

Profile of warli artisans of Maharashtra

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Received: 11.09.2014; Revised: 16.10.2014; Accepted: 30.10.2014

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Tribal art generally reflects the creative energy found in rural areas that acts as an undercurrent to the craftsmanship of the tribal people. Over the years they have found worldwide appreciation and admiration from art connoisseurs. Warli painting is the famous folk art of Maharashtra. Warli is the name of the largest tribe found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai, in Western India. The present exploratory study was conducted in Maharashtra as the higher concentration of the warli artisans found in Dhanu, Jawahar, Manor and Cosbad Villages of Thane distt. to assess the socio-economic profile of warli artisans.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Warli, Artisan, Socio, Profile, Motifs, Maharashtra

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Vaishnav, Sangeeta and Srivastava, Meenu (2014). Profile of warli artisans of Maharashtra. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 9 (2) : 491-495.

India had always been known as the land that portrayed cultural and traditional vibrancy through its conventional arts and crafts. The folk and tribal arts of India are very ethnic and simple and yet colourful and vibrant enough to speak volumes about the country's rich heritage.

Warli art is a beautiful folk art of Maharashtra, traditionally created by the Warli tribal women. This art was first explored in the early seventies and from then it was named as "Warli art". Tribal people express themselves in vivid styles through paintings which they execute on the walls of their house. This was the only means of transmitting folklore to a populace not acquainted with the written word. The most important aspect of the painting is that it does not depict mythological characters or images of deities, but depicts social life. Pictures of human beings and animals, along with scenes from daily life are created in a loose rhythmic pattern.

Warli is the name of the largest tribe found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai, in Western India. Of a total population of 3,31,829, in Maharashtra's Dahanu taluka (Socio-Economic Abstract, 2006-07, Thane district), 64.84 per cent are tribal, belonging predominantly to the Warli tribe. Dispersed across 174 villages in Dahanu, the Warlis are today a marginalized community. The tribes are forest-dwellers but have made a gradual transition towards being a pastoral community. They

reside in the West coast of Northern Maharashtra. A large concentration is found in the Thane district, off Mumbai. A little backward economically, they still maintain their indigenous customs and traditions. They are spread out in the villages named Dahanu, Talasaree, Jawahar, Jamshed, Raitali, Manor, Cosbad, Vikramgad, Makhada, Vada, Palghara and several other parts of the district as well. The present paper focuses on profile of warli artisans.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Origin of Warli paintings is rooted in the history of Maharashtra. Since the warli is folk art of Maharashtra, in present study, the survey was conducted in Thane distt. of Maharashtra based on the higher concentration of the population in these villages. To collect desired information about the socio-economic profile of these artisans, the present study was purposively carried out in Dhanu, Jawahar, Manor and Cosbad Villages of Thane distt. of Maharashtra. The researcher randomly selected 15 artisans from each of the selected four villages, thus, comprising of a total sample of 60 respondents. An structured interview schedule, developed by the researcher was used to elicit the required information about socio-economic profile of these selected warli artists of different villages. The developed schedule was pre-tested on

ten non sample subjects. The collected data was analysed for statistical treatment in the light of objective of study.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following section contains the outcome of the major observation made during the study. Socio-personal characteristic such as age, education level, occupation, income and family type were studied. The respondents selected in the study belonged to scheduled Tribes (East Indian Tribe) of India.

Data given in the Table 1 indicate that the majority of the respondents (67%) belonged to the age group as 25-35 years followed by 17 per cent respondents belonged to 35-45 years age group. Hundred per cent of the men were involved in warli craft. The educational status of the respondents was categorized into primary, secondary, Senior secondary, and graduation. The data pertaining to education revealed that 70 per cent of respondents were qualified up to Hr. Secondary and 20 per cent of the respondents were graduates while 10 per cent respondents were qualified up to Primary. It was found that none of the respondents was illiterate. It was observed that the cent per cent respondents belonged to joint families. Regarding family size, the data revealed that 80 per cent respondents belonged to large family size and rest of 20 per cent respondents belonged to medium family size.

Table 1 : Socio-personal traits of the respondents (n=60)		
Socio-personal traits	Number of respondents	Percentage
Age (in years)		
15 to 25	5	8
25 to 35	40	67
35 to 45	10	17
up to 45	5	8
Sex		
Men	60	100
Women	-	-
Education		
Primary	6	10
Secondary	0	0
Hr. Secondary	42	70
Graduation	12	20
Type of family		
Nuclear	0	0
Joint	60	100
Family size		
Small (4 or less members)	0	0
Medium (5 to 8 members)	12	20
Large (8 or more members)	48	80
Monthly family income (Rs.)		
Less than 10,000	6	10
10,000 to 20,000	54	90

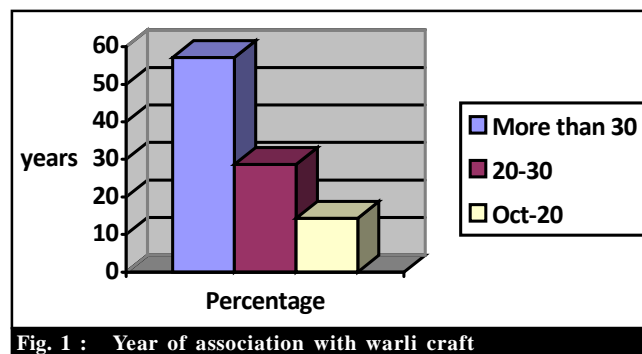
The monthly income of the respondents was categorized into two groups. The finding of the study revealed that 90 per cent of respondents belonged to income of Rs. 10,000 to 20,000 while 10 per cent respondents belonged to less than Rs.10,000 income range.

Association with craft :

The researcher also tried to collect the information about warli craft and the duration the respondents were associated with the craft, the data gathered have been presented below :

Association with craft :

It is apparent from the Fig. 1 that 57.14 per cent respondents were found to be associated with this craft for more than 30 years, and 28.57 per cent respondents from last 20-30 years. Remaining 14.28 per cent respondents was associated with this craft from last 10-20 year. It shows that all the respondents were practicing this craft from more than one decade.



Mode of learning :

All the respondents said that art of warli is their ancestral work. While interviewing the respondents, it was found that they had not undergone any special training to learn this art and all the skills of profession had been acquired from their family members like father, elder brothers and each artist trained himself by the method of learning by doing.

Other areas in Maharashtra where other artisans are scattered :

It was found that they were spread out in the villages named Dahanu, Talasaree, Jawahar, Jamshed, Raitali, Manor, Cosbad, Vikramgad, Mokhada, Vada, Palghara and several other parts of the district as well.

Time spent :

Data regarding exploring the approximate time spent per day for creating warli have been presented in Fig. 2. It was found that majority of the respondents (68.57 %) spent 8-10 hours in a day, followed by 31.42 per cent respondents who work 7-8 hours per day for developing beautiful Miniature Paintings.

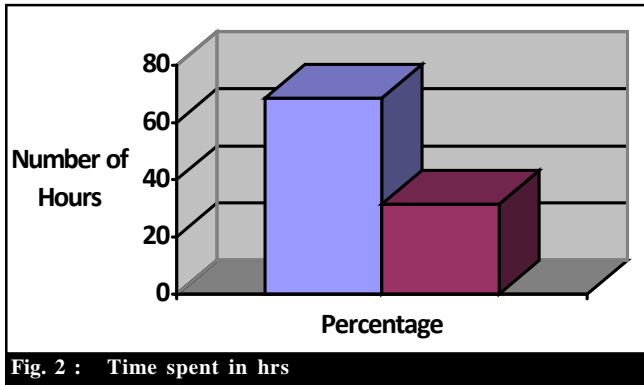


Fig. 2 : Time spent in hrs

Other source of income :

Respondents revealed that warlis were originally hunters but today they are farmers and work according to the monsoon. The struggle for access to forests, rights over land and minimum wages became the critical conflicts around which the Warlis have been struggling for the last several decades.

Reason behind being attached to this craft :

Respondents believed that warli paintings invoke powers of the God and gave them strength. Since childhood they were involved in warli craft. This craft were part of their daily life. They express everything in their paintings what they saw, felt, and believed in life.

Basic facilities available in home/nearby :

It was found that 60 per cent respondents were having mobile phone, 40 per cent were having T.V. and no one respondent were having computer in home but they were having facility of cyber cafe at nearby.

Difference between warli painting from other paintings :

It was revealed by the respondents that Warli Paintings are very different from other folk and tribal paintings in India. Their themes are not mythological, nor their colours as bright as the ones seen in Madhubani Paintings. Neither do they contain the robust sensuality of the paintings found in Eastern India. Instead they are painted on mud, charcoal, cow dung based surface using natural dyes in white. Their linear nature and monochromatic hues make them similar to pre-historic cave paintings and aboriginal art in execution. These paintings also serve social and religious aspirations of the local people, since it is believed that these paintings invoke powers of the God.

Techniques of making warli painting :

The researcher found that cent per cent of respondents used free hand drawing method in warli painting. They prepared mud base and then made painting with white pigment. They use a bamboo stick chewed at the end, to make it work like a paintbrush.

Knowledge of another method of doing painting :

It was revealed by the cent per cent respondents that they didn't have any knowledge about another method painting. Researcher asked them about their interest in learning another method of painting, it was revealed that they all wanted to learn.

Table 2 : Techniques used for different base material

Base material	For base color	For painting
Mud wall	Cow dung + sand + red geru	Rice floor + water + gum
Canvas	Geru + fevicol	White poster color
Hand-made paper	Cow dung water	White poster color

Material used for warli painting :

Traditionally it was painted to decorate the mud walls of the huts with paintings made in rice paste. The painting on paper is a fall-out of commercialization. Now-a-days, these paintings are made on hand-made paper with white poster colour. It was revealed by 50 per cent respondents that they used Canvas as main material, 30 per cent respondents used hand-made paper and remaining 20 per cent respondents paint mud walls. It was interesting to know that they got order to paint walls of hotels, restaurants, resorts and marriage places.

Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to Materials used for painting (n=60)

Material	Respondents	Percentage
Hand-made paper	18	30
Canvas	30	50
Mud wall	12	20

Cent per cent respondents reported that canvas paintings were more in demand as compared to paper or wood

Colour commonly used for painting :

Cent per cent respondents reported that the only colour used in creating Warli paintings is white used on a red earthen background. This white colour is obtained from grounding rice into white powder. Now-a-days, these paintings are made on green or brown hand-made paper.

Themes used in warli paintings :

The themes are often repetitive and symbolic in nature. The theme of Warli paintings are mostly celebration, harvesting, marriage and many such occasions in tribal life. usually depict scenes of humans engaged in activities like hunting, dancing, sowing, going out, drawing water from well, drying clothes or even dancing.

Type of motifs :

The trademark of Warli paintings is the use of geometric designs such as triangles, circles, squares, dots and crooked

lines. These geometric designs are used to depict human figures, animal figures, houses, crops etc.

- Circle: representing the sun and the moon
- Triangle: triangle derived from mountains and pointed trees
- Square: indicating a sacred enclosure or a piece of land. So the central motive in each ritual painting is the square.

These geometric figures are joined together to form beautiful patterns. Like two apex of triangles are joined together to form a human figure.

Selection of motifs and themes :

The Fig. 3 depicts that most of the respondents 70 per cent selected the design as per their own choice followed by customer demand as reported by 30 per cent respondents.

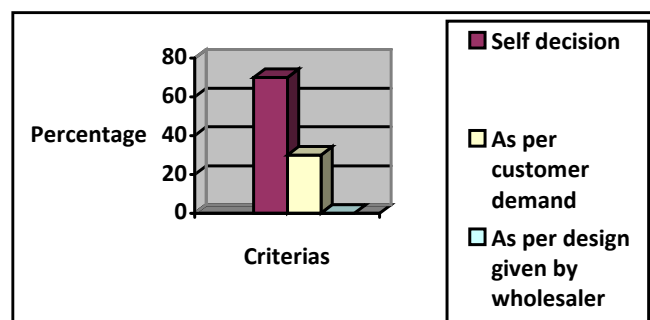


Fig. 3 : Selection criteria of warli designs

Mode of procurement of raw material :

According to respondents everything what is required for painting was available at local market. Cent per cent of respondents reported that they purchased raw material from local market.

Consumers of warli paintings :

The Table 4 shows that 80 per cent respondents reported that foreigners were main consumers of warli painting and remaining 20 per cent respondents were of opinion that both the local people and the foreigners were their consumers.

Table 4 : Consumers of warli paintings (n=60)		
Type of consumer	No. of respondents	Percentage
Foreigners	48	80
Local	-	-
Both	12	20

Mode of procurement of order:

It was found that 85 per cent respondents got direct order from consumers while 10 per cent respondents got order from stakeholder and rest of 5 per cent respondents got order from dealers.

Table 5 : Mode of procurement of orders (n=60)		
Order	Respondents	Percentage
Stakeholder	6	10
Dealers	3	5
Direct contact with consumers	51	85

Time needed to complete one painting :

It was found that artisans devoted more than 5 hrs. According to size they consume time for completion one. Table 6 depicts that smallest painting took one day for completion and accordingly bigger one took more days.

Table 6 : Time is needed to complete one painting	
Size (cm) / theme	Time consumed for completion
20 × 30	1 day
27 × 35	2 to 3 days
140 × 240	1 month

Taking help from other :

It can be clearly seen from the Table 7 that 60 per cent of respondents reported that they took help of other family members. Further it can be seen that 40 per cent respondents took help from fellow workers.

Table 7 : Distribution of respondent taking help of others in warli painting (n=60)		
Help taken	Respondents	Percentage
Family member	36	60
Fellow worker	24	40

Marketing of products :

The Table 8 shows that 90 per cent respondents market the products at their own shop and rest 10 per cent through retailers.

Table 8 : Distribution of respondents according to marketing of products (n=60)		
Marketing through	Respondents	Percentage
Retailer	6	10
Wholesaler	-	-
At your own shop	54	90

Problems and future prospectus:

Majority of respondents revealed their dissatisfaction with the market demand of warli craft. Like many forms of art, warli craft is gradually losing its grace and demands. As most of the warli crafts are made on order and demand of the customers for export purpose. The domestic requirement of this craft is limited to a particular strata of the society. Hence, there is need to revive this beautiful craft before it lost its glory.

Conclusion :

Thus, it can be concluded that at the time of present investigation most of the artisans were in age group of 25-35 years, as far as caste is concerned of them belonged to schedule tribe castes. Regarding family structure and education, most of the artisans had education upto secondary level and living in joint family, 80 per cent had large family size and their monthly income ranged between Rs. 10,000- 20,000. Majority of the respondents were found to be associated with this craft from more than 30 years. As far as mode of learning all the respondents accepted that warli craft is their ancestral work. Time spent by the respondents in warli work ranged from 8-10 hours per day. The respondents were found dissatisfied with the marketing demand of the Warli craft and felt that this art needs to be popularized in order to preserve its reminiscent beauty by adapting it for versatile uses in apparel and textiles. The growing popularity and commercialization of the Warli paintings will uphold bright potentials for their upliftment of these tribal people and will help in integrating them with the mainstream.

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