

Tribal Paintings of India: Notes for UPSC Art and Culture

Paintings provide evidence to the archaeologists in studying the cultural, religious and geographical influences on a community. They help the archaeologists in studying the practices, traditions and lifestyle of the people or tribes. The origin of Indian paintings dates back to 30000 BCE and is found in the caves of Central India. Here is a list of Indian tribal paintings for the IAS exam.

Warli folk art has its origins in Maharashtra. It is widely practised in the Northern Sahyadri region by the Adivasis (tribes). Warli tribe is one of the largest tribes of India which has rejected contemporary culture. Elements of nature are the focal points of Warli folk paintings. A mixture of rice paste, gum and water is used as paint by the warlis. A bamboo stick is used as the brush.

Gond Art

Gond art encompasses life as the central theme of art. It is practised by “Gondi” tribe of Central India. The art form celebrates life i.e, hills, streams, animals, birds etc. The tribes, traditionally painted on the mud walls of their house.

Madhubani Paintings

Also called Mithila painting is practised in the Northern and Eastern Bihar region in India and in Nepal. Twigs, nibs, matchsticks and fingers are used for painting. Natural dyes and pigments are used as paints. It is characterized by geometrical patterns such as line drawing filled with bright colours. The painting is done on freshly plastered or mud walls. Godna, Kohbar, Tantrik, Bharani and Katchni are the distinctive styles of Madhubani painting.

Pattachitra

Pattachitra – literally translates to picture on a cloth. It is traditionally practised in the state of Odisha. The paintings encompass Hindu mythology, religious stories, folklore and the figures of deities. Natural paints and a cloth canvas are used for creating simple themes.

Pithora paintings

It is a highly ritualistic painting practised by tribes like Rathwas, Bhilalas of Central Gujarat. They are found on the walls of the houses and are believed to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to the household. It is considered more of a ritual than an art form to plead the gods for a boon. It is interesting to note that there is never an attempt to imitate nature. The walls are treated with a double layer of cow dung and a layer of chalk powder before painting.