Nerathinga - 2024

Report on Project Display, Demonstration and Sale of Tribal Paintings

(Tribal Arts & Handicrafts Festival)

As part of the National Tribal Festival "Nerathinga 2024," a National Tribal Art Exhibition and Sale was organized at the KIRTADS campus in Kozhikode, from 24th December 2024 to 1st January 2025. The event was inaugurated by Dr. Beena Philip, the Hon. Mayor of Kozhikode Corporation. The program serves as a vibrant platform to showcase the rich cultural heritage and traditions of tribal communities. The festival celebrates the talents and contributions of tribal artists through performances, exhibits, and workshops, fostering cultural understanding and preservation. The painting exhibition featured a wide array of tribal art from artists across India, with a total of four artists from Kerala and six artists from other states participated. The exhibition showcased the rich cultural heritage and artistic traditions of various tribal communities, including the Gond, Oraon, Warli, Kurumba, Mavilan, Paniya, and Kurichya tribes.



Godna Painting

Mrs. Safiano Pavlo and her son, Mr. Bajju Ram Pavlo, represented the Gond tribe from Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh. They are renowned for their Godna paintings, an art form that incorporates symbols representing animals, flowers, jewelry, and other cultural elements, often painted on both canvas and fabrics like sarees and dupattas. Safiano, who has been painting for over 15 years, draws inspiration from the body painting traditions of her tribe. She has received several accolades, including one from the Chhattisgarh state government in 2016.

Sumathi Devi Bhagat from the Oraon tribe of Jaspur, Chhattisgarh participated in the exhibition. Her unique Oraon paintings, which focus on the traditional customs, rituals, and folklore of her community, have earned her recognition across India. Using natural materials like clay and leaves, she creates artwork that spreads awareness about the Oraon culture.

From Maharashtra, Subhash, a Warli artist from Palghar, participated with his distinctive Warli paintings. Using natural red soil and dried clay, Subhash creates captivating artwork on canvas, depicting subjects such as festivals, weddings, and agricultural practices. Following in the footsteps of his father, a well-known Warli artist, Subhash's works have been showcased at various government-led camps.

Balasubramani and his son Bharatkumar, both from the Kurumba tribe in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris, displayed their art, which utilizes natural colors sourced from tree bark, leaves, and turmeric. Their paintings, inspired by nature and the Kurumba tribe's customs such as honey collection, festivals, and harvests, echo the designs found in ancient cave paintings.

Suresh M. from Kasaragod, representing the Mavilan tribe, also participated. His art reflects the cultural practices of the Mavilan community, and he is a skilled mural artist and writer. Suresh has dedicated his work to preserving and promoting the Mavilan language and traditions.

From the Paniya tribe in Wayanad, Dasan V. and Ramya C. K. showcased their art, which portrays the lives and traditions of the Paniya community. Dasan is known for his large canvas works and murals, while Ramya creates artworks that blend tribal and contemporary themes.

Suresh Koduvathil, a self-taught artist from the Kurichya tribe of Wayanad, also participated. Known for his captivating pencil drawings, Suresh is also the designer of the "Nerathing" logo and occasionally writes poetry.

The total revenue generated from the art sales at the exhibition was around ₹80,000. To support the artists, the department provided various artistic tools, including brushes, acrylic paints, and canvases.

Artist Profiles

1. Name: Sumanthi Devi Bhagath

- **Tribe/Community:** Oraon Tribe
- **Hometown:** Jashpur District, Chhattisgarh
- **Art Form:** Painting
- **Specialisation/Style:** Natural painting, Wall painting
- **Years of Experience:** 14-15 years
- **Themes/Subjects:** The paintings depict the rituals, traditions, cultures, worship, nature, and stories of the Oraon Tribe.
- **Materials Used:** Base painted with hands or fingers using mud. Painting done with materials like mud, leaves, and natural dyes.
- **Message or Meaning:** The paintings aim to showcase Oraon culture and spread awareness about it to a wider audience.
- **Short Biography:** Sumanthi is a self-made artist from a small village in Jashpur District, Chhattisgarh. Her inspiration for painting comes from her mother and grandmother, who painted as part of their tradition for marriages, traditional festivals, and rituals. She has had

opportunities to travel across India and showcase her tribe's culture through Manav Sangralay, Bhopal. In addition to painting, Sumanthi performs Oraon traditional dance, cooks traditional food for festivals, and portrays the significance of the Oraon language. She has completed a Tata fellowship that allowed her to cover four states to showcase her paintings, make a documentary film based on her tribe, and write an e-book that is yet to be published.

- The paintings are made from natural materials like mud, leaves etc. The base of the painting is done by making patterns using fingers in the mud. Then the pictures are done on top of it using brushes and natural materials. Each painting has a different story to it depicting the traditions, daily life activities, rituals, culture, animals, etc. The patterns made on the base of the painting is seen on the walls of the houses of the Oraon Tribe too.



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2. Name: Subhash Natu Sutar

- **Tribe/Community:** Warli Tribe
- **Hometown:** Palghar, Maharashtra
- **Art Form:** Painting
- **Specialisation/Style:** Warli Painting
- **Years of Experience:** 22 years
- **Themes/Subjects:** Festivals, marriage, Devi Devta Pooja, farming, and their whole lifestyles

- **Materials Used:** Medium is cloth. Clay powders and cow dung paste as base and white acrylic colour for paintings. Traditionally the tribe uses brushes made from bamboo sticks. The base is done with red soil, cow dung and the painting is done with rice paste. Rice is powdered and mixed with water.
- **Short Biography:** Subhash was inspired to pursue Warli painting by his father, who was also a well-known artist. Despite completing his BA in Arts, Subhash remained dedicated to showcasing Warli art in government camps and exhibitions. He has displayed his work across India in cities like Mumbai, Bhopal, Bangalore, Kolkata, and Nagpur, portraying the entire lifestyle of the Warli Tribe through his paintings.
- This art form uses basic geometric shapes like circles, triangles, and lines to depict daily life, nature, and rituals. These shapes are inspired by elements of nature, like the sun, moon, trees, and mountains. Traditionally, Warli paintings are done on the walls of huts. The walls are prepared with a mixture of mud, cow dung, and water, which acts as the canvas. White is the primary colour, made from a paste of rice flour and water with gum as a binder. Occasionally, natural dyes are used for detailing. Warli paintings are a visual narrative of the tribe's lifestyle, beliefs, and traditions. They highlight the interconnectedness of humans with nature. These paintings are often created during special occasions like weddings, harvests, or festivals, symbolizing prosperity and harmony. Today, Warli art is used in textiles, home decor, and other forms of modern artistic expression, bridging tribal traditions with contemporary aesthetics.



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3. Names: Safiano Pavlo & Bhajju Pavlo

- **Tribe/Community:** Gond Tribe
- **Hometown:** Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh
- **Art Form:** Godna Painting
- **Specialisation/Style:** Tattoo-inspired Painting
- **Years of Experience:** 15 years
- **Themes/Subjects:** Ornaments, symbols depicting animals (elephant), flowers (pumpkin flower), fish bones, cardamom, chains, etc.
- **Materials Used:** Cloths like shawls, sarees, dupattas, and canvas. Use natural colors such as turmeric, lime, kajal, leaves, mud, harra (fruit), and painting brushes.
- **Short Biography:** Originating as a form of body tattooing, Godna painting uses natural dyes and traditional tools to create patterns on the body. Tattoos are considered auspicious for tribal women during marriage. Bhajju draws inspiration from his mother, Sapyano, to continue their cultural art form. Sapyano has received prestigious awards, including the Chhattisgarh State Award (2016) and the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya Award.
- The Gond Tribe of Chhattisgarh carries a rich tradition of body tattooing, known as Godna. This ancient art form holds deep cultural significance, with intricate designs symbolizing identity, spirituality, and auspiciousness. Traditionally, tribal women adorned their bodies with tattoos representing ornaments, animals, and natural motifs like flowers particularly during significant life events like marriage. Over time, Godna has evolved into a vibrant painting style, transferring these symbolic patterns onto canvases, shawls, and sarees using natural dyes and materials. This transformation not only preserves their heritage but also brings their unique artistry to a wider audience.Godna on the body is their traditional and family profession and this was a livelihood for them. This transformation work of Godna art now became an income source for those tribal ladies. They use only pure natural colors for painting fabrics. These colors are fast to use and never bleed during or after washing the fabric. They use their traditional Godna motifs for painting on fabric. The women make large no of sarees from Godna painting as they said that saree is a highly demanded product of Godna painting.



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4. Name: Balasubramanyam, Chithra, Bharath Kumar (Family)

- **Tribe/Community:** Kurumbal Tribe
- **Hometown:** Kothagiri, Nilambur
- **Art Form:** Kurumbal Tribal Painting
- **Specialisation/Style:** Traditional Tribal Art
- **Years of Experience:** 24 years
- **Themes/Subjects:** Honey hunting, festivals, harvesting, pooja, etc.
- **Materials Used:** Canvas, paper, brush, Venga tree milk/serum (yellow, brown, and black colors), Katta chedi (leaf), Kumkuma kai (seed)
- **Short Biography:** Balasubramanyam has practiced Kurumbal Tribal Painting for 24 years, drawing motivation from his ancestors and family support. The traditional paintings of their ancestors still adorn the walls of some caves. The family is committed to passing on their heritage to future generations.
- The art is primarily ritualistic, describing various facets of tribal life in the remote forests of the Nilgiris. We see the Kurumba huts built of leaves and wood, women drying foodgrains, men collecting honey, weddings and rituals, and wild animals prowling the forest. The Kurumbas love the hills and have an exquisite style of art. Originally, they drew with burnt twigs and coloured the art with a resin extracted from the bark of the Kino tree (Pterocarpus marsupium) (Vengai in Tamil). They still use this method, which is slow and cumbersome, but beautiful.

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5. Name: Suresh Koduvattil

- **Tribe/Community:** Kurichya
- **Hometown:** Vellamundu, Wayanad
- **Art Form:** Acrylic Painting, Pencil Art
- **Years of Experience:** 15 years
- **Materials Used:** Canvas, brushes, acrylic paint, pencil
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6. Name: Suresh M

- **Tribe/Community:** Mavilan Community
- **Hometown:** Changad, Kasaragod
- **Art Form:** Mural Painting, Acrylic Painting
- **Years of Experience:** 30 years
- **Materials Used:** Acrylic Paint, brushes

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7. Name: Sreejitha Balan

- **Tribe/Community:** Paniya Community
- **Hometown:** Velliyoorkavu, Wayanad
- **Art Form:** Acrylic Painting, Watercolor Painting
- **Years of Experience:** 5-6 years
- **Themes/Subjects:** Ritualistic paintings
- **Materials Used:** Canvas, brush, acrylic paint, watercolor
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8. Name: Remya

- **Tribe/Community:** Paniya
- **Hometown:** Korome, Wayanad
- **Art Form:** Acrylic Painting
- **Years of Experience:** 3-4 years
- **Materials Used:** Canvas, brush, acrylic paint, pen
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9. Name: Dasan V

- **Tribe/Community:** Paniya Community
- **Hometown:** Ambalavayal, Wayanad
- **Art Form:** Acrylic Painting
- **Years of Experience:** 20 years
- **Materials Used:** Canvas, brush, acrylic paint
- Dasan is also an artisan who makes musical instruments like ‘Thudi’ and ‘Kuzhal’ which are used for their traditional artforms and songs.
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