli paintings depict a sense of uniformity in people and highlight close social relations within their community members. Elements in paintings such as trees, animals, events, social gatherings and formations of humans are from real-life scenarios and situations. A Warli painting can also be a visual narration of their traditional stories. Artists nowadays are including elements of the modern world such as bicycle, car, building, computers, aeroplane and trains.

#### IV. MAKING OF WARLI PAINTINGS

##### 4.1 Tools and raw materials :

Following are the tools and raw material required for warli painting:

- Handmade Paper: It is used as the basic material for Warli painting.
- Steel Plate: Though mainly used as a paint pallet, it also holds pencils, paintbrushes and eraser.
- Pencil: It is used to sketch characters and draw the border outline.
- Paint Brush: It is used to highlight the border and paint the Warli tribe on to a handmade paper.
- Eraser: It is used to erase the outline after the painting is completed.
- Acrylic Color: It is used for shading the Warli tribal art by using a brush.
- Table: It is used as a work area, where the artisan sets all the tools and raw materials required for the painting, for an easy reach and comfortable placing.
- Plastic Scale: It is used while drawing straight borders.

##### 4.2 Painting technique used

Design is selected. Without tracing design, it is directly drawn on paper or cloth. Motifs are painted with white paste on the walls or earthen pots, on wooden articles or on paper or on cloth. First, the body of the human figure is drawn by connecting two triangles and hands and legs are depicted in a dancing position and then the remaining design is accomplished by painting minute details. The cloth is ironed from the reversed side of the cloth.

#### V. MODERN TRENDS IN WARLI ART

To take benefits of the commercial potential of Warli art and to make it a more appropriate product for a larger market, Some organizations of Warli artists focusing on developing new products using Warli art. These products include products in association with other local craftsmen like potters and bamboo craftsmen. Commercial products include merchandise goods like T-shirts and handkerchief with Warli patterns, Bamboo pen stand, Key-chains, Table pots and other Stationery Products.

#### VI. WARLI PAINTINGS IN INTERIORS

Warli art is an ancient method of expression whether it be a festival, occasion or a message to pass on to the future. Similarly, music has always been a part of the history of humans. The space in which we shall incorporate warli painting will be the spacious lobby of a music studio which has columns in the lobby hall. The column shall be our main element to work on and the focal element for the lobby hall. Firstly we finalize a pattern for the column which depicts human playing musical instruments like flute and drums. Each column can have different patterns with varying instruments or floral patterns. The base colour for the column shall be black on which the figures will be painted with white. The columns highlight themselves in a space which is lighter and creates a contrast. Not just with art but also some clay panels can be used at the lobby reception background. The clay panels can have cutouts of the figures on them with varying poses and instruments.



Figure - 3 Example of Pattern and painting it on a column

**VII. CONCLUSION**

The project started with studying about Warli paintings and its history aiming to preserve the ancient art in this modern era by incorporating it in the interiors of a space. Similarly, various elements of interiors can be selected and painted in this style, trying different compositions and colour combinations to suit the interior style. This way the art style can be preserved in this modern era and inspire the future generation with this folk art style

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