

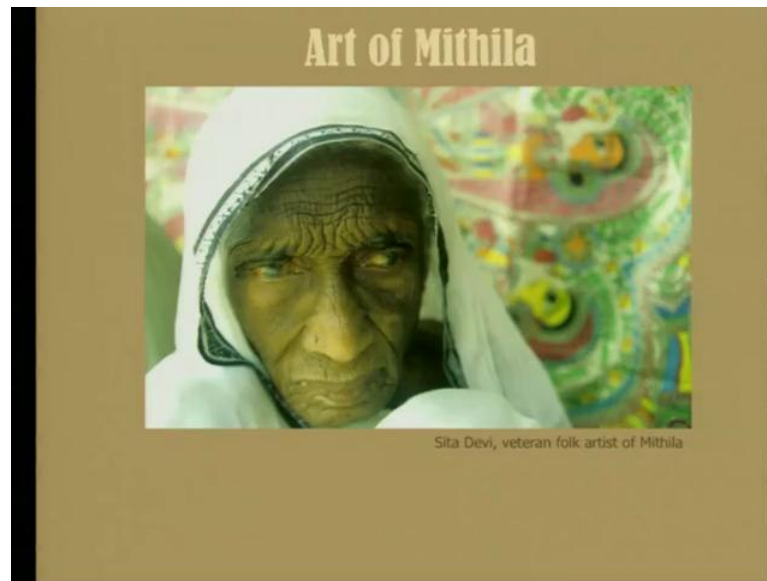
Folk and Minor Art in India
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Lecture - 20
School of Art in Madhubani Painting

So, we begin our second topic of the 4th module on Madhubani painting and we are going to explore the tradition the habitual and customary tradition of Madhubani painting as it started. It was complete feminine preserved and slowly it has moved to much secular, less religious practice that is popularly practiced by the male communities, the male members of the community of the traditional community. So, this is very important to realize how the style of Madhubani painting build up which were the guiding factor that worked as operational factors to give birth to so many different styles that gives us a character in Madhubani.

In fact when we look at art of Mithila, it is like any other habitual art practice that was being practiced all over in our country, and also outside these is the part of the regular ritualistic rites, the practices of customary and habitual decorations. But from there must happen some special reasons why Madhubani art is so rich in its artistic features. So, let us try to look at it from the perspective of the stylistic variation and the divisions which are the outcome of the class, division of the society. Although there are no divisions as such which is very stringently followed in today's time, but we must see how it developed in its formative years and how it changed.

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Seeing the picture is veteran folk artist of Mithila, Sita Devi. She pioneered the art long back under certain circumstances and we are getting back to that.

As we know that the folk art tradition of Madhubani as a feminine preserve developed and grew in Madhubani in the region of Mithila that emerged in its formative years to meet the requirement of daily ritualistic course. The art works embody a harmonious and rhythmic quality in them; the forms are apparently simplistic and extremely pleasing to the eyes

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Objective of research:


To realize its broader scopes and look back on a century of changes that has gone through enormous shifts in cross-cultural and cross-media influences, and moves for both modernization and revival of traditions.



An outlet for the sale of Mithila Paintings at an art fair in Bhopal, 1993

To realize its broader scopes and look back on the century of changes that has gone through enormous shifts in cross cultural and cross media influences and moves both modernization and revival of tradition. The women of Madhubani continued to create designs on the earthen walls and floors as part of their daily life, as the cause of domestic rituals protective form and auspicious places created for the well being of their kin folk.

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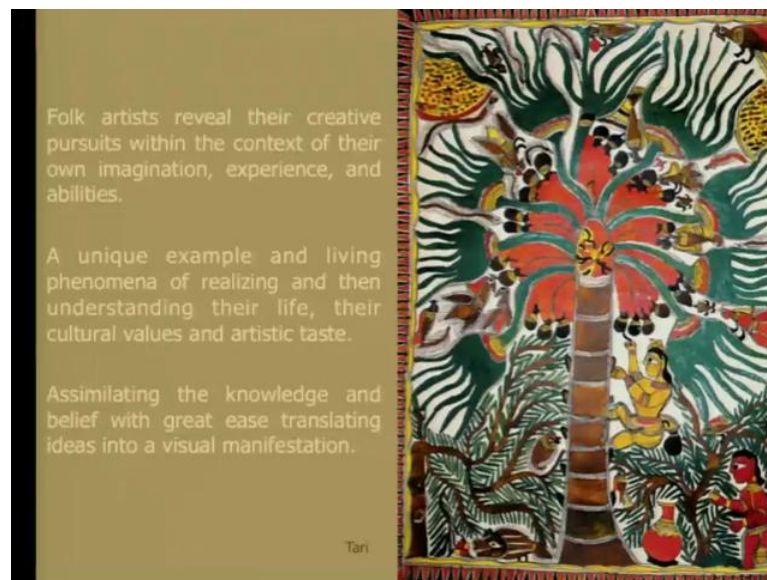
Jitwarpur, Kumari Kusum painting Durga on earthen walls of her house

Through a comprehensive survey of the present-day art practice of Mithila painting, this study illustrates its prevailing state.

They perpetually engage with the creative act in the name of oneness with god. Precisely this transcendent ideology prevents the art form from disappearing, that result into the simple economic and utilitarian augmentation that may not be achieved through any other means. While religious conviction explains its survival the creative flare describes its universal spread and fame.

Following a prolonged ecological crisis in 1966 to 68 and endeavor to promote art of Madhubani resulted in some favorable outcome, to generate sources for non agrarian earning or non agricultural earning by the agrarian society. The women were told, advised and persuaded to some extent to transform their artistic ability they were highly encouraged to transform the kind of motives that they other produce on the walls and floors on paper so that it can get them some revenue by selling them into the market to generate some fund during the crisis. So, their artistic legacy got remarkable artifacts in the making. The initiatives were also regulated art production and initial marketing of the art works.

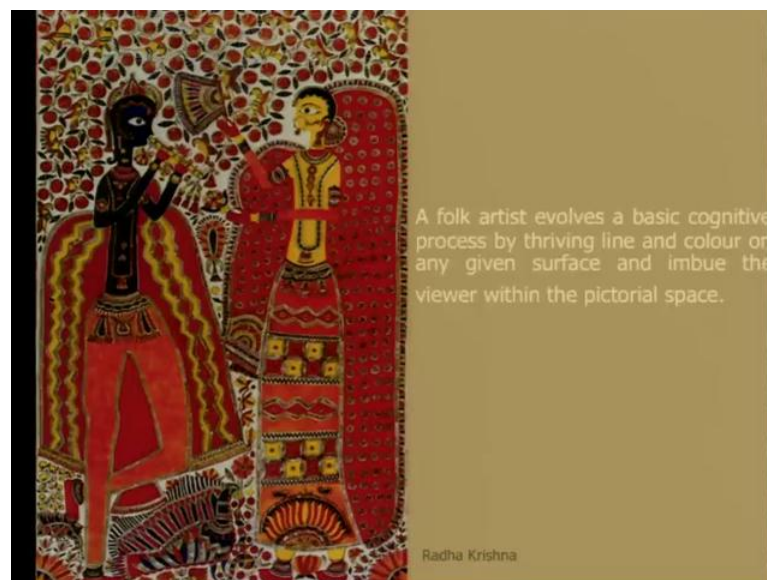
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Folk artists reveal their creative pursuits within the contexts of the own imagination experience and abilities. A unique example and living phenomena of realizing and then understanding their life, their cultural values and artistic taste, assimilating the

knowledge and belief with great ease, translating the ideas into visual manifestation that is seen in Madhubani painting of today's time. Had it not been the exogenous factor of the patronizing bodies would Madhubani painting appreciate the scene recognition and acknowledgment that it bears today. The heart of the old society was formed community, cultural values, they have their own language and dialects and a characteristic sense of regional lively hood that echoes back to ancient time. Art forms have been essentially associated with agrarian culture, common instincts of decor for ritualistic purpose worked as a major cause for the continual of this tradition.

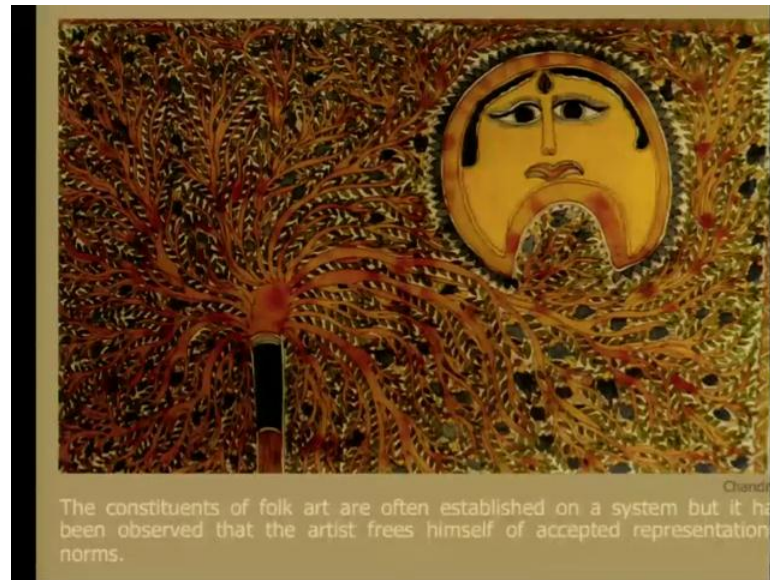
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A folk artist evolves a basic cognitive process by thriving line and color on any given surface that is shown in the picture that there are images and almost the entire part is filled up with two dimensional motives. They are flat, but highly contrasted with the use of primary color very simple means with a beautifully rendered composition with lots of intricacies and decorative balance throughout. Although most of the individual communities were not totally isolated, the inhabitants were particularly self sustaining with a little need of contact with a outside world for a very very long time. The chief means of communication between country dwellers and the outside world were the local government officials and occasional trade. Essentially the cognitive content has been

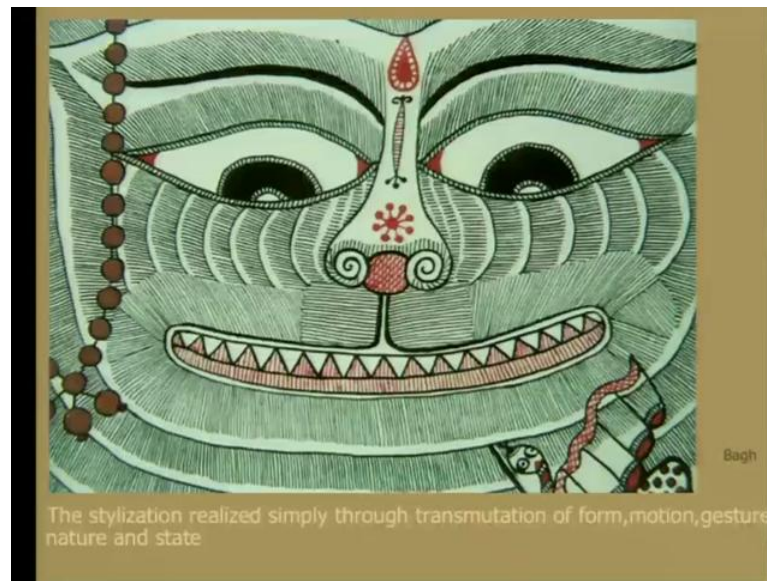
conveyed to this generation mainly by the women folk, it is the legacy of visual language inherited by the daughters from their mothers and mother-in-laws.

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This particular feature of Madhubani folk art tradition is a unique phenomenon that is unparalleled to any other comparable folk art traditions anywhere in the globe. The constituents of folk art are often established on a system, but it has been observed that the artist frees himself from the accepted representational norms, though the images are recognizable we cannot call it naturalistic. The tree is made with the basic understanding of it everywhere the form is executed with its basic essence and they are not with the conventional representational term although highly recognizable.

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This stylization realized simply through transmutation of form, motion, gesture, nature and state. The two quotes that I am going to read out in this context from Archer 1946. The folk painting in Madhubani Mithila region Bihar India emerged as a successful culmination of customary art practice. The Mithila paintings of Bihar are related to the marriage ceremony and depict various details and symbols of fertility and prosperity. The wall paintings practiced by women of Brahmin and Kayastha families have preserved their distinctive character in an unbroken tradition through generations written in 1966.

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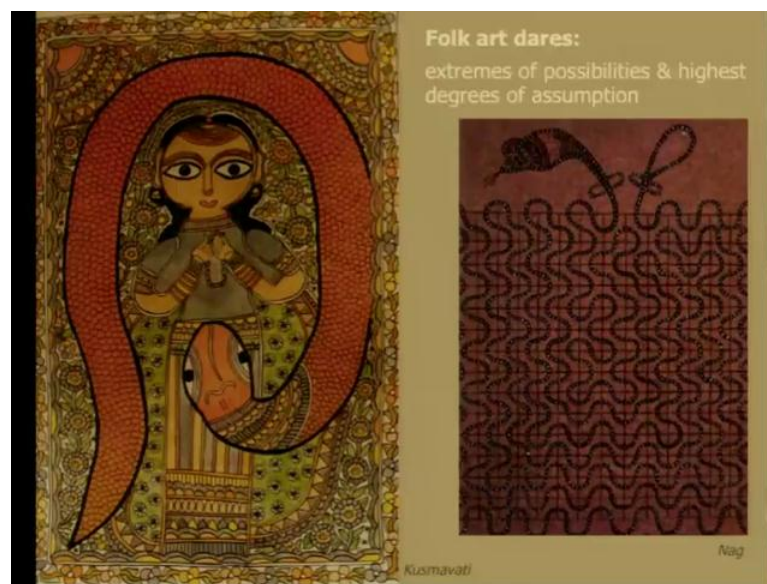
The very fact that Madhubani's fame, its prominence and distinction has got the fame word over is due to the resourcefulness and efforts of only the women folk who have endured Madhubani with this fame throughout the world. The depicted figure is transformed into a divine simulacrum, prominent 'eye for vision', 'elongated torso' to show strength, 'arms multiplied for power', and 'legs stretched for alertness'. The description also indicates the stylization the freedom of stylized formation that was used in Madhubani that gives it an extremely expressionistic character that was compared by lady archer; I will mention that with proper reference later with the abstract expressionism of America which was a recent movement. I am coming to the context of modernism once again in a higher detail, but let us spend some time looking at the images that are documented directly from the wall.

So, see here is image of Durga on the tiger as the artist has used all possible freedom to render the forms to exaggerate and express the optimum qualities. I will read another very important quote from Santun and Bhakshi in 2007 written is - The paintings on paper are conceptualized as a whole and done freehand without prior sketches with rare exceptions. The artistic legacy can be well realized if viewed from the grass root level from the perspective of the life that the people of Madhubani live like any other country men in anywhere. So, from there comes the motives, the inspirations, the images, that are

found there are unique in their executional qualities. Nevertheless they are from the same grass root locations.

So, it written by Santun and Bhakshi in 2007 that paintings on paper are conceptualized as a whole and done freehand without prior sketches with rare exceptions artists begin by painting a border or frame with a geometry floral or faunal design that often will reflect the intended subject of the painting. Turning them to the subject they begin in the middle of the paper outlining the image and then work towards the edges. Details are added after the figures are drawn, the eye filled in last to give a figure life. As this suggests the painting are rooted in an indigenous aesthetics neither derived from nor seriously influenced by western or colonial schools museums galleries or patrons.

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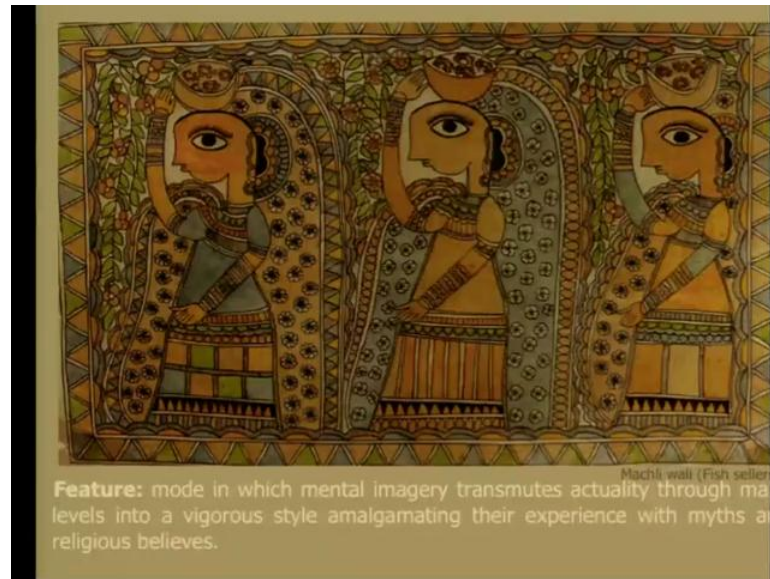
So, extremes of possibilities and heights degrees of assumptions that is seen in Madhubani painting and its quite a daring effort from the part of the painters one not trained in mainstream academic styles from the beginning and they are able to establish their own style in the form of the institution.

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The folk painting in Mithila came forth from a productive instance of day to day art practice a common and regular phenomenon observed in the region. The women of Madhubani, the painters are duly credited for their contribution and one must also not undermine the role of the various external resources to which the fame is additionally owed to. During 1950s the Walter and Sons, a publishing company printed a calendar with black and white reproductions of the native wall paintings.

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The beginning of Madhubani painting on paper close to the form that we see today were created in the year 1967 when an aid worker for the Indian government Bhaskar Kulkarni encouraged the rural folk and presented the idea of translating those paintings onto papers. The paintings traditionally practiced on walls and floors one can observe extended miscellanea of pictorial elements varied imageries constantly being introduced to paintings over the years - "Mode in which mental imagery transmutes actually through many levels into a vigorous style amalgamating their experience with myths and religious beliefs".

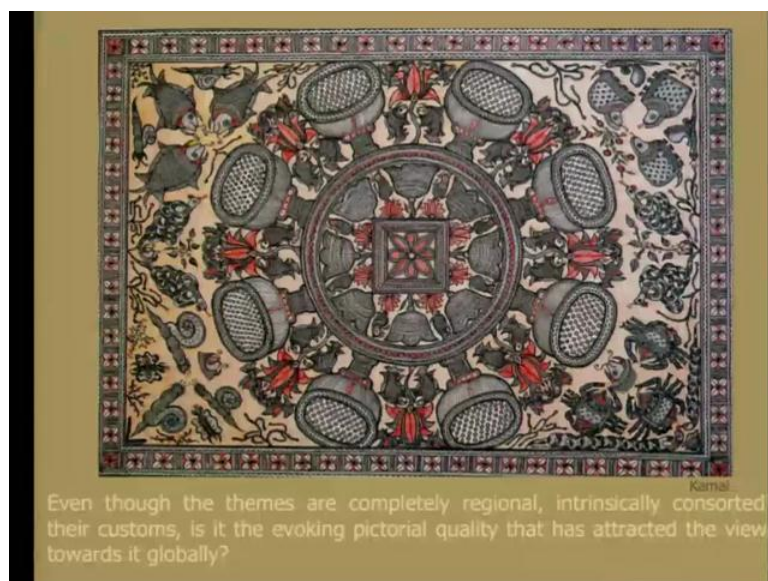
A tradition with respect to its inherent nature associated to the life and spirit of Mithila and its people that are seen in the picture it is too blended for the daily life.

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With the introduction of a new rather intimate surface the individual artistic abilities were for the first time provoked by some external factors as I said with the intervention of Bhaskar Kulkarni attending a freedom of expression out of the so called ritual obligations they felt fear to express their melodic themes and thoughts virtuously on paper.

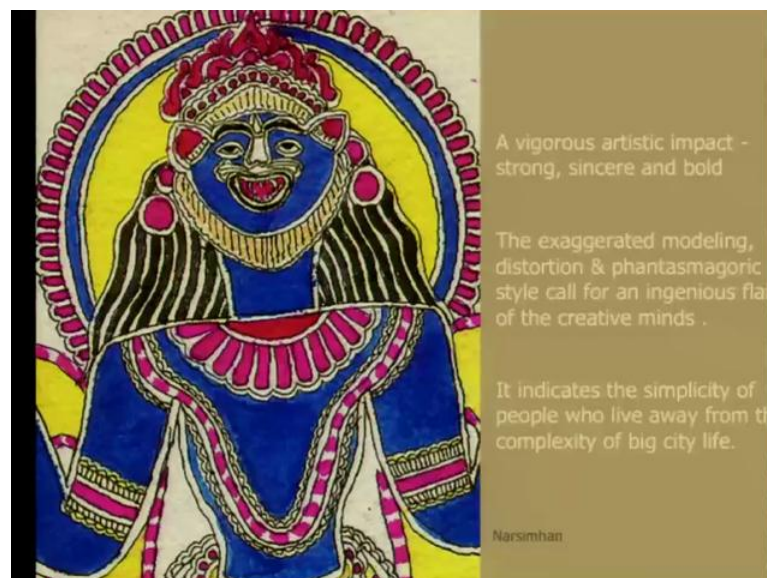
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Madhubani painting till date is recognized for its highly spirited vitality and innovativeness. As this state outside age affected the foundation of heritage how did the artists react to the change for such openness also lead to deterioration as it has been observed in similar traditions. The various initiatives to popularize to provide its practice with due gratitude cause change, but the creators knew it in the mind that what is the changeable factor, what is the invariable in the due course of the creation. Like any other folk art tradition painting from Madhubani also mirrored the periodical change and traditional values of the society.

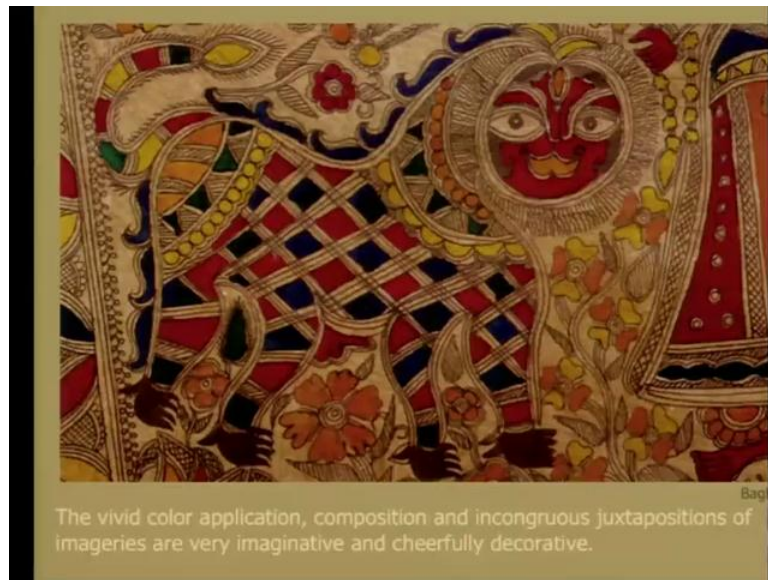
The tangential factors time and again affect the fabric of all lives and society with their inherent traditional values attempt to preserve culture unaffected with in a controlled environment is not very practical theme. Rather an imperative need is to realize the variable features and preserve the cultural augmentation; the tradition that will need the revisiting and reexamination from time to time. Even though the themes are completely regional, intrinsically consorted to their costumes is it the evoking pictorial quality that has attracted the viewers towards it globally for ages.

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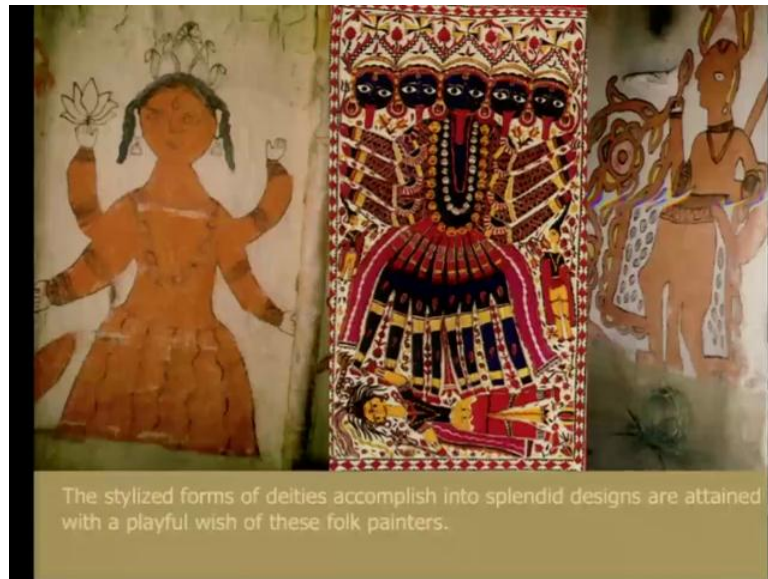
A various artistic impact strong, sincere and bold exaggerated modeling with distortion and phantasmagoric style for an ingenious player of creative minds it indicates the simplicity of people who leave away from the complexity of big city life.

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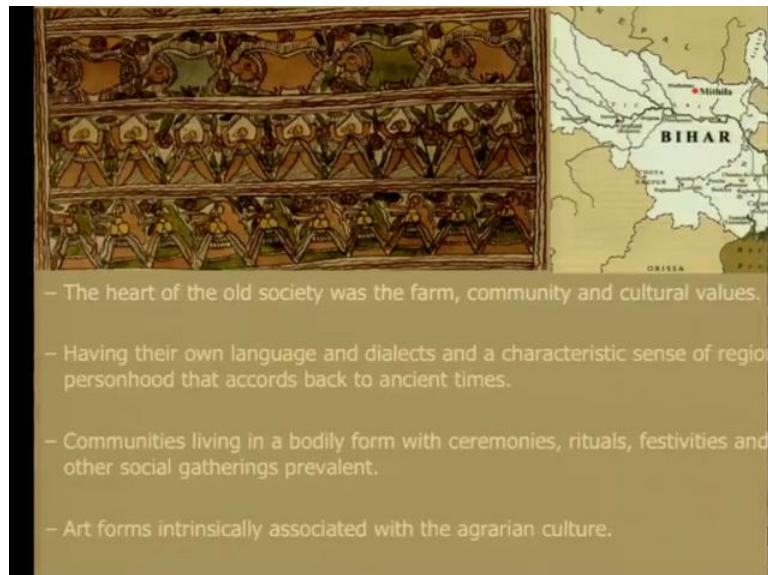
The vivid color application, composition and incongruous juxtaposition of imageries are very imaginative and cheerfully decorative.

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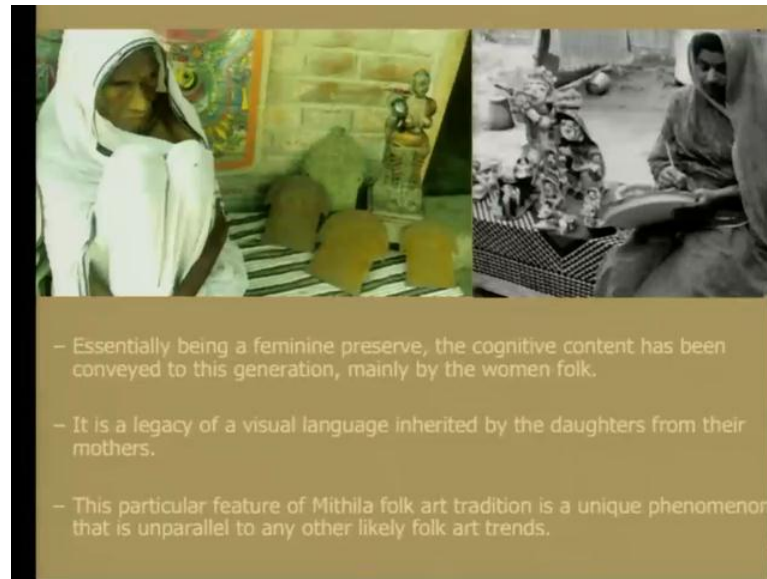
The stylized forms and details accomplish into splendid designs are attained with a playful wish of the folk painters.

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The heart of the old society was firm community and the cultural values, art forms intrinsically associated with the agrarian culture.

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Essentially being a feminine preserve, the cognitive content has been conveyed to its generations mainly by the women folk. It is a legacy of visual language inherited by the daughters from their mothers, this particular feature of Mithila folk art tradition is a unique phenomenon that is un parallel to any other likely folk art trains. The very fact that Mithila's fame its prominence and distinction world over is due to the resourcefulness and efforts of only the women folk who have endowed Mithila with this fame throughout the world.

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See in the picture are Ganga Devi, Sita Devi and Mahasundari Devi.

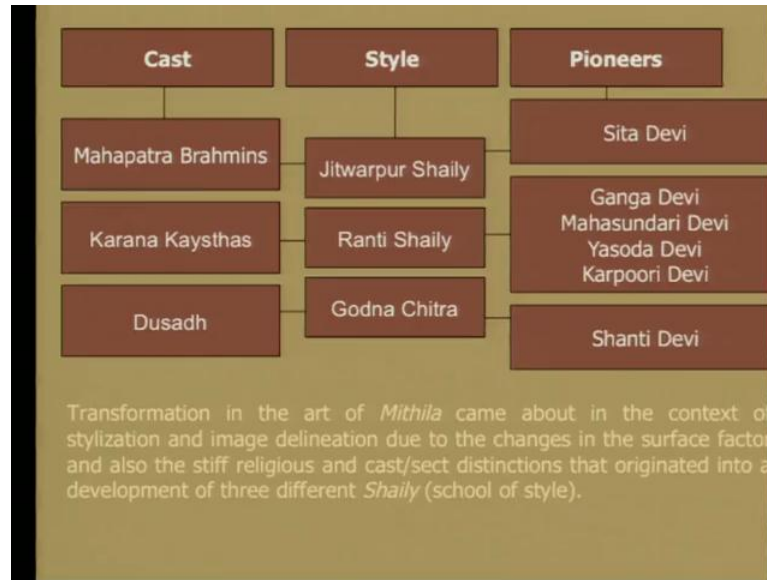
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The folk painting in Mithila emerged as successful culmination of customary art practice. Transformation in the art of Mithila came about in the context of stylization and image delineation due to the change in the surface factor and also the stiff, religious and cast or

sect, distinction that originated into the development of three different Shaily or school of styles.

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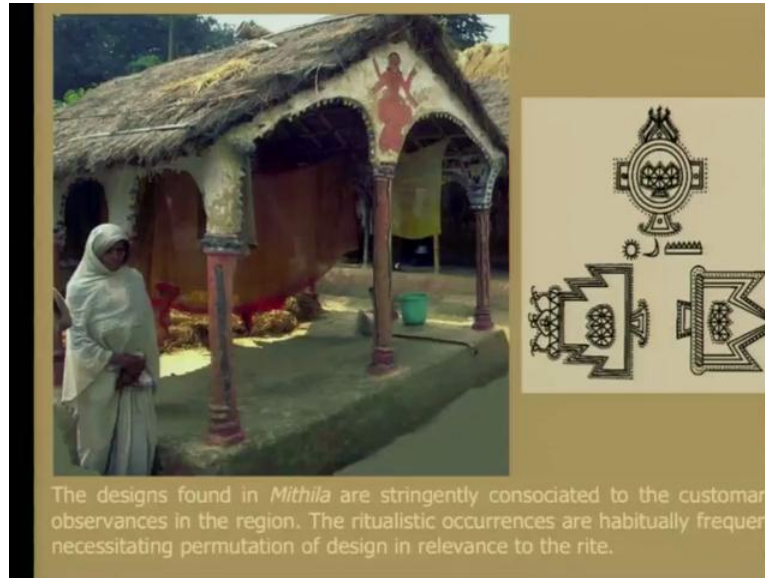


Characteristic Brahmin technique is done using a flared straw wrapped in cotton brush to both outline and fill in the outline of the figures of gods and goddesses with large masses in the vibrant colors. Locally the technique is known as *bhurmi* literally meaning filling. Internationally acclaimed Kaystha kalakars of Mithila also transferred their long standing Kaystha wall painting technique into paper. Their paintings were done with a fine black and red ink pens and technique locally referred to *kachni* or the line drawings.

One style optimized by the prolific and contiguously innovative work of Shanti Devi using double outline of boldly drawn figures from Bhushath community, the pantheon and spaces between the filled with colored floral motifs reflective of Brahman style, but colors are less bright due to the use of natural colors. Those artists extract from the different flowers and roots of the variety of plants which are locally available there, yet another style of painting by Channo Devi based on the Bhushath tradition of small protective bodily tattoos known as *Godna* which are simple figurative motives with upturned arms, animals and birds of regular sizes are drawn with in rows of lines or circles all across the standard white paper coated with cow dung.

Apart from these paintings on paper painting on earthen walls and floor is a regular domestic activity for a Mithila village girl.

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The designs found in *Mithila* are stringently consociated to the customar observances in the region. The ritualistic occurrences are habitually frequen necessitating permutation of design in relevance to the rite.

Not all of them, but some have shown remarkable proficiency in adding more aspiring elements and eventually establishing themselves as painters. The other are not full timers as artists and are involved with just domestic work, but ensure continuance of the traditions simply by contributing to the ephemeral art practice for regular customary rites. Although the Harrapans or the decorative patterns on floor are painted with white rice, rice pastes called Pithar and occasional red dots or vermilion or sindoor, the walls both inner and outer as well as the muntapas or the courtyard are colorfully painted. Earlier the pigments derived from lamp black lime geru and other oxide and earth colors, local berries, flowers, twigs, branches, leaves, soils, burnt, branches, etcetera, goat bell, cotton ted flares, straws, bamboo sticks were used to color fill and fill up the broader areas acacia gum was used as fixative binder for water soluble paints. The painter that did the painting from paper are open to paints available in the market now.

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Order of Cast System

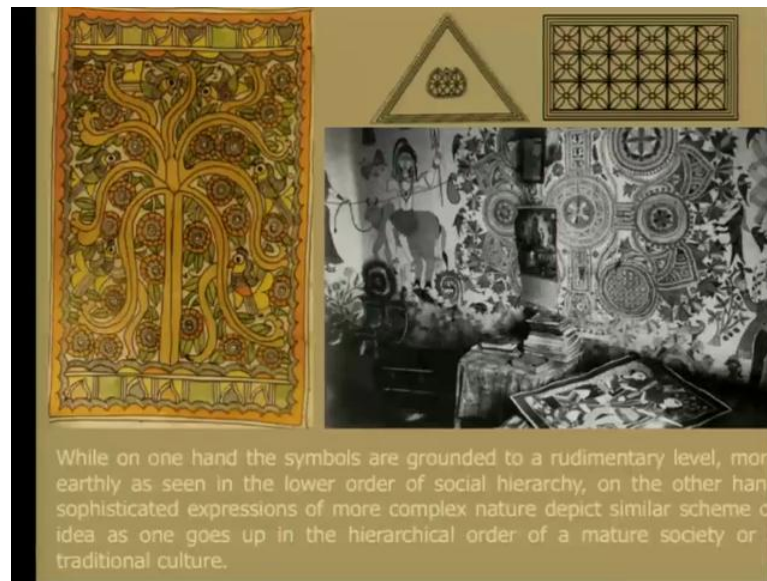
- Srotriya Brahmins
- Maithil Brahmins
- Karana Kaysthas
- Dusadh

The research in context of Mithila indicates that symbols and motifs in the customary designs vary in complexity corresponding to the change in social hierarchy and existential status of these communities
(referring to the different cast and sect distinction so pronounced in Mithila)

Simplification of thought & spontaneity of expression in creative process is often observed in the traditional societies.

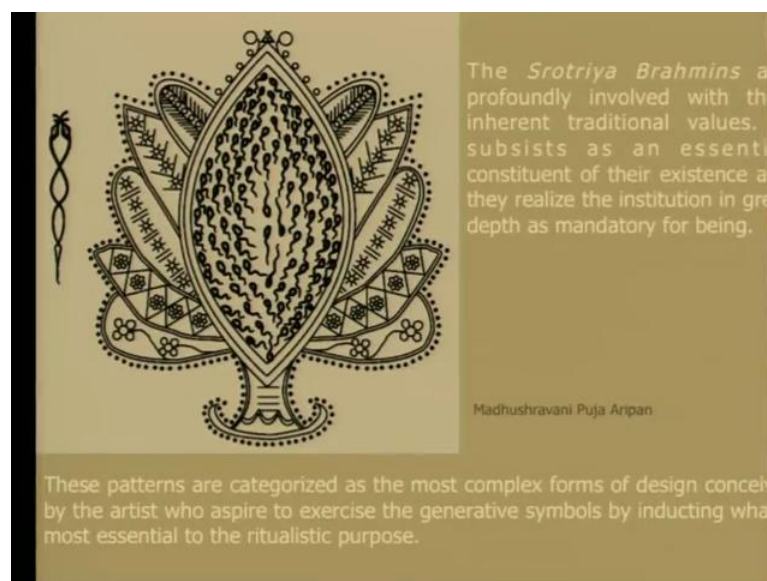
They often apply multani mitti - china clay and carbon tint to have a feel of mud wall on handmade paper and it also gives it a firm base The hierarchy or the order of casts system comes from the Srotriya Brahmins, maithil Brahmins, Karana Kaysthas and Dusadh traditionally. The research in context of Mithila indicates the symbols and motives in the customary designs vary in contextualities corresponding to the change in social hierarchy and existential status of these communities. Simplification of thought and spontaneity of expression in creative process is often observed in the traditional societies.

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While on the other hand the symbols are grounded to a rudimentary level more earthly as seen in the lower order of social hierarchy, on the other hand sophisticated expressions of more complex nature depict similar scheme or idea as one goes up in the hierarchical order of a mature society or a traditional culture as said by the local people and experts.

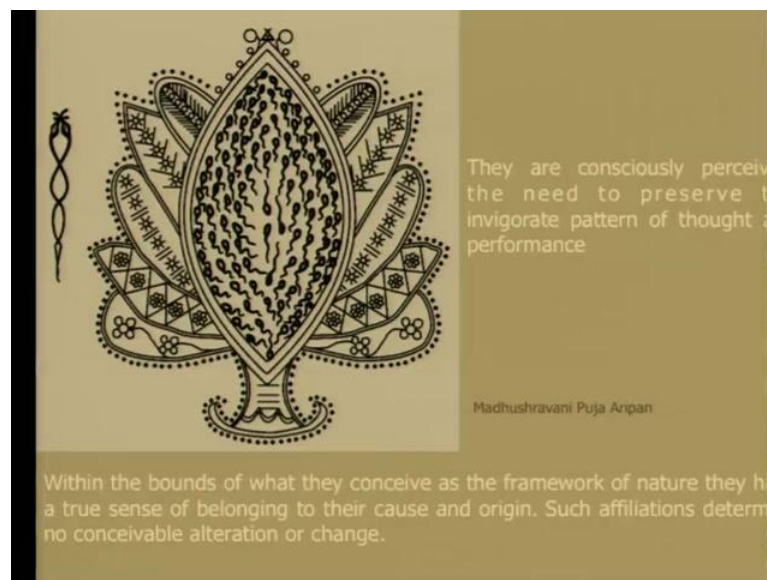
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Madhushravani Puja Aripan a traditional decoration these patterns are categorized as the most complex forms of design concentrated by the artists who aspire to exercise the generative symbols by introducing what is most essential to the ritualistic purpose.

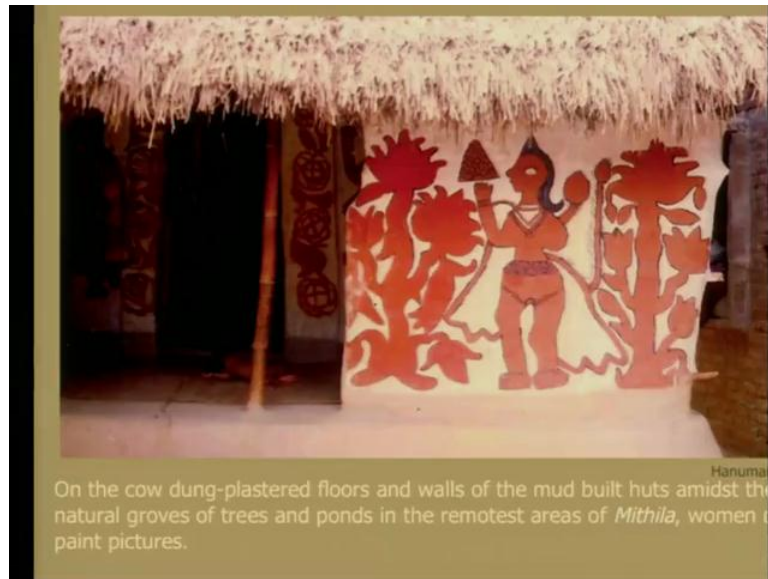
The Srotriya Brahmins are profoundly involved with their inherent traditional values it subsists as an essential constituent of their existence and they realize the institution in great depth as mandatory for being they are consciously perceiving the need to preserve the invigorate pattern of thought and performance.

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Within the bounds of what they conceive as the framework of nature they have a true sense of belonging to their cause and origin. Such affiliations determine no conceivable alteration or change.

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On the cow dung-plastered floors and walls of the mud built huts amidst the natural groves of trees and ponds in the remotest areas of Mithila, women daily paint pictures.

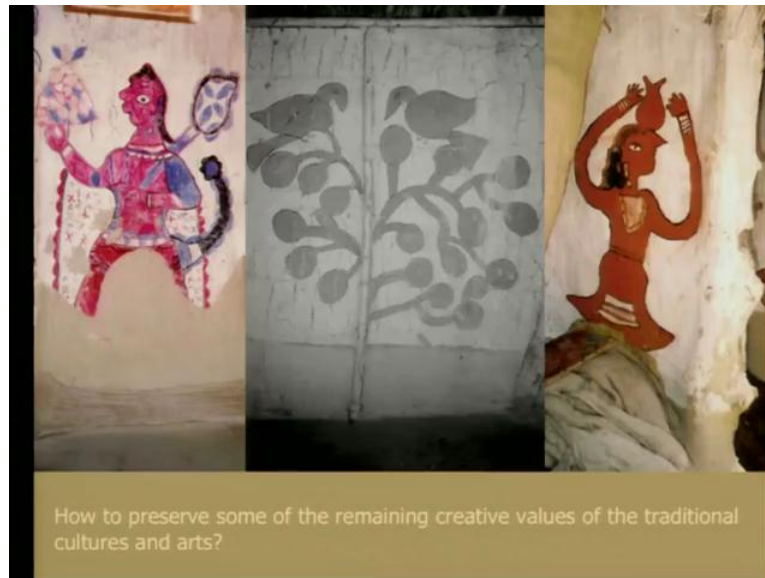
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They have been performing these rites as a ritual for generations and it is the way of living.

How to preserve some of the remaining creative values of the traditional culture and art remains a question.

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A need to investigate their very own cultural backgrounds and urgent need to acknowledge and create an awareness of a still living craftsmanship if need be then ensure substance of these folk art and craft traditions that is practical in present day context. However, with the introduction of paper it initiated a paradigm shift and with that it no longer remained a practice which is intrinsically and compulsorily connected to the daily religious rituals and as an outcome it gave birth to a new community of the male painters who were not traditionally engaged into this practice. So, this introduction of painting on paper with locally available and also the color which they got from the market, it started another traditional exploration which were often secular, which was duly responsive to the current happenings and that gave it a very different profile into today's time.

So, in our next lecture we are going to discuss all this factors that has worked as evolutionary factor and how the male painters are included into the tradition and how they are continuing with a thing in a wider continuum.