

GONDI PAINTING: A CULTURAL AND AESTHETIC LEGACY OF THE GOND TRIBE

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Abstract:

Gondi painting, a significant part of the Gond tribe's cultural heritage, has gained global recognition due to its lively depictions of nature, folklore, and mythology. However, despite its artistic acclaim, the artists in Patangarh, Madhya Pradesh face numerous challenges related to poverty, lack of market access, and exploitation by intermediaries. Originating from the central regions of India, this folk art employs intricate lines, dots, and vivid colors to depict myths, folklore, and the symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, Gondi painting serves as a visual narrative of tribal beliefs, social values, and ecological wisdom passed down through generations. The contemporary revival of Gondi art has not only preserved its traditional essence but also positioned it as a significant form of cultural identity and sustainable livelihood for tribal communities. The research draws upon ethnographic studies, historical accounts, and artistic analyses to underscore the significance of Gondi painting in preserving tribal identity and offering livelihoods.

Keywords: Patangarh, Gond artists, Gondi paintings, cultural heritage, indigenous aesthetics

Introduction

Gondi painting is an indigenous form of visual storytelling practiced by the Gond tribe. The term 'Gond' is derived from the Telugu word *Kond*, meaning hill, indicative of their traditional dwelling in hilly terrains (Mathur, 2006). Historically, Gondi painting adorned the walls of homes, symbolizing prosperity, protection, and spiritual beliefs. Over the past few decades, this art form has transitioned from ephemeral wall art to canvas-based works, gaining national and international recognition. Gondi painting, a vibrant and intricate art form, is a significant cultural expression of the Gond tribe, one of India's largest indigenous communities. The Gond people, predominantly found in central India, have a rich cultural heritage that is deeply intertwined with nature, folklore, and spirituality. According to Sharma (2015), the intricate patterns and vibrant colors of Gondi art were meant to create a visual language that resonated with the tribe's spiritual beliefs. Gondi painting, traditionally practiced by the Gond tribe, reflects their worldview through vivid depictions of animals, trees, mythological figures, and everyday life. These paintings are not merely decorative but are often imbued with deep spiritual significance, intended to bring good fortune and protect against evil spirits. Verma (2018) emphasizes that this dynamic perpetuates the economic vulnerability of Gondi artists, as they are unable to access buyers directly or negotiate better deals for their work. Bhagat (2020) argues that the commercialization of Gondi art risks turning it into a commodity, where the emphasis is placed

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on mass production and salability rather than on the preservation of traditional narratives and techniques.

The village of Patangarh, located in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, holds a particularly important place in the history of Gond painting. It was here that the art form transitioned from being a largely local practice to gaining national and international recognition. Patangarh is known as the birthplace of the “Jangarh Kalam” style of Gond painting, named after the renowned artist Jangarh Singh Shyam, who was instrumental in bringing Gond painting to the global stage. His work introduced the world to the unique aesthetic and cultural significance of this tribal art form, inspiring a new generation of artists in Patangarh to continue the legacy of their ancestors. Tiwari (2021) have highlighted how Jangarh’s unique style transformed traditional wall murals into intricate paintings on canvas and paper, giving the art form a new dimension. His work gained national and international recognition, leading to the emergence of the “Jangarh Kalam” school of art, named after him. This transformation allowed artists from Patangarh to transition from local traditions to global art platforms, elevating Gond painting into a distinct modern art form. While Gond art has garnered attention and admiration globally, the artists in Patangarh face significant socioeconomic challenges.

Despite the increasing demand for tribal art in urban and international markets, many Gond painters continue to live in poverty, struggling to secure stable incomes and market access. The commercialization of Gond art has brought both opportunities and difficulties, as artists navigate the complex dynamics of preserving their traditional art forms while adapting to the demands of modern markets. This introduction will explore the broader context of Gond painting, focusing on its historical and cultural significance, the evolution of the art form in Patangarh, and the socioeconomic realities faced by Gond artists in this region. The Gond painting tradition, especially in the village of Patangarh in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, holds a special place in the history and cultural identity of the Gond tribe. Gond painting, one of the most celebrated forms of tribal art in India, represents the rich cultural heritage and profound artistic sensibilities of the Gond tribe, one of the largest indigenous communities in Central India. Rooted in oral traditions and spiritual beliefs, Gond painting serves as a visual expression of the tribe’s intimate relationship with nature, mythology, and everyday life.

The art form is characterized by its use of intricate patterns, vibrant colors, and rhythmic compositions that transform ordinary subjects’ animals, trees, deities, and celestial bodies into dynamic narratives filled with symbolic meaning. Traditionally painted on the walls and floors of mud houses during rituals and festivals, Gond paintings have evolved over time to find a place on canvas and paper, gaining national and international recognition. This evolution not only highlights the adaptability and creativity of the Gond artists but also underscores the enduring cultural significance of this art form as a living tradition that continues to inspire and preserve the tribe’s collective identity in the modern world.

Materials and methods

Study area: The present research proposal is planned to perform a study on people belongs to Gond tribe residing in Patangarh village. Patangarh, 81.4691° E longitude and 22.7403° N latitude) is situated in Dindori District, Madhya Pradesh with Latitude 22.34912 and Longitude 80.62335 is a small village in Dindori which is famous for a rich tradition of producing world class painters depicting tribal culture and heritage in their paintings. It is a specialty of the Gond tribe, which is relatively a new art form, and its roots can be traced far down in history. The Gond Paintings is a hidden treasure that is passed on from generation to generation in Patangarh. Mostly found in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the Gond tribe is one of the largest Adivasi communities have uniqueness on their community structure and culture (Plate-1).



Plate-1: Statue of renowned Gondi painting artist Late. Mr. Jangarh Singh Shyam at Patangarh village under Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.

Data collection: This research employed visual analysis, a qualitative methodology that utilizes artistic expressions as a means of generating and interpreting information. Artistic media provide a rich and nuanced source of data, capturing both factual elements and deeper insights into the meanings conveyed by the artwork, as well as the intentions and perspectives of the artist. Through this approach, the researcher gains a comprehensive understanding of the viewpoints, emotions, and cultural perceptions reflected in the paintings. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with traditional Gond artists and on site observations of Gondi paintings. The observational method played a crucial role in gathering firsthand information for this study. These techniques facilitated an in-depth analysis of Gond art themes, especially those grounded in the tribe's historical narratives and cultural traditions. Additionally, a wide range of secondary sources including books, academic journals, online materials, and unpublished documents was carefully reviewed prior to the collection of primary data. This preliminary review ensured that the research was built upon a well-informed foundation, guiding the subsequent process of data collection and interpretation (Plate-2).



Plate-2: Data Collection among Gondi painting artists at Patangarh village under Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.

Results

History and origin of Gond Painting: The Gond community traces its origins to the Gondwana region, where they first settled around the 9th century (800–900 AD). Between the 14th and 16th

centuries, they established powerful kingdoms that ruled over large parts of central India, with strongholds in present-day Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh (Vajpeyi, 2008). During this period, the Gond dynasty flourished both politically and culturally, constructing magnificent forts, temples, lakes, and palaces. Although no written records from that era survive, the evolution of diverse art forms suggests that decorative wall painting likely emerged as a significant form of cultural expression. However, following the Muslim invasions of the 14th century, many Gond communities were displaced and retreated into the dense forests of the Vindhya and Satpura ranges (The India Craft House, 2012). In these secluded areas, their artistic traditions persisted, though they gradually faded from mainstream recognition. Today, the Gonds remain one of the largest tribal groups in central India, with a major concentration in Madhya Pradesh. Their cultural and artistic practices are believed to have evolved from their Mesolithic ancestors, and the tradition of decorating walls and floors in Gond homes is thought to have originated from prehistoric cave art (Plate-3).

Traditional Gond art includes music, dance, and wall painting. Among the Gond subgroups, the Gond-Pardhans have been the principal custodians of this painting tradition. Historically, their artworks known as Bhatti Chitra (literally “wall painting”) were created on the interior walls of houses, primarily by women, to mark special occasions such as weddings, childbirth, and festivals like Dussehra, Nag Panchami, Hareli, and Deepawali. These paintings adorned the walls throughout the year, reflecting both aesthetic beauty and spiritual significance. In addition to Bhatti Chitra, the Gonds also created symbolic floor decorations called Dighna, which are believed to have inspired the motifs and patterns found in contemporary Gond paintings. Over time, Gond art has evolved while retaining its traditional essence. Its intricate detailing, vibrant colors, and storytelling nature have drawn widespread admiration in recent decades, both in India and abroad. A major catalyst for this recognition was the pioneering work of Jangarh Singh Shyam, one of the first Gond artists to gain national and international acclaim. His innovative approach not only revived the art form but also established Gond painting as a significant and enduring expression of tribal identity and creativity.



Plate-3: Dighna (Bhatti Chitra) and wall paintings created by Gondi painting artist at Patangarh village under Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.

Patangarh as cradle of modern Gondi art: Patangarh’s role as the birthplace of modern Gondi painting is central to the art form’s history and development. The village, home to several prominent Gondi artists, became a hub of creative activity following Jangarh Singh Shyam’s rise to fame. His success encouraged many other artists from the Gond community to take up painting, transforming the village into a vibrant center of artistic production. Today, Patangarh is known for producing some of the finest Gondi painters in India, many of whom have received national and international recognition for their work. The transition from traditional wall murals to canvases and paper allowed

Gondi artists to adapt their art to the demands of the contemporary art market. This shift was significant, as it not only provided the artists with a new medium to explore their creativity but also opened up new avenues for them to sell their work and gain financial independence. The move from local mud walls to canvases that could be exhibited in galleries was a critical development in the commercialization of Gondi art. However, this commercialization has been a double-edged sword for the artists of Patangarh. While some have achieved considerable success, many others struggle to navigate the complexities of the modern art market. The process of selling their work often involves intermediaries, who frequently underpay the artists while profiting from the sale of their paintings. This exploitation has left many Gondi painters in Patangarh in a precarious economic position, despite the growing demand for their art (Plate-4).



Plate-4: Depiction of living harmony and the world of Gond tribe expressions.

Community thinking and system on the unity and integrity of the village: There is a lot of unity in the village here, in any house where events like marriage, festival, ceremony, mud ceremony, joint meeting are organized, all the people of the village often take their own responsibilities. Like someone takes the responsibility of cooking food in a wedding, someone takes the responsibility of filling water. Someone takes the responsibility of bringing vegetables. Someone takes the responsibility of cutting vegetables. Someone takes the responsibility of covering the mandap, someone goes to cut the tree. someone decorates the bride and groom. Someone brings things for the wedding rituals. Someone brings oil. Someone serves the food. Someone does the work of picking up the dishes. Someone takes the responsibility of cleaning, someone goes to invite people to their homes, someone takes care of the guests, who is so good that when there is a wedding in someone's house, they take all the responsibility of that house in which the youth of the village have a major contribution. If there is a wedding or any other function in a poor person's house in the village, then all the people of the village collect money for that house and with that money all the functions of that house are arranged such as marriage and serving food in the Dasgatra program of death or full help is given in case of any problem in someone's house (Plate-5).



Plate-5: The vibrant expression of Gond community life.

Role and lifestyle of women in Gond community based on painting: The main role of village women can be seen in Gond painting. Painting has become a good and wonderful opportunity for women. They learn the nuances of art from their husbands, who learn it by helping them in their painting work. Some women are from the same village, who learn this skill from their parents and they have settled in their village for employment and money earned through painting. The women in the village have got self-employment due to which they earn a good income and are able to maintain their household as well as take care of their children and like men, she becomes the main source of livelihood. Due to this, the women here enjoy a good status and respect in society, a glimpse of which can also be seen in their Gond paintings. Women especially help men in painting at home by helping them in putting designs on their paintings, adding colors to their paintings and also by helping them in their imagination so that they can make good paintings. The paintings made by women here are very attractive and show their amazing talent through which their skills and interest can be detected. Which helps them in thinking more deeply and in making paintings and in making themselves self-reliant through hard work and dedication This is the biggest achievement of this small forest village where the inspiration for women to become self-reliant has been well guided by their own culture and tradition. Which provides economic strength to the community. As soon as women become empowered, it is as if the whole community is becoming empowered because seeing the women, their children are also showing interest in painting and are learning to make good paintings, due to which the knowledge of their culture and tradition is increasing in these children, they are able to celebrate the customs and festivals of the village well and a new dimension is being established for the youth. Apart from painting, women's art skills, household chores, following traditional songs, music, dance and customs, learning and creating mutual harmony in the field of women's art and helping and discussing with each other. Preparation of traditional events in the village by women, cultural programs, following customs, puja, fasting, digging houses, decorating with wall paintings, wearing traditional costumes, Teej festival, singing Dadra Dariya songs appear very attractive. Women have displayed these very things and imaginations on canvas by expressing them to the whole world through paintings (Plate-6).



Plate-6: Participation of women in Gondi Painting.

Religious places of the village and their beliefs: Gods and goddesses are established all around the village, among which the main deity of the village is considered to be Thakur Dev, who is established in the middle of the village and for the protection of the village, there is a place of worship of Maharelin Dai and Kheromai, Shankar Bhagwan, Bajrang Bali temple, which are established in different areas of the village. In the village, Thakur Dev's place of worship is situated in the open environment under a Peepal tree where he is worshipped and there is also a tradition of worshipping him after three years. In which the sacrifice of pig, goat, hen and paddy, rice, wheat and vegetables are also brought and offered in pure form Before celebrating marriage, birthday program and other household celebrations, main worship of Thakur Dev is done. Blessings of Thakur Dev are taken for other purposes also and this belief is very much prevalent in the village. Apart from this, there is a belief that different goddesses reside in all the four directions of the village, in which Marihimata Garhthakurain, Tiptaheen Mata (in the square), Jalahrein Mata (in water), Madai Mata (Madai fair) reside, there are also temples and places of worship of Kali Mata, Durga Mata, Lord Ganesha and Lord Shankar, Bajrang Bali (Plate-7)



Plate-7: Depiction of religious activities and belief system in Gond tribe at Patangarh village under Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.

Painting stories: According to another legend, once when Lord Shiva was in penance, a girl appeared from his sweat. This girl had supernatural beauty. Then Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati named her and said that you have made our mind happy, so from today your name will be Narmada. Narmada means "giver of happiness". At the same time, according to another legend, there were many wars between the gods and demons, so the gods also became partners in sin. All the gods went to Lord Shiva with this problem and started asking him for its solution. On this, Lord Shiva created Mother Narmada to wash away the sins of the gods. According to mythological beliefs, once Lord Shiva was absorbed in meditation, then Narmada was born from his sweat. At that time Lord Shiva was on Maikhal mountain. He named that girl Narmada. Which means the one who provides happiness. Lord Shiva blessed that girl that whoever sees you, will be blessed. She was born on Maikhal mountain, so she is also called the daughter of Maikhal Raj. Which is depicted in Gond painting. When Narmada ji grew up, her father Maikhalraj arranged her marriage with Prince Sonbhadra. Once she wanted to meet the prince, so she sent a maid to meet him. The maid was adorned with royal jewellery, which Prince Sonbhadra mistook for Narmada. Both of them got married. When the maid did not return even after a long time, Narmada ji herself went to meet Prince Sonbhadra. She found Prince Sonbhadra with the maid. Then she became very sad and decided never to get married. It is said that since then Maa Narmada started moving towards the west. Since then she never returned, so Maa Narmada still flows in the west direction. Like Ganga, Narmada river is also a goddess and river in Hinduism. In Matsya Purana it is said that all the banks of Narmada are sacred. The Narmada is also considered sacred because of the stones called Banalingas found on the river bed. These pebbles are made of white quartz and are shaped as lingams. They are considered to be the incarnations of Shiva and there is a popular saying, "Narmada ke kankar utte sankar" which means 'Shiva is in the stone of Narmada (Plate-8).



Plate-8: Mythological and story depiction through Gond Painting.

Motivation story made by Banageet : Bana geet is the driving force behind Gond paintings, bringing the essence of music into their work and giving the stories a dreamy character. Bana is a traditional style of singing and storytelling. Through diverse elements, Gond artists create rich depictions of myths, legends and everyday life experiences of the Gond people. Additionally, Hindu deities such as Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna and Lord Ganesha co-exist with local deities such as Phulwari Devi (Goddess Kali), Jalharin Devi (river goddess) and Marhi Devi, further enriching the narrative and spiritual dimensions of their artworks. For the Pradhans and Gonds, Bana is not just an

instrument, it is worshipable and is akin to God and is the abode of God. Budha Dev resides in Bana, its sound enchants one and awakens the Gods and Goddesses. Generally, the Parghaniya people roam around the village for four months in a year and play Bana ritually at the places of their Gond clients and receive paddy, grain, clothes, money etc. as donation. Bana is sung on all auspicious occasions and after Dasagatra in case of death in someone's house, which purifies the house (Plate-9).



Plate-9: Showing Bana (Musical instrument) and Banageet perform by Gond tribe at Patangarh village under Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.

Discussion

Gondi painting, a unique form of tribal art, embodies the rich cultural heritage and aesthetic expressions of the Gond tribe, one of the largest indigenous communities in central India. The art form is not only a visual manifestation of Gond cosmology, myths, and social life but also serves as a living tradition that connects past legacies to contemporary identities. Understanding Gondi painting requires examining its historical roots, symbolic motifs, techniques, and evolving place in modern art markets, while appreciating the ways it preserves and transforms Gond cultural values. The Gond tribe originally settled in the region known as Gondwana around the 9th century AD, establishing significant kingdoms between the 14th and 16th centuries in parts of present-day Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh (Vajpeyi, 2008). During this era, the Gond rulers fostered not only political dominance but also a rich cultural milieu where arts flourished. While direct written documentation is scarce, the persistence of various art forms, including wall paintings and craft traditions, suggests a long-standing indigenous aesthetic culture (Singh, 2014). The decline of Gond political power following the Muslim invasions in the 14th century led many Gond communities to retreat into the forests of the Vindhya and Satpura ranges (The India Craft House, 2012). These secluded environments became sanctuaries for preserving their cultural and artistic practices, although these traditions receded from mainstream historical recognition. The art practiced in these regions reflects the Gond's symbiotic relationship with nature, a worldview centered on animism and respect for all living beings.

Gondi painting's roots are believed to stretch even further back to prehistoric times, possibly deriving from the cave paintings and rock art created by the tribe's Mesolithic ancestors. This connection to ancient art underscores the continuity of Gond cultural expressions through millennia, highlighting the deep symbolic resonance of motifs and the use of natural pigments and materials (Vajpeyi, 2008). At the heart of Gondi painting lies an intricate symbolism that reflects the tribe's spiritual beliefs, social customs, and ecological knowledge. The Gond worldview perceives nature as alive and divine, with trees, animals, and natural phenomena seen as embodiments of spirits or deities (Singh, 2014). This animistic perspective is vividly expressed in their paintings, where flora

and fauna dominate the visual narrative. Common motifs in Gond paintings include animals such as birds, tigers, deer, and peacocks; trees laden with leaves and fruits; rivers and hills; and celestial bodies like the sun and moon. These motifs are not mere decorations but carry stories and moral lessons. For example, the peacock is often symbolic of beauty and spirituality, while the tiger represents strength and protection (Sinha, 2015). The narrative quality of Gond painting is a key aspect of its cultural function. Paintings often depict mythological tales and folk stories involving gods and goddesses such as Bada Deo (the Great God) and Kherel, whose legends explain natural phenomena and social values (The India Craft House, 2012). Through these visual stories, elders pass down communal wisdom and cultural memory, ensuring continuity of identity. Gond paintings are characterized by their distinctive stylistic elements, which contribute both to their aesthetic appeal and cultural meaning. The use of vibrant natural colors derived from minerals, leaves, and flowers creates a rich palette dominated by reds, greens, blues, yellows, and blacks. The choice of colors is intentional and symbolic; for instance, red may signify fertility or vitality, while green often represents growth and harmony (Vajpeyi, 2008). The technique involves meticulous application of fine lines, dots, and repetitive patterns, a hallmark known as the "signature patterning" or "dot-and-line" style (Singh, 2014). These patterns animate the surfaces, producing a sense of movement and rhythm that conveys the dynamic life force in nature. Leaves are depicted with detailed veins, animals are filled with scale-like or feather-like motifs, and backgrounds are often adorned with dots that resemble the natural environment, such as rain or stars. Traditionally, Gond paintings were executed on the walls and floors of mud houses, created mainly by women during festivals and life-cycle events like weddings and childbirth (The India Craft House, 2012). The wall paintings, called *Bhitti Chitra*, and floor designs, called *Dighna*, are temporary yet highly symbolic, serving as auspicious decorations to invite blessings and ward off evil spirits. The ephemeral nature of these artworks ties them closely to the cycles of life and seasons. Within the Gond community, the Gond-Pardhans have been the primary custodians of the painting tradition. Historically, they served as bards and ritual specialists, responsible for preserving oral histories, songs, and visual arts (Sinha, 2015). The Pardhans' role in painting is not merely artistic but deeply embedded in ritual and storytelling, intertwining performance and visual expression. This custodianship has ensured the transmission of stylistic and thematic elements across generations. However, the traditional practices faced challenges with modernization and marginalization. The shift of Gond people from forested rural areas to urban centers threatened the continuity of these art forms, as younger generations moved away from ancestral practices.

The resurgence of interest in Gond painting began in the late 20th century, largely through the pioneering efforts of artists like Jangarh Singh Shyam. Recognized as the first Gond artist to gain national and international acclaim, Jangarh adapted traditional mural techniques to modern mediums such as paper and canvas, opening new avenues for Gond art beyond its ritual context (Verma, 2017). His success sparked a revival among Gond artists, encouraging them to innovate while retaining core cultural values. This transition from wall to canvas has allowed Gond art to enter art galleries, exhibitions, and markets worldwide. The commercialization has brought financial benefits to many tribal artists, offering an alternative livelihood and enhancing the visibility of Gond culture (Sinha, 2015). However, this shift has also raised concerns about authenticity and cultural appropriation. The pressure to produce market-friendly art can sometimes lead to simplification or distortion of traditional themes, risking the loss of deeper meanings embedded in the original context. Sustaining the integrity of Gond painting requires balancing modern adaptation with respect for its ritual and cultural origins (Verma, 2017). Institutional support, fair trade practices, and community involvement are critical to ensuring that the art remains a true expression of Gond identity rather than merely a commodified product. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, Gond painting functions as a powerful medium for expressing cultural identity and environmental values. In an era marked by rapid globalization and environmental degradation, the Gond tribe's artistic focus on nature offers important lessons about ecological balance and sustainable living. The close relationship between the Gond people and their environment is evident in the way natural elements dominate their art, highlighting a worldview that sees humans as part of an interconnected ecosystem rather than separate from it (Singh, 2014).

This ecological consciousness is especially relevant today as indigenous knowledge systems gain recognition for their role in biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, Gondi painting acts as a form of cultural resistance, affirming tribal identity in the face of social marginalization and cultural homogenization. By preserving traditional motifs and stories through art, the Gond community asserts its place in the broader narrative of India's cultural diversity (Vajpeyi, 2008). Despite its global popularity, Gondi painting faces ongoing challenges. The commercialization of tribal art can lead to exploitation of artists, undervaluing of traditional knowledge, and loss of cultural control (The India Craft House, 2012). The influx of counterfeit or mass-produced "Gond-style" paintings threatens the authenticity of genuine works and undermines tribal artisans' livelihoods.

Additionally, younger generations may feel detached from traditional practices due to urban migration and modern education systems that do not emphasize indigenous cultures. Ensuring the transmission of artistic skills and cultural values requires concerted efforts in education, community programs, and policy support. Future research and cultural preservation initiatives should focus on empowering Gond artists as cultural custodians, promoting sustainable economic models, and fostering greater appreciation for the socio-cultural contexts of their art. Documentation, exhibitions, and academic studies can help bridge gaps between tribal communities and global audiences, highlighting the relevance of Gondi painting as both an artistic and cultural legacy. Gondi painting stands as a vivid testament to the Gond tribe's deep-rooted cultural consciousness, spiritual worldview, and aesthetic sensibilities. As a traditional form of visual storytelling, it represents more than mere decoration it serves as a living narrative of the community's beliefs, myths, and ecological wisdom. The Gond people, who have long inhabited the forested regions of Central India, possess an animistic belief system in which every element of nature trees, animals, mountains, and rivers is endowed with life and divinity (Singh, 2014). This worldview is intricately reflected in their art, where motifs drawn from flora and fauna are imbued with symbolic meaning and spiritual significance.

The use of bright natural colors, rhythmic patterns, and detailed linework in Gondi painting exemplifies a sophisticated aesthetic tradition grounded in tribal cosmology. The characteristic dot-and-line technique, often referred to as "signature patterning," not only enhances visual rhythm but also conveys movement and vitality, symbolizing the interconnectedness of all living beings (Vajpeyi, 2008). Traditionally, these paintings adorned the walls and floors of homes during festivals and rituals, serving both decorative and ritualistic purposes (The India Craft House, 2012). The themes often depicted legendary tales of deities such as Bada Deo (the Great God) and narratives from Gond folklore, thereby functioning as a visual archive of tribal mythology. In the modern context, Gondi art has transcended its ritualistic origins to emerge as a recognized form of contemporary tribal expression. Artists such as Jangarh Singh Shyam have played a transformative role in bringing Gond art to national and international attention (Sinha, 2015). By translating traditional wall art onto canvas and paper, Jangarh and his successors have adapted indigenous visual traditions to modern mediums while preserving their cultural essence. This transition has not only revitalized Gond art but has also provided a sustainable livelihood for many tribal artists, bridging the gap between folk and fine art. Moreover, the recognition of Gondi painting in academic and cultural discourse has contributed to the broader appreciation of indigenous aesthetics within India's artistic landscape. Scholars argue that the art's enduring appeal lies in its ability to merge myth with modernity, blending spiritual symbolism with contemporary techniques (Verma, 2017). Despite this progress, the art form still faces challenges related to commercialization, cultural appropriation, and the marginalization of tribal voices in mainstream art markets. Ensuring the authenticity and continuity of this tradition requires institutional support, community led initiatives, and policies that prioritize indigenous representation. Ultimately, Gondi painting embodies a cultural and aesthetic legacy that transcends time. It is a visual manifestation of the Gond people's identity, values, and harmonious relationship with nature. As it continues to evolve, Gondi art not only preserves the memory of tribal traditions but also asserts their relevance in a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

Gondi painting exemplifies a profound cultural and aesthetic legacy that encapsulates the history, spirituality, and identity of the Gond tribe. Rooted in ancient traditions and closely intertwined with nature, the art form offers rich symbolic narratives rendered through distinctive patterns and colours. The transition of Gondi painting from ritual wall art to a globally recognized medium reflects both resilience and adaptation in the face of changing social realities. As a living tradition, Gondi painting continues to nurture the cultural pride and ecological wisdom of the Gond community. Its preservation and respectful promotion not only honour the tribe's heritage but also enrich the diversity of Indian and global art landscapes. Ensuring that this legacy thrives into the future will require a sensitive balance of cultural integrity, economic empowerment, and scholarly engagement. Empowering tribal artists through education, fair trade practices, and institutional support is key to sustaining this living tradition. In conclusion, supporting Gondi painting artists requires a multifaceted approach that balances economic viability with cultural integrity. The continued collaboration between artists, local communities, and institutions is essential in preserving this invaluable cultural legacy and empowering the artists who carry it forward. Implementing these recommendations can significantly enhance the socioeconomic status of Gondi painting artists in Patangarh while ensuring the preservation of their rich cultural heritage. A collaborative approach involving artists, government bodies, NGOs, and the community will be essential for fostering a sustainable and equitable environment for Gondi art to thrive.

Acknowledgment

We are gratefully acknowledging the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, for their generous financial support in funding this research project. Their assistance has been instrumental in facilitating the successful completion of this study. We express our sincere gratitude to the ICSSR, New Delhi, for their commitment to promoting social science research and for providing the necessary resources to carry out this work.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Gondi painting artisans and the villagers of Patangarh, Dindori, Madhya Pradesh, for their valuable time, cooperation, and heartfelt participation during the survey work. Their openness in sharing their experiences, traditional knowledge, and artistic insights has been immensely enriching. The warmth and hospitality extended by the community greatly contributed to the success of this study and provided a deeper understanding of the cultural and artistic heritage of Gondi art.

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