

# Mithila- A Creative Expression through Colours and Lines

## Abstract

India though has also been always from times immemorial, been marked by its rich indigenous heritage of tribal & folk arts and Culture. Historically each region have their own distinctive styles which have evolved over centuries & represents the social milieu of prevailing times. Mithila or Madhubani painting are true living traditions of Bihar which edifies the cultural identity of region.

Nowadays the new generation of artists' are gradually improvising on the themes, narratives, size, colour palette etc mostly on two dimensional surfaces and are encouraged to develop innovative, functional and utility products range for the large contemporary market segment.

**Keywords:** Tribal, Diversified, Mithila, Artisans, Compositional.

## Introduction

Probably no other nation on the planet might be as diversely & richly endowed as India is. It has always been a melting pot of numerous lineages, races & heritages. Owing to its geographical location & its riches, it historically attracted numerous hordes of invaders & conquerors from far away, who too over time amalgamated themselves into social fabric & left their indelible stamp on polity, culture & art. India though has also been always from times immemorial, been marked by its rich indigenous heritage of tribal & folk arts and Culture.

The tribals predominantly have been the indigenous inhabitants of India & since the days of yore, have held their distinctive & diversified forms of art and cultural. Their art form brings forth the brilliance & richness of tribal and rural inhabitants. They have continued to convey their creative splendour through their Integrative values, which is uniquely distinctive. In India the wealth of Folk Art is unique and exotic. Most of these required some kind of craftsmanship and show a lively imagination. The basic characteristic of Folk Art is that its forms are simple, bold, and clear. The most famous types of Indian folk art paintings hence include various ancient Indian art forms such as Madhubani, Phad, Kalamkari, Orissa Paata, Warli paintings and so on.

Indian art has had a chequered history which is both diverse, rich and steeped in local traditions. Historically each region have their own distinctive styles which have evolved over centuries & represents the social milieu of prevailing times. Mithila or Madhubani painting are true living traditions of Bihar which edifies the cultural identity of region. It symbolizes the social & cultural identity of Bihar. Its evolution as a art form over generation is reminiscent of stylistic changes it has undergone to evolve today as a folk art form of international repute. Indian folk art has its roots in rural & tribal societies & hamlets that dot the landscape of the nation. Though folk art is indigenous and centuries old, it was only during the 20th century that Indian folk art came into prominence & slowly emerged as a theme of discipline and admiration.

20<sup>th</sup> Century was in a sense renaissance of a sort for indigenous art in India, which was an era of introspective examination of various indigenous art forms. Initially the study of folk painting was confined to state of Bengal. After the initial period of examination there was a sense of realization, which made numerous other regions/states reflect on their own art forms and began propagating them. What then fueled tremendous dissemination & diversification of regional art forms was that people adapted & augmented the use of readily & locally available ingredients.

Madhubani art has its roots, in the Mithila region, of Bihar state, in Northern India. Mithila art is believed to date back to the times of Ramayan. It is believed that king Janak asked artists, in those times to capture Sita's



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wedding to Ram in these art works. Madhubani painting or Mithila is one such unique style of Indian painting, which is proficiently followed in the Mithila region of Bihar and the contiguous region of Terai in Nepal. Owing to its simplicity it has endeared to masses & use of simple medium such as paper, has immensely enhanced its commercial value, supplanting the household income and providing recognition to its exponents, especially women. Its contemporary form is replete with profoundness, vitality & variety.

#### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to bring forth the importance of ancient Indian folk art Mithila, which has been practiced since generations in Bihar. It was to dwell upon the fact that today's practitioners of this art have amalgamated and diversified it into a very successful commercial art form. This art is still in an evolutionary stage and has a vast scope still of diversification and successful and mass commercial art form.

#### **Basic characteristics compositional elemental features of Mithila Paintings**

1. Traditionally it has been rural womenfolk who have been the proponent of Mithila art, which has an anatomy as a decorative or celebratory form of art practiced on special occasions like weddings, festivals, rituals, child birth or any other occasions.
2. Madhubani is a thematic art form predominantly based on influential representational symbols of social & cultural life, like on the Gods and Goddesses, Sun, Moon, Stars, auspicious signs like Om. Also the subject of drawings / paintings may be other things of religious reverence for Hindus like elephants, peacocks & fish. Other religious references might come as plants having religious significance like Tulsi plants, mango leaves, lotus flower, Banyan and Peepal trees.
3. The proponents of Mithila have used diverse mediums like canvas, cloth, or handmade paper. It is also popularly done on mud walls or floors of house. The colors are bright and are exclusively natural, derived from things of daily use. Turmeric powder, vermilion sandalwood powder, rice powder / paste, and other natural colours derived from flower and fruits. Black is gotten by blending soot and cow dung. The color yellow comes from a mixture of lime, milk of banyan leaves, turmeric and pollen. Red comes from the juice of the Kusam flower or from red sandalwood, while white is gotten from rice powder and so on. Colour is the most descriptive element of art structure. It can be employed to create line, form and tonal quality, to devote texture, to suggest space, ideas emotions and to portray moods. Color has three properties. The first is hue, which is the name of the colors. The primary hues are yellow, red, and blue. Secondary colors are made by mixing two primaries. Intermediate colors are mixtures of a primary and adjacent secondary color. The second property of color is value, which refers to the lightness or darkness of hue. The third property of color is intensity, which refers to the purity of the hue (also called "chroma"). Colors are easy to use as a visual means of expressing moods and ideas which are hard to describe in words. Intelligent use of colours does not require an elaborate descriptive analysis or an understanding of the physical and chemical basis. This is evident in the works of Mithila painter, who had avoided modeling and mixing of colours, as there are no

modeling effects of light and shades but has used the pure bright and vibrant colours full of life.

4. Mithila paintings are characterized by line drawings based on mythological themes, in bright colours and decorative borders. Mithila painter's talents lie in their draftsman ship and the handling of detail. The artist perceives and expresses reality through relations between opposites that he identifies in the two dimensional space of the painting with horizontal and vertical lines. In their paintings, horizontal lines are calm and quiet, vertical lines suggest more of a potential for movement, while diagonal lines strongly suggest movement and give more of a feeling of vitality to a picture.

The development of any folk art form & its popularity depends on the quality of representative expression of social/cultural experiences and beliefs. Basic tenants being symbolism, simplicity and beauty of those expressions. In Mithila paintings representative figures delineated a certain symbols. Fish is symbol for fertility, procreation and good luck, peacocks are associated with romance, love and religion, snakes represent divine protectors. The colors used are lively & vibrant. Motifs being simplistic underlying traditional geometric patterns reinforce the main theme. Artists are being invited to exhibitions across India, and to Europe, the United States, and Japan - no longer as "folk artists," but now as "contemporary artists." Today, Mithila Paintings are made on silk, handmade paper, cloth, canvas etc for commercial purposes. The uses of chemical dyes and paints have resulted in brighter multi coloured paintings.

#### **Conclusion**

There is a certain feminine exclusivity to Mithila school of folk painting. This folk art is predominantly a craft practiced by womenfolk of the region, its a craft learnt from & passed on by older generations Giving it a certain exclusivity, Mithila artisans use the cow dung and mud paste as base on canvases, Mithila paintings have become extremely popular created a niche for themselves. Nowadays the new generation of artists' are gradually improvising on the themes, narratives, size, colour palette etc mostly on two dimensional surfaces and are encouraged to develop innovative, functional and utility products range for the large contemporary market segment. Its beauty and popularity has spread beyond regions, and now we see Mithila paintings on the fabrics, Sarees, dress materials, hand bags, crockery, wall hangings, canvas paintings, and even on five star hotel walls and interiors

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