



ON SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF A PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUP OF THE NILGIRIS

(A Case Study of the Graphic Art Tradition of Alu Kurumbas)

FINAL REPORT



Submitted by
DR. C. MAHESWARAN

Former Director
Tribal Research Centre
The Nilgiris

Government of Tamil Nadu

To the
SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI

New Delhi – 110 001

October, 2019

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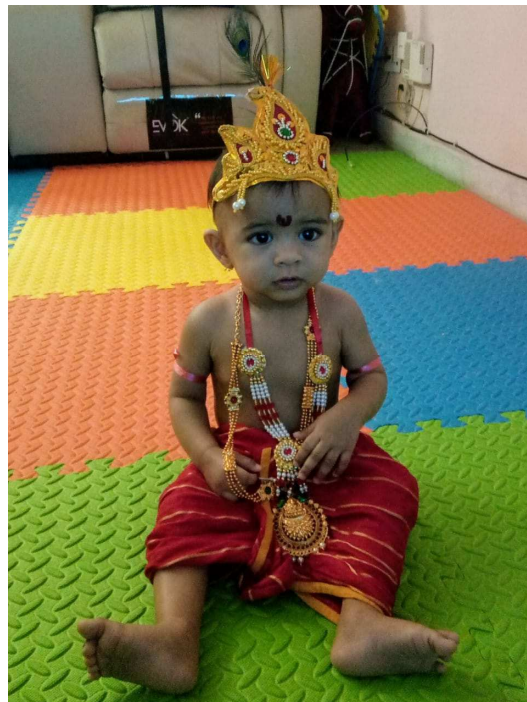
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Dedicated to our grandson Master **W.S. Chirush**,
the first off-shoot in our lineage



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At the outset, I wish to record my gratitude to the authorities of ICH Section of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. For having sanctioned grant to undertake this Research Study on documenting the ICH of the Kurumba Painting Tradition of Tribal Nilgiris.

Further, I wish to record my deep sense of gratitude to Rev. Philip Mulley of Kotagiri who facilitated me to have access on the Green Shop of the Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri in studying & documenting the graphic art tradition of the Alu Kurumbas of The Nilgiris.

I wish to place on record the help rendered by Shri. K.A. Murugavel, Curator, Government Museum, Udthagamandalam, The Nilgiris in photo – documenting the Project under study.

I wish to acknowledge the help rendered by M/s. Epoint Common Service Centre, NGGO Colony, Coimbatore, in bringing out this Final Report in this appreciable shape.

I wish to record the helps & cooperation that I have received from my Alu Kurumba Tribal People, especially the Master Craftsman Shri. R. Krishnan alias 'Kitna' without whom this documentation and research could not have been completed successfully.

I would like to thank profusely my spouse Smt. Suseela Rani who accompanied me and remained as the source of inspiration & support in all my research endeavours.

C. Maheswaran

O. INTRODUCTION

0.0 General :-

While stressing the significance of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' of an indigenous tribal group Richard Kurin, a noted Museologist observes, "Cultural Heritage is not something dead, frozen or stored away but rather something living, vital and connected to the identity and the spirit of a contemporary people trying to make their way in a complicated world today" (2004:9).

Keeping this above mentioned observation in mind, the Graphic Art Tradition of Alu Kurumbas, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG)¹ of The Nilgiris is subjected to study, documentation, and retrieval so as to safeguarding it for the posterity.

Leonard Adam, a celebrated Cultural Anthropologist advocates, "For full appreciation of a work of art, it should be seen as far as possible in the setting in which it was created". As suggested by L. Adam, It has been decided to study the indigenous painting tradition of Alu Kurumbas within their cultural context by undertaking direct field studies at various tribal habitats of Alu Kurumbas where that intangible cultural heritage is nurtured and augmented.

0.1 The Nilgiris – An Overview :-

'The Nilgiris', popularly known as the 'Blue Moutains', is an integral part of the great Deccan Plateau which occupies the juncture of Eastern Ghats and Western Ghats of South India; And the district comprising 'The Nilgiris' that is noted as the 'Nilagiri District' has an area of more than 88 sq. km. with a human population of 7.64 lakhs distributed in 6 taluks, viz., Udhamandalam, Kundah, Coonoor, Kotagiri, Gudalur and Padalur. The total tribal population figure of the District is enumerated as 28,378 (as against the total population of District) giving a percentage of 4.32.

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0.2 Tribal Nilgiris - Its Geographical & Ethnological Settings :-

Bounded on the west by Kerala, on the north by Karnataka, and on the south- east by Coimbatore District (of Tamil Nadu), ‘ The Nilgiris ’ is located at the tri-juncture of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. Although ‘it’ exists as one of the smallest districts of State of Tamil Nadu, it is noted for its scenic beauty, characteristic tribal groups, and unusual archaeological–anthropological heritage.

The Nilgiris rises abruptly from the surrounding plains on western, northern, and south – eastern sides while it slopes down generally on north. And thus, it forms a hilly area located between 11’ 10’ to 11’ 30’ North latitude and between 76’ 25’ and 77’ 00’ East longitude at the junction of Eastern Ghats and western Ghats, the two prominent mountain ranges that run almost parallel to the coast line of Peninsular India with an average of 6,500ft.

At this high land region of north-west Tamil Nadu which forms a massif in the juncture of Eastern Ghats and Western Ghats to the north of Palghat Pass is not only rich in ethnographic artefacts and craftefacts but in all sorts of cultural heritage as well. For instance, the massive stone outcrops along the slopes made The Nilgiris an ideal arena for the creation of rock art. Further, certain tribal groups of The Nilgiris are more likely to be identified with the rock shelters than others, as evidenced from the fact that both the Alu Kurumbas and the Irular regularly store their ritual paraphernalia within the rock shelters located nearby their hamlets. Further more, several of the rock art depictions of such rock art shelters have been found to be re-painted and or re-touched suggesting that these rock shelters are in continuous ritual utility.

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Kota, Kurumbas, Irular, Paniyan and Kattunayakan. As 'it' accommodates all the above cited PTGs of Tamil Nadu within its fold (in contradistinction of other districts which shelter at the maximum of 5 tribal groups only) this district is designated aptly as the ' Tribal District of Tamil Nadu ').

Interestingly, all these 6 PTGs of The Nilgiris are not evenly distributed in its 6 taluks². Of the total tribal population of the Nilgiris, about 46% of the tribal groups are observed to be inhabiting the taluks of Gudalur and Pandalur; About 24% of the tribes are located at the Kotagiri taluk; About 23% of the tribal peoples are identified at the taluks of Udhagamandalam and Kundah; And the remaining 7% of the tribes are found to be residing at the Coonoor taluk.

The various tribal groups of Nilagiri Plateau differ considerably in selecting their habitation sites as well. For instance, the Paniyan, the Kattunayakan, the Mullu Kurumbas inhabit the lower western slope of Nilgiri District – at the taluks of Gudalur and Pandalur – upto an altitude of 1,200 meters, the Alu Kurumbas and the Irular dwell chiefly in the hilly tracts between an elevation of 1,200 meters and 1,500 metres at the taluks of Coonoor and Kotagiri; the Kota tribes live in the locations at the height of about 1,800 metres at the taluks of Udhagamandalam, Kundah, and Kotagiri and the Toda tribal group occupies the higher attitude of 2,000 metres to 2,200 metres at the taluks of Udhagamandalam, Kundah and Kotagiri.

Such a spatial distribution of all the tribal groups at the Nilagiri District reveals the fact that these indigenous tribal communities maintain different kinds of ethnic relationship which have direct socio-cultural bearings within the Tribal Cultural Heritage of The Nilgiris.

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0.3 The Position of Alu Kurumbas within the Tribal Nilgiris :-

Among the 6 PTGs of The Nilgiris, the Kurumbas have been identified as a single complex entity, the ‘ Kurumba Complex ’ by David G. Mandelbaum, one of the several Cultural Anthropologists who worked on The Nilagiri tribal groups. However, the present investigator is of the strong contention that the so-called sub-sects of Kurumbas as (i) Betta Kurumbas / Urali Kurumbas, (ii) Jenu Kurumbas/Kattunayakan, (iii) Mullu Kurumbas / Kurumans, and (iv) Alu Kurumbas / Palu Kurumbas deserve each a separate ethnic status, owing to their linguistic and ethno-cultural distinctiveness observable with each other.

Linguistically, the speech varieties of Betta Kurumbas / Urali Kurumbas and Mullu Kurumbas / Kurumans are identified as two separate languages of South Dravidian sub-group within the Dravidian linguistics family whereas the speech varieties of Alu Kurumbas / Palu Kurumbas and Jenu Kurumbas / Kattunayakan are identified as two distinct archaic dialects of Kannada. And based on their ethnic – differentiating features also, all these so-called 4 sub-sects of Kurumbas could be identified as 4 different ethnic groups³. For example, the possession of Traditional Knowledge System (TKS) on medico-magical practices and indigenous painting tradition could be cited as certain exclusive ethnic – differentiating features of Alu Kurumbas / Palu Kurumbas and thereby ethno-culturally distancing it with the other three so-called sub-divisions of Kurumbas.

0.4 The Graphic Art Tradition of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris :-

Interestingly, the Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris are identified with the possession of a unique intangible cultural heritage, viz the ‘ graphic art tradition ’ from time immemorial. For instance, the Alu Kurumbas are observed to decorate the walls of their dwelling hats with unique graphic art depictions – in the form of an indigenous painting tradition – employing the leaf juice (*Pachchele Chaaru*) and the latex extract (*Vaenga Paalu*) as the

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paint and the aerial root of banyan tree (*Aalanguchchi Vaeru*) as the painting brush.

Further, on the annual secret ceremony of religious orientation, the tribal shaman of Alu Kurumbas re-draw (by re-touching and or re-painting) the anthropomorphic image of tribal deity that gets covered with white wash during the previous year; and this is believed to re-vitalize the imbibed spirit residing in it. Further, the Alu Kurumbas believe firmly that such re-vitalized spirit, in turn, will fly to the nearby cliff and re-charge the cult figure drawn therein by their ancestors on a huge rock canvas. And this cultural observance ensures their entire tribal community with protection and prosperity throughout the year, believe the Alu Kurumbas⁴.

One Shri R. Krishnan alias 'Kitna', a tribal youth of Alu Kurumbas residing at Vellaricombai near Mamaram of Kotagiri taluk of The Nilgiris who possesses the flair for this indigenous graphic art tradition was trained meticulously with painstaking efforts, to transform the technique of wall painting into paper, board, and or canvas mediums, of course by employing natural resource materials such as *Vaenga Paalu*, the latex extract from the bark of *Vaenga Marom*⁵ (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), *Pachchele Chaaru*, the leaf juice obtained from the indigenous herbs such as *Katte Gidaa* (*Strobilanthes Sp.*) *Kaatu Avare* (*Dolichas sp.*)⁶. Moreover, as the master-trainer Shri. Krishnan was requested to train other youths of his own tribal community (of Alu Kurumbas) in the graphic art tradition resulting into a band of tribal graphic artists nurturing this intangible cultural heritage in complete vibrancy. The outcome of practising this intangible cultural heritage records the various facts of socio-cultural milieu of tribal lifestyles of Alu Kurumbas (,inclusive of ritual observances) for the posterity.

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0.5 Aims & Objectives of this Present Research Study :-

The aims of this proposed research study are two-fold, namely,

- (i) to advocate and highlight the awareness of the deep-rooted interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural heritage; and
- (ii) to enhance the role of cultural institutions and indigenous communities in safeguarding this intangible cultural heritage under study.

And consequently, the task before the present investigator is giving 'physical form' to the intangible cultural heritage while at the same time reviving the spirit and the soul of creators of tangible cultural assets.

Thus, the core objectives of this present research study could be summarized as follow :

- i) To pass on the traditional craft (here, the indigenous paintim tradition of Alu Kurumbas) to the younger generation through research and practice; and
- ii) To improve the cooperation and experience on the traditional craft of painting among the museums and other relevant cultural institutions.

Therefore, the main objective of this present research study is not only documentation of the intangible cultural heritage but also engagement in its presentation, preservation, protection and transmission by the way of working closely and cooperatively with the relevant communities.

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- (a) Preserving the traditions of human creations at the risk of safeguarding them completely;
- (b) Providing the intangible cultural heritage national and world-wide recognition; and
- (c) Facilitating international cooperation and assistance in safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage.

With the ulterior objective of safeguarding the graphic art tradition (,especially the “indigenous painting tradition”), the unique intangible cultural heritage of Alu Kurumbas for the posterity, in this proposed research study it is ventured to study-

- I. The graphic art tradition that has been practised by the Alu Kurumbas of The Nilgiris;
- II. The traditional motifs, the indigenous style, and the themes identified within this intangible cultural heritage;
- III. The significance of this intangible cultural heritage within the cultural framework of Alu Kurumbas;
- IV. The ways and the means to sustain and propagate this intangible cultural heritage throughout the Tribal Nilgiris; and
- V. The modality of ensuring sustainable tribal development by creating avenues of marketing the end products crafted out of practising this intangible cultural heritage.

0.6 Significance of the Present Research Study :-

The Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris are observed to preserve, nurture, and augment their indigenous graphic art tradition as a culture – specific intangible cultural heritage. As the Tribal Nilgiris exists as a ‘melting pot of cultures’⁷ owing to the onslaught of various developmental activities, this culture-specific intangible cultural heritage practised by the Alu Kurumbas

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ought to be studied, documented, and propagated in order to safeguard it before it gets acculturated and become obsolete beyond retrieval.

Further, as there is ample chance that the Alu Kurumbas tend to lose their culture specific traits and practices due to their 'culture contacts' with the neighbouring non – tribal groups, such loss of culture specific traits⁸ and practices in turn shall lead to the loss of their specific graphic art tradition, the living intangible cultural heritage of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris.

And the outcome of this present study will enable the planners and the administrators to chalk out the modalities in framing up various strategies of sustainable tribal development in the coming up years.

0.7 Methodology employed in the Present Research Study :-

By conducting direct field studies at the select hamlets of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris, the present investigator has employed different anthropological research methods such as 'Participant-observation', 'Key-informant Interviewing', 'Case Histories' so as to unravel the various nuances and intricacies of this unique intangible cultural heritage practised by almost all the 'Living Human Treasures'⁹ among the Alu Kurumbas.

Apart from these 'Maintainers'¹⁰, the various agencies such as 'TRIFED' (the 'Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited), Ministry of Tribal Affairs, '*Ajelu Bottu*' (Lit. "Tattoo Mark"), the self-formative group of Alu Kurumbas and 'other Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) of Tribal Nilgiris' that have been involved in the protection, propagation, and sustenance of this intangible cultural heritage have also been subjected to study in order to evolve a holistic presentation in the desired direction.

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0.8 Selection of Field Centres and Key-informants :-

The hamlets of Alu Kurumbas in and around the Tribal Nilgiris where this intangible cultural heritage is practised are selected as the field centres to carry out direct field studies.

And the practioners of this intangible cultural heritage who enact and thus contribute as the 'Living Human Treasures' are subjected to detailed study so as to assess their contributions in terms of both quality and quantity; Of the available 'Living Human Treasures' Shri. R. Krishnan alias 'Kitna', Shri. M. Balasubramani alias 'Baalaa' Smt. Selvi, Smt. Pushpa, Kumari B. Kalpana have been selected as the 'Key-informants'.

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I. A NOTE ON THE TRADITION OF TRIBAL ART

1.0 General :-

The word 'Art' refers to the quality production, expression or realm of what is beautiful or more than ordinary and significance. Hence, it is surmised that 'Art itself is a social construction out of aesthetic elements'. The most important feature of 'Art' lies in the skills, visions, and sensibilities. Thus, the tools and the materials become merely the means for realizing these quintessential qualities.

As 'Art' is the autobiography of culture, We locate in it the aspirations, the achievements and the envisages of people; In other words, the 'Art' plays and essential part in every culture by giving that culture a meaning and an emotional tone. And consequently, the 'Art is construed as the product of deep-rooted human expressions to the emotional drives through rhythmic patterns that are manifested in varied forms.

The humankind has proclaimed its uniqueness within the animal kingdom through the ability to conceptualize (i.e., to evolve and express its thought process). Therefore, the Cultural Anthropologists define the 'Art' as a language for expressing 'things' (i.e., 'tangible objects of culture') and 'concepts' (i.e., 'intangible aspects of culture')¹¹ that are true and important which can not be stated in prosaic terms.

1.1 On Classifying the 'Art' :-

Frnz boas the celebrated Cultural Anthropologist in this authoritative work entitled, 'Primitive Art' published in 1972 dichotomizes the 'Art' into (i) 'Arts of space' and (ii) 'Arts of Time'. And he further polarizes the first category (i.e., 'Arts of Space') into (a) 'Graphic Art' and (b) 'Plastic Art' and the second category (i.e., 'Arts of Time') into (a) 'Music' and (b) 'Dance'.

I. A NOTE ON THE TRADITION OF TRIBAL ART

1.0 General :-

The word 'Art' refers to the quality production, expression or realm of what is beautiful or more than ordinary and significance. Hence, it is surmised that 'Art itself is a social construction out of aesthetic elements'. The most important feature of 'Art' lies in the skills, visions, and sensibilities. Thus, the tools and the materials become merely the means for realizing these quintessential qualities.

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Apart from this general classification, 'Art' could also be classified variedly based on different criteria, viz., (i) 'Criterion of Proportion', (ii) 'Criterion of Performance', (iii) 'Criterion of Senses', (iv) 'Criterion of Verbality', (v) 'Criterion of Dimension', (vi) 'Criterion of Purpose', (vii) 'Criterion of Realism', (viii) 'Criterion of Ritualism', (ix) 'Criterion of Primitiveness' (x) 'Criterion of Cultural Level, and (xi) 'Criterion of Chronology'.

We should bear in mind, however, certain popular types of art such as 'Fine Art', 'Folk Art', 'Tribal Art', exist either as synonym(s) or sub-type(s) of 'Art categories' expressed in the above cited classifications. For instance, 'Fine Art' and 'Tribal Art' are synonyms of 'Minor Art' and 'Primitive Art' respectively whereas 'Rock Art', 'Tribal Art', and 'Folk Art' are sub-types of 'Primitive Art'.

1.2 The Place of 'Tribal Art' within the 'Primitive Art' :-

The 'Primitive Art' is neither an appendage of religion nor divorced from life; Rather, 'it' is part and parcel of life and an autonomous activity integrated with the totality of social behaviour. In other words, the purpose of primitive art is both 'Sacred' as well as 'Secular'; Further, it is both 'utilitarian' and 'decorative' as well.

In the primitive society, the proclamation that 'Art is for Art's sake' is denied; Rather, the 'Art' is regarded to be wholly utilitarian and that too mainly from the magico-religious point of view.

In nutshell, we could proclaim that the 'Primitive Art' is 'representational' in nature wherein every art form tells a story; And 'it' is both 'decorative and geometric' as well as 'realistic and symbolic'. Unlike the improper understanding by the modern human beings, the primitive art is frequently advanced in technique and sophisticated in handling. For example, the 'Australian Aboriginal Art' exhibiting high stylization; the 'American Indian

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Aboriginal Art' exceeding in abstractness; and the 'African Aboriginal Art' highlighting the symbolic motifs could be cited as the empirical evidences in support of the above contention.

Under the broad spectrum of 'Primitive Art', both the 'Tribal Art' and the 'Folk Art' are considered and treated as two sub-types. Unfortunately, the 'Tribal Art' which comprises the part and parcel of 'Primitive Art' is on the decline, now – a – days, because of biased appraisal towards its knowledge and belief system by the so-called mainstream society. However, as there is immense richness both in the verbal and non-verbal art forms of tribal world, the 'Tribal Art' in all its possible forms has to be preserved for the posterity.

1.3 The Position of 'Graphic Art' within the 'Tribal Art' :-

Three types of 'Graphic Art' have been distinguished within the genre of 'Tribal Art' as detailed below :

- (i) Abstract Art;
- (ii) Representational – Expressionistic Art; and
- (iii) Representational – Naturalistic Art.

(i) Abstract Art

This type of graphic art depends upon the formal elements such as 'lines', 'triangles', 'squares', 'rectangles', 'diamonds', 'circles' with the pattern formed from these elements showing such properties as symmetry, repetition, balance, and rhythm.

While the pattern is based on a conscious arrangements of elements, the repetition of motifs produced a simple and often geometric pattern.

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An arbitrary meaning could be assigned to the elements by the artists and other members of his or her culture, if the elements symbolize things in the real world or the supernatural world.

Here, the meaning is attached to the individual elements but not to the overall pattern.

(ii) Representational – Expressionistic Art

This type of graphic art wherein peoples, animals, plants or other natural phenomena are depicted with treatment of exaggeration is referred to as the ‘Representational-Expressionistic Art’. And here, the representation is based upon a deliberate over-emphasis of certain parts of the figures depicted.

The geometric patterns may be used to produce such exaggeration. As individual non-representative motifs are employed, the pattern formed there is more complete than the pattern in the abstract art.

In contradistinction to the abstract art, the meaning here is attached to the overall pattern but not to the individual elements.

(iii) Representational – Naturalistic Art

In this type of graphic art peoples, animals, plants or other natural phenomena are depicted in a realistic manner.

Here, the representation is based upon a deliberate attempt to portray things as they appear (i.e., ‘Photographic realism’) and consequently, formal elements and geometric patterns are not at all employed in this type of graphic art.

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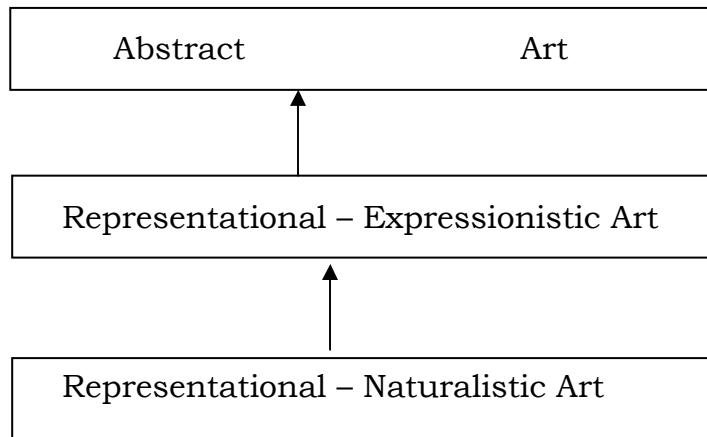
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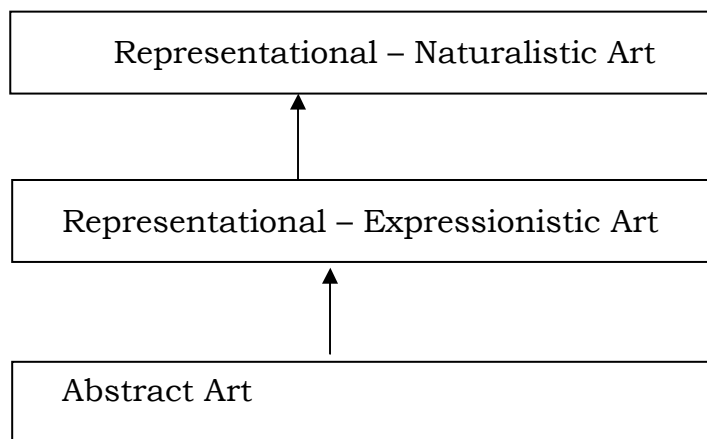
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1.4 Evolutionary Theories on the Graphic Art Tradition :-

Regarding the evolutionary sequence of above cited three types of graphic art, there prevail two juxtaposed schools of thought among the Cultural Anthropologists. One school of thought putforths the evolutionary sequence of graphic art as –



On the contrary, the other school of thought proposes the evolutionary sequence in the reverse order as follow:

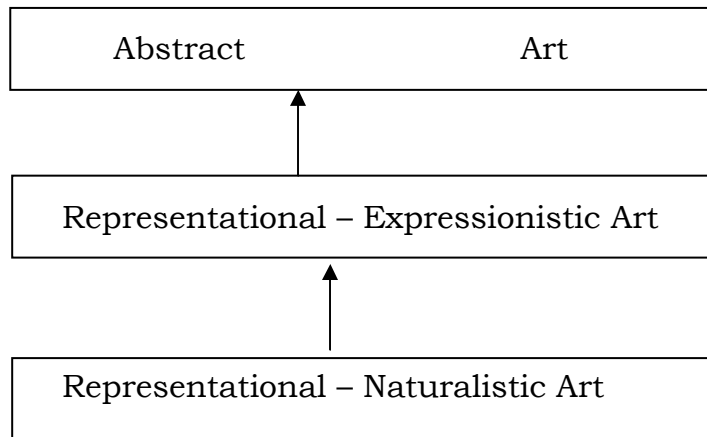


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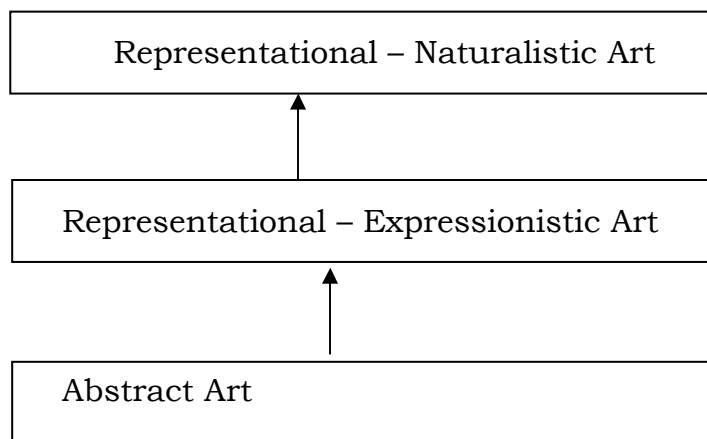
As rightly observed in the earlier context, ‘Art is a social activity; And society is the framework within which an individual artist works’. Consequently, the art begins in society and ends in it. However, when a truly original artist is at work, then art which begins in society passes in his or her and ends ultimately in society; And therefore, it is the earnest duty of

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such truly original artist to channelize and transform what society offers him or her and then creates new tastes and values of aesthetic creation and appreciation.

While engaging in creativity the artist as an individual makes a momentary withdrawal from the society where he or she is a miniscule. However, we should bear in mind that the creative artist can not make an absolute or eternal withdrawal as he or she has to return to the society in order to receive the recognition and or the award for his or her efforts and achievements.

The tribal artist has certain ritualistic restrictions placed upon his or her mode of work. For instance, a tribal artist could work only in a place where he or she could not be seen by the members of opposite sex and or young members who have not yet been initiated into the society that is entitled to utilize the resultant products of art.

At times, the tribal artists also prefer to work in solitude not for magico-religious reasons but for either avoiding distractions or protect their skills not copied by others.

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II. ON SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE – UNESCO & SOCIETY

2.0 General :-

The UNESCO'S convention for safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) defines the conception of intangible cultural heritage as 'the products, representations, expressions, skills, knowledge that communities, groups, and in some cases the individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage'.

In short, the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' includes the languages and the literatures, the performing arts and the craftsmanship and consequently represents the skills and the knowledge which can not be depicted by the tangible objects of culture; And thus, by definition the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' is living and embedded in the ongoing social relationships.

2.1 The Notion of Intangible Cultural Heritage :-

Consequently, the notion of Intangible Cultural Heritage covers a vast number of domains such as –

- Oral traditions and expressions, including the language as a means of transmission of cultural heritage;
- Cultural practices, rituals, and festive events;
- Knowledges and practices relating to the Mother Nature and the Universe; and
- Traditional arts and crafts.

Put it in nutshell, the Intangible Cultural Heritage is :

- i. closely linked to life;
- ii. mobile and evolves in time and space; and
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groups in response to their natural and cultural milieus. And such intangible cultural heritage provides the communities with a sense of identity and continuity.

2.2 Correlation & Contrast between ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage & Intangible Cultural Heritage :-

The human cultures are polarized into ‘Western’ Vs. ‘Non-western’, ‘Elite’ Vs. ‘Folk’, ‘Tangible’ Vs. ‘Intangible’ always with the former category has been construed consistently as the ‘Privileged’; And consequently, the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ is viewed as relatively less important than the ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’. Such a ‘cultural hierarchy’ of ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’ over the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ should be brushed aside, on realizing their interdependence with each other – based on certain correlations that exist between them despite an obtrusive basic point of contrast.

The ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’ is the embodiment of ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’. In other words, the ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’ as well as the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ are ultimately the product of human spirit. Thus, the ‘visible’ comes to contain the ‘invisible’¹². And the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ could be transferred into the ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’ documentation and interpretation.

However, we should bear in mind that while the ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’ becomes part of the collections and reside under the roof and the authority of cultural institutions such as ‘Museums, Galleries’¹³, the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ remains with its practitioners the people under their authorities ¹⁴.

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2.3 Significance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage :-

Unfortunately, we live in an age where the ethnoses are more interested in the ‘material things’ (i.e., ‘Tangible Cultural Heritage’) than in the ‘peoples’ traditions’ (i.e., ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’). However, it is crucial to present the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage in order to perpetuate the age old traditions which may otherwise be lost for ever. At the same time, we should bear in mind that the tangible objects of culture can never be produced without involving various resources of intangible cultural heritage. Because of the force, the spirit, and the soul revealed by the intangible cultural heritage, we could surmise, the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ has played an important role in emphasizing a group’s unique cultural identity.

In short, the ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ wherein the knowledge and the skills that are involved is realized as the significant ones. In other words, the importance of ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ in defining the cultural identity of an ethnos can not be over-emphasized.

2.4 On Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage – The Challenges Before Us :-

The cultural heritage will retain its vitality as and when the endless cycle between the ‘womb’ (i.e., ‘where it is created’) and the tomb’ (i.e., ‘where it is buried’) continues. Unless we place the intangible assets and store them for ‘Evaluation’, ‘Categorization’, and or ‘Contextualization’ they will disappear altogether in the present globalized context.

In order to deal with the task of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, we must have an extensive, fully envisaged, substantive dialogue and partnership with the people who hold intangible cultural heritage. And

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Thus, the challenges of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage are much more heavier than the effective and the inspired exercise of techniques of presentation. In safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, further, we should bear in mind that the larger whole is the object of attention and the measure of accomplishment.

2.5 The ‘Living Human Treasures’ & Their Role in Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage :-

The intangible cultural heritage was transmitted by the ‘styles’ and the ‘techniques’ (that were ‘visible’ and ‘audible’); And therefore, to preserve and continue the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, the knowledge and the skilled persons who maintained a particular art and or technique were also identified and encouraged to transmit to others.

The persons who perpetuate the accomplishments and the skills of significant intangible cultural heritage have been designated as the ‘maintainers’ and are glorified usually as the ‘Living Human Treasures’.¹⁵

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III. TRIBAL CREATIVITIES OF THE NILGIRIS – A BIRD’S EYE VIEW

3.0 General :-

The ‘ Tribal Creativities’ are part and parcel of our rich cultural heritage. In the tribal societies, the artistic creativity is not a separate domain; Rather, it is linked intrinsically to the mundane activities of every day life and the production of ‘tangible objects’ (i.e., ‘artefacts’ & ‘craftefacts’ and ‘intangible performances’ (i.e., ‘music’, ‘dance’, ‘rituals’ ‘narratives’, etc.,)

3.1 Tribal Creativities as the Embodiment of Tribal Aesthetics :-

Both the menfolk and the womenfolk of tribal society possess a highly developed sense of aesthetics; And consequently, the tribal hamlets and the dwelling units within them are crafted aesthetically. All tribal groups make a variety of simple but elegant ornaments from locally available resource materials of vegetative and or animal origin. And their tangible objects of culture such as hunting tools, agricultural implements, weapons of warfare, musical instruments, dresses, ornaments are made by themselves only. Most of the tribes are experts in basketry and other allied fibre crafts ranging from bamboo, cane, and other wild fibres. Woodcarving is also a known work of creativity among the tribes; Metal works such as blacksmithy; Plastic art such as pattery are practised by the tribal peoples as well; Some of the tribal groups have also specialized in graphic art such as tattooing, embroidery painting; Music and dance too constitute the integral parts of tribal cultural ethos.

In short, the tribal aesthetics finds embodiment in creativities moulded in clay, fabricated with fibres, carved out of wood, woven and or embroidered in threads, cast in metal.

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3.2 Nature of Tribal Creativity :-

In the tribal world, not only the socio-cultural milieu but also the economic, the ecological, and the geographical settings determine the quality, the content, the mood, the medium, the expression, and the impression of creative activity of individual artist.

However, we should bear in mind that -

- (i) An art work is not the creation of an individual but in many senses the creation of a community as a whole;
- (ii) As every art form changes and grows, it can not be related to any specific time frame and or cultural context; and
- (iii) Most of the tribal creativities are ritualistic in intent; And consequently, they lost their vitality at the culmination of magico-religious rites and discarded ultimately as their presence being redundant.

3.3 Tribal Creativities of The Nilgiris that paved the way for Cultural Symbiosis :-

In the yesteryears, there existed an appropriate cultural symbiosis at The Nilgiris due to the varied tribal creativities that were in operation. The Toda tribes, for instance, shared their excess dairy products to other indigenous communities (inclusive of the non-tribal Badugas) at their neighbourhood; The Kota tribal people produced characteristic black pottery and agricultural implements of iron for their own use and for other indigenous communities living nearby; Moreover, the Kota tribal people performed instrumental music for Kota tribal people performed instrumental music for others as well, in addition to their own use; The tribal Alu Kurumbas served other ethnoses as the medico-magicians by their expertise in the required skills; The Irular tribes performed the duty of native medicine men to their neighbouring ethnic communities with their immense traditional knowledge system on medicinal herbs; And the non-tribal Badugas exchanged their agricultural produce with the neighbouring tribal

3.2 Nature of Tribal Creativity :-

In the tribal world, not only the socio-cultural milieu but also the economic, the ecological, and the geographical settings determine the quality, the content, the mood, the medium, the expression, and the impression of creative activity of individual artist.

However, we should bear in mind that -

- (i) An art work is not the creation of an individual but in many senses the creation of a community as a whole;
- (ii) As every art form changes and grows, it can not be related to any specific time frame and or cultural context; and
- (iii) Most of the tribal creativities are ritualistic in intent; And consequently, they lost their vitality at the culmination of magico-religious rites and discarded ultimately as their presence being redundant.

3.3 Tribal Creativities of The Nilgiris that paved the way for Cultural Symbiosis :-

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groups of the Nilgiris (viz., the Toda, the Kota, the Kurumbas, and the Irular) for goods and other services in return.

Such a beautiful pattern of cultural symbiosis was at peril, owing to the onslaught of various socio-cultural and socio-economic pressures (during the British regime) following the introduction of plantations at The Nilgiris since 1820s.

3.4 Cultural Significance of Tribal Creativities of The Nilgiris :-

It is observed that the tribal creativities bear cultural significance as well, apart from serving their primary function in ritual and or utilitarian domain(s). For instance, *Putkuli*, the embroidered shawl of Toda tribes is an indispensable attire, protecting them from severe cold on the utilitarian angle but an ethnic indicator on the cultural angle; *Mandook*, the shadow – dried fragrant leaf bunch worn by the Kota women as lunate hair ring is a natural aphrodisiac, from the utilitarian point of view but indication of marital status¹⁷ from the cultural point of view; For the Mullu Kurumbas their *Mullu*, the arrow-head (of iron) is primarily a hunting tool but it does find a significant place in their funeral rite, as burying it along the corpse becomes an obligatory cultural practice;¹⁸ And the graphic art expressions in the form of paintings of Alu Kurumbas is ritualistic on the one hand but exist as the cultural link with the prehistoric rock art traditions on the other hand.

3.5 Present Scenario of Tribal Creativities of The Nilgiris:-

It is disheartening to note that the expressions of tribal art are at the verge of extinction as the tribal cultures, at present, exhibit the situation of melting pot of cultures. The tribal communities are facing an identity crisis as their way of life is disintegrating with the inroads of material culture of modernity; And consequently, their creativities get threatened as the beliefs and the values which initiated and sustained them are crumbling. Already

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much has vanished and much more is being extinct in the name of enacting stringent forest acts, restricting the indigenous tribes from utilizing the natural resources even in a meaningful and sustainable manner; And whatever exist today exhibit dilutions in quality and or aesthetic value signalling lack of confidence among the tribal creators.

Now-a-days, the artefacts and the craftefacts born out of tribal cultural milieu are accommodated as the decorative art objects – in the drawing rooms of urbanites either underestimating or not understanding their cultural significances.

3.6 Conclusion :-

Creating a work of art is a process that takes place on two levels, namely, (i) Conceptual Plane (i.e., in the artist's mind); and (ii) Layout Plane (i.e., in the artist's hand).

Although the tribal emotions tend towards the aesthetic value, their art forms are not appreciated apart from their utilitarian and socio-cultural significances.

And the art expressions of tribal world may be abstract or symbolic in nature depending upon the skills of individual artist and or cultural context on which they are created. But, technically the art expressions of tribal world concentrate mostly on three aspects, viz., (i) Flexible design, (ii) Exploitation of material, and (iii) Anonymous artist.

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IV. THE GRAPHIC ART TRADITION OF ALU KURUMBAS OF TRIBAL NILGIRIS

4.0 General :-

The Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris , apart from decorating the walls of their dwelling huts with their indigenous paintings, are observed to draw caricature sketches of human beings over the rock outcrops in and around their indigenous habitats in order to bring magical effects on the people depicted therein. For instance, a malevolent official who is construed corrupt and amass the public property is depicted usually through a caricature figure with pot belly (so as to portray that the official gathered the public property as of his own), that too in a lying posture whereas a benevolent official is shown normally by a caricature image with enlarged head (in order to reveal that the official is virtuous and brainy person as well), in an upright position and it is believed firmly by the Alu Kurumbas that such depictions of caricatured images shall bring the desired results (of ill-health or longevity, as the case may be).

4.1 On Introducing the Graphic Art Tradition of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris :-

The graphic art tradition of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris might be traced back to the Prehistoric Period from the cultural point of view wherein the rock art site of Vellaricomбай is regarded as their sacred site. Moreover, the Alu Kurumbas are observed to venerate the ‘ key anthropomorphic figure’ of that site as their ‘ancestral spirit’ and believe that it could be revitalized by periodical (annual) re-touching and or re-drawing the ritual cult figure (drawn already & masked with lime coat) on the wall of their shaman’s hut. And this magio-religious secret ceremony observed is believed to rejuvenate the imbibed spirit of that cult figure; Such revived spirit of cult figure ensures the protection and the prosperity to their entire tribal community throughout the year, believe the Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris.

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4.2 The Emergence of ‘Kurumba Paintings’ and the ‘Legacy of Living Human Treasures’:-

The persons perpetuating the accomplishments and the skills of intangible cultural heritage are designated as the ‘maintainers’ whom could be realized and treated as the ‘Living Human Treasures’; And therefore, to preserve and continue the transmission of such significant intangible culture heritage, the band of knowledgeable and skilled persons which maintain a particular art tradition is also encouraged in transmitting it to other members of its society. Such a legacy of ‘Living Human Treasures’ is obtrusive as well within the tribal community of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris through which emergence of an indigenous graphic art tradition, namely, the ‘Kurumba Painting Tradition’ has also become a reality.

Myself with a team of experts (comprising of Dr. R. Kannan, I.A.S., the then Commissioner of Museums, Government of Tamil Nadu; Shri. G. Chandrasekaran, the then Faculty of Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai, Shri. M. Ravichandran, the Artist – in – charge of Art Gallery, Udthagamandalam) while returning from trekking to the Prehistoric Rock Art Site of Vellaricombai, a shy tribal young man representing the Alu Kurumbas of that locality approached us introducing himself, showed his pencil drawn art works (in paper), and sought our appraisal on those sketches. We learnt that he has imbibed the indigenous tribal artistic skills from his grandfather Shri. Madhan who was the then shaman of that Vellaricombai tribal hamlet. Indeed, that was a golden moment in the annals of history of graphic art tradition of Tribal Nilgiris. Yes..... That shy tribal youth is none other than Shri R. Krishnan @ ‘Kitna’, the indigenous master craftsman that we have identified from the tribal community of Alu Kurumbas; and those art works of him have highlighted the various cultural facets of Alu Kurumba tribal lifestyles as depicted usually at the wall of their dwelling units. Thereupon, the great artist ‘Chandru’ (i.e., Shri G. Chandrasekaran of Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai) who interacted with ‘Kitna’ (i.e., Shri.R. Krishnan of Vellaricombai) and appraised

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his artistic acumen wanted to ascertain whether he was willing to learn the various tools, mediums, and techniques of contemporary painting tradition with the genuine aim of enriching his graphic art skills further. On receiving the affirmative response from Shri. Krishnan, he was called upon to visit Chennai wherein Shri. Chandrasekaran has inculcated all the requisite intricacies and nuances of contemporary graphic art tradition, of course without interfering the indigenous motifs, style, and creativity of Alu Kurumbas. With the support of Smt. P. Sivakami, IAS., (the then Secretary to Government, Adi Dravidar & Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu), the first batch of tribal creativities of (, comprising a total of 9 Kurumba paintings that could reveal the different cultural facets such as ‘day-to-day chores’, ‘honey harvesting’, ‘deification of megalithic structures’, ‘climbing over the, tree-top house,) depicted by Shri. Krishnan adorned one of the bays of Art Gallery of Tribal Museum at the Tribal Research Centre, The Nilgiris.

Later, the C.P.R. Foundation, Chennai has taken up the efforts of imparting the graphic art skills from Shri. Krishnan to other fellow Alu Kurumbas of both the sexes so as to sustain and nurture them to higher levels. One Shri M. Balasubramani @ ‘Baalaa’ of Bhaviy9ur tribal hamlet was fortunate enough to be the first disciple of Shri. Krishnan; and interestingly, this duo has been observed to spread the name and the fame of graphic art tradition of their tribal ethos in the length and breath of our Indian subcontinent whenever they get a chance to showcase their art works, viz., the ‘Kurumba Paintings’.

During the ‘Annual Flower Show, 2012’ held at the Government Botanical Garden, Udthagamandalam (as the then Director of Tribal Research Centre, The Nilgiris) self has arranged to showcase the graphic art tradition of Alu Kurumbas (of course, along with the ‘Kota Pottery Making’, & the ‘Toda Embroidery Knitting’ as the ‘Tribal craft Demonstrations’ wherein the Intangible Cultural Heritage, with the genuine aim of showcasing the traditions of Kurumba Painting (, the Kota Pottery & the

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Toda Embroidery) to the general public on the one hand and of murturing and propagating these Intangible Cultural Heritage and creating the sense of pride over the minds of indigenous tribal people about their craft traditions on the other hand. Both Shri. Krishnan, the master craftsman and shri. M. Balasubramani, his first disciple demonstrated their indigenous graphic art tradition, namely, the 'Kurumba Painting Traditon'; And both of them could generate an additional income through selling their finished art works (in the form of 'book marks', 'greeting cards', 'paintings') to the visiting public.

Subsequently, in the ' Tribal Meet ' that was organized at the Tribal Research Centre, The Nilgiris for the various dignitories of National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (inclusive of Dr. Ramesh Oraon, the then Chairperson of NCST) self has organized the ' Tribal Craft Demonstrations ' wherein the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Alu Kurumbas, namely, the 'Kurumba Painting Tradition' was also presented and highlighted.

Owing to the ever increasing popularity of Kurumba Painting Tradition, the Alu Kurumbas of The Nilgiris are usually invited to take part in the event named 'Aadhi Chitra' (, the painting Demonstrations of Indigenous Tribal Peoples) that was organized by the Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai - at regular intervals. Either Shri. Krishnan or Shri. Balasubramani (or at times both of them) participated in that prestigious programme of 'Lalit Kala Akademy', without fail.

Realizing the importance and the significance of Kurumba Painting Tradition, the other notable Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) of The Nilgiris such as the Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri; Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association (NAWA), Kotagiri have started to support this intangible cultural heritage of Alu Kurumbas.

On unravelling the potentialities of Kurumba Painting Tradition, the ' TRIFED ' (, the Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India) has also

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And it is learnt that the TRIFED is planning to carve a niche for the Kurumba Painting Tradition within its proposed site allocated for their tribal emporium, the ‘ Tribes India ’ at the ‘Resource Centre of Tribes of Tamilnadu’ located on the way to the Government Botanical Garden, Udthagamandalam that get established out of the generous funding of Hill Area Development Project (HADP) of Government of India through the District Administration of The Nilgiris.

The present investigator of this research study, as the person who identified, nurtured, and augmented the ‘Kurumba Painting Tradition’, an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Alu Kurumbas of The Nilgiris is focussing presently all his genuine efforts to secure the tag of ‘Geographical Indication’ to this indigenous art tradition in order to ensure not only proper recognition of this tribal craftifact but also achieving the expected level of economic upliftment and thereby ‘empowerment’ to the Alu Kurumbas, a PTG of Tribal Nilgiris, in the long run.

And it is interesting to observe that irrespective of their affiliations with the Government Agencies (Such as ‘Tribal Research Centre’, ‘TRIFED’) and the Non-governmental Organizations (such as ‘C.P.R. Foundation’, ‘Keystone Foundation’, ‘NAWA’), the tribal graphic artists of Alu Kurumbas have organized a federation of their own, in the name ‘*Ajelu Bottu*’ (Lit. “Tattoo Mark”).

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4.3 Some Interesting Facts on the 'Kurumba Painting Tradition' :-

Certain interesting facts on the indigenous painting tradition of Alu Kurumbas could be listed below :

- i) The indigenous painting tradition of Alu Kurumbas could be traced back to their indigenous graphic art tradition of painting the walls of their dwelling huts;
- ii) Most of the depictions of these indigenous paintings of Alu Kurumbas constitute their *Gove Mane* (Lit. "Cave Dwelling")¹⁹, *Kumbha Dhaevaru* (Lit. "Pot Deities ")²⁰ day-to-day activities (Such as 'drying of cereals, nuts, pulses etc., over the rock surface', 'dehusking the grains'), animals (both wild and domestic), plants (mostly trees with bee-hives);
- iii) *Jaenu Paare*²¹ (Lit. "Honey Rock") is the favourable theme of this indigenous painting tradition where the Alu Kurumbas go for harvesting of honey periodically with the accompaniment of bamboo ladders (of different types) and country torch (of emitting fumes) to reach the cliff and drive away the bees respectively ;
- iv) The graphic art tradition of Alu Kurumbas adopts varied geometric shapes (i.e., 'sticky' limbs with 'circular' head and 'rectangular' torso); And thereby it differs from other aboriginal painting traditions of Warli, Gond, Koya, Saora, Pithora within Tribal India; and
- v) The natural resource materials such as *Vaenga Paalu*, the extrusion of latex of *Vaenga Marom* (*Pterocarpus marsupium*), *Pachchele Chaaru* (Lit. "Extraction of Herbal leaves") obtained from the juicy leaves of *Katte Gidaa* (*Strobilanthes Sp.*), *Kaattu Avare* (*Dolichos Sp.*), *Kari Podi* (Lit. "Charcoal Powder") derived from the roasted bark of *Vaenga Marom* are generally employed by the tribal graphic artists of Alu Kurumbas as the 'indigenous paint materials'. And it is heartening to note that the use of readily available commercial pigments is rather discouraged although the

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tribal artists tend to use readymade paint brushes in lieu of traditional *Aalanguchchi Vaeru* (Lit. “Aerial root of banyan tree) obtained from natural resource.

And thus, the colouring pigments used in this indigenous graphic art tradition are earthy and predominately red, green, and black. The pitch dark extrusion of *Vaenga Paalu* is mixed appropriately to yield three different shades of colour, viz., ‘brown’, ‘light brown’, and ‘Orange’; the leaves of *Katte Gidaa* and *Kaattu Avare* produced the requisite ‘Green colour’; and ‘*Kari Podi*’, the charcoal powder yielded the ‘black colour’.

4.4 Vellaricombai Rock Art Depictions – An Emic Perspective :-

As the ‘insider’ Shri. Krishnan, the master craftsman – cum-master trainer among the Alu Kurumbas has revealed certain intricacies on the depictions of Vellaricombai Rock Art; And his ‘emic expressions’ are enlisted below :

- i) Vellaricombai was once a hide-out of the Alu Kurumbas and it protected them from their waring foes from outsides;
- ii) And the paintings of this rock art site depict the cult of ancestors of Alu Kurumbas;
- iii) Of these, a gigantic cult figure with long fore limbs is observed to carry a decapitated head on its right hand²² while the torso of slain victim is found to lie down beneath; and
- iv) The dotted design shown near the feet of that lying figure is construed as ‘*Muni Sangili*’ (Lit “Chain of *Muni* (, the evil spirit)” symbolically denoting the evil force.

4.5 Conclusion :-

The graphic art tradition identified and nurtured among the Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris could be regarded as an illuminating chapter in

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And in the current art scenario of Tribal Nilgiris, the graphic art tradition practised by the Alu Kurumbas enthrals the art connoisseurs on the one hand and encourage the tribal graphic artists of Alu Kurumbas on the other hand, as it derives the 'aesthetic satisfaction' to the art connoisseurs' and the 'additional revenue' to the practising tribal graphic artists of Alu Kurumbas respectively.

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IV. MOTIFS, STYLE, & THEMES IDENTIFIED IN THE GRAPHIC ART TRADITIONS OF ALU KURUMBAS

5.0 General :-

The graphic art tradition of Alu Kurumbas of Tribal Nilgiris is observed to possess a direct cultural link with the Prehistoric Rock Art Site of Vellaricombai (, the abode of their anthropomorphic cult figure) on the one hand and on the other hand with the anthropomorphic cult image drawn and preserved at the wall of shaman's hut (, the source of prowess of protection & prosperity) whose imbibed spirit gets revived as and when re-touched and or re-drawn annually²³.

As cited earlier, the depiction of caricatured sketches of officials either as the standing figure with enlarged head (, symbolizing the virtuous & brainy fellow) or as the lying image with pot belly (, designating the corrupt & bad person who amassed public wealth) also found their due places within the 'Graphic Art Tradition of Alu Kurumbas.

At the walls of their dwelling huts also one could perceive the testimony to the graphic art skills of Alu Kurumbas, as evidenced from the simple depiction of characteristic Kurumba Paintings (with mere leaf juice extracted from *Katte Gidaa* and or *Kaattu Avare*).

5.1 Motifs identified from the Kurumba Painting Tradition :-

Three different types of motif have been identified chiefly from the typical Kurumba Painting Tradition, namely,

- i. Phytomorphic Motifs (such as 'trees');
- ii. Zoomorphic Motifs (such as 'elephants');
- iii. Anthropomorphic Motifs (such as 'Menfolk',- 'Womerfolk', 'Cult figures').

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In addition to the aforementioned three types of motif, the motifs depicting 'inanimate things' (such as 'dwelling units', 'sacred structures', 'honey harvesting tools', 'natural landscapes, say hillocks', boulders') are also shown in the Kurumba Painting Tradition.

Interestingly, 'Theriomorphic Motifs' (, of depicting combinatorial form of half – human' & 'half - animal') are totally wanting in the Kurumba Painting Tradition.

5.2 Style identified in the Kurumba Painting Tradition :-

Unlike the stereotypic presentation of human torso as 'double triangles' (, one in the top and the other at the below) in most of the graphic art traditions of Tribal India (, viz., Warli of Maharashtra, Saora of Odisha & Andhra Pradesh, Gond of Madhya Pradesh), Koya of Andhra Pradesh & Odisha), the Kurumba painting tradition shows a distinctiveness by way of depicting the human torso by means of 'rectangle'.

While the human heads are drawn as 'circles' attached to the double – triangular torso (& 'hair buns' as the additional smaller circles over the circular heads), the fore limbs and the hind limbs of human beings are depicted as the stickly figures, appended to the rectangular torso.

Further, in conbtradistinction to other tribal art traditions, Kurumba Painting Tradition is observed to continue the use of indigenous pigments drawn from organic sources, of course with the employment of modern pain brushes. However, to start with *Aalanguchchi*, the aerial root of banyan tree were utilized as the painting brushes – in applying various natural pigments of organic origin, namely, the milky extrusion of *Vaenga Marom*, the juicy leaf extracts (*Pachchele Chaaru*) obtained from *Katte Gidaa* and or *Kaattu Avare*.

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'Day-to-day activities' (, especially 'drying of cereals, pulses, and nuts over the rock surface,) 'climbing over tree-top house, 'honey harvesting', 'deification of megalithic structures (such as as menhirs, dolmens, cairn circles which are construed as the abodes of ancestral cult figures), the secret ceremony of propitiation of seven pots as '*Kumbha Dhaevaru*' (Lit. "Pot Deities") constitute certain noteworthy themes that get presented and highlighted in the indigenous Kurumba Painting Tradition.

Interestingly, in this Kurumba Painting Tradition, the paintings have been created not as mere outline sketches but rather as 'in-fillings' with appropriate natural pigments sourced from wilderness.

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FOOT NOTES

- 1 In lieu of the erstwhile obsolete term bearing ethnocentric perception 'Primitive Tribal Group(s)', this neo-term 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group(s)' has been introduced by the Anthropologists, the Administrators, and the Planners, However, it is interesting to note that the abbreviation remains unchanged as 'PTG'(s).
- 2 Earlier the Nilagiri District was considered to be consisting of four taluks only, namely, Udhagamandalam, Coonoor, Kotagiri, and Gudalur; Subsequent to the bifurcation of Udhagamandalam into Udhagamandalam and Kundah and Gudalur into Gudalur and Pandalur, the number (of taluks) has been raised to six.
- 3 For details Cf. Maheswaran, C. "Ethnic Identity Vs. Linguistic Identity of the so-called Kurumba Complex of Tribal Nilgiris".
- 4 As this is observed as a secret ceremony, the details of cultural practices connected to this ritual were elicited from the Irular tribes who inhabit Sundapatti, an indigenous hamlet located nearby Vellaricombai (Alu Kurumba Tribal Habitat).
- 5 It is to be noted that this tree *Vaenga Marom* (Pterocarpus marsupium) is construed as the abode of sacred spirits, in the belief system of Alu Kurumbas.
- 6 These two plants are selected as the natural source for extracting leaf juice, as their leaves are comparatively more thick with abended stock of juice; And as the preferential *Katte Gidaa* is not perineal but only seasonal, *Kaatu Avare* is consumed as an appropriate alternate source to obtain leaf extract as and when *Katte Gidaa* is not available.

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‘transculturation’ and ultimately ‘acculturation’; and that is why,
such situations are described as the ‘melting pot of cultures’.

8 This is generally referred to as ‘culture traits’ as well.

9 The practitioners of intangible cultural heritage who remain as
storehouses of traditional knowledge system are designated as the
‘Living Human Treasures’, as they are resourceful with wealth of
indigenous knowledge.

10 The practitioners of intangible cultural heritage are referred to simply
as the ‘maintainers’.

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‘invisible’.

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objects of culture which are presented as the ‘exhibits’ are realized
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- 15 Although the terms ‘maintainers’ and ‘Living Human treasures’ are used as synonyms, in reality, there is a subtle but noteworthy difference exists between them-as the former is generic while the latter is ‘specific’ in nature.
- 16 In order to draw a finer line of distinction between the ‘practice of craft’ and the ‘product of craft’, the present investigator has introduced a new coinage of technical term, namely, ‘craftifact’ on the analogous line of ‘art’ & ‘artefact’.
- 17 As and when a Kota man notices that his spouse is not wearing the *Mandook*, he will realize that she is in menstruation and avoid cohabiting with her.
- 18 That is why, in the acquisition of tangible objects of culture, the acquiring of *Mottu* ‘blunt arrow’ from the Mullu Kurumbas is relatively easier than the acquiring of Mullu “iron-tipped arrow”
- 19 The Megalithic heritage structures such as ‘menhirs’, ‘dolmens’, ‘cairn circles’ located in and around the vicinity of tribal hamlets of Alu Kurumbas are construed by them as the sacred abode of their ancestral cult heroes; And consequently, they periodically decorate these heritage structures by erecting roofs of thatch over them and observe rituals propitiating them; And *Dhaeva – Kotta – Kallu*, the ‘spirit stone’ collected from rivulets are usually deposited and stored therein at such ‘*Gove mane*’.
- 20 The secret ceremony of Alu Kurumbas deifying the *Kumbha Dhaevaru* came to lime light only when it gets expressed overtly at first by the Kurumba Painting Tradition through the sketches of Shri. Krishnan, the master craftsman of Alu Kurumbas.

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- 22 Interestingly, Prof. Allen Zagarel of West Michigan University, United States of America, on studying the magnified image of key anthropomorphic figure of Vellaricombai Rock Art Site, has arrived at the same contention.
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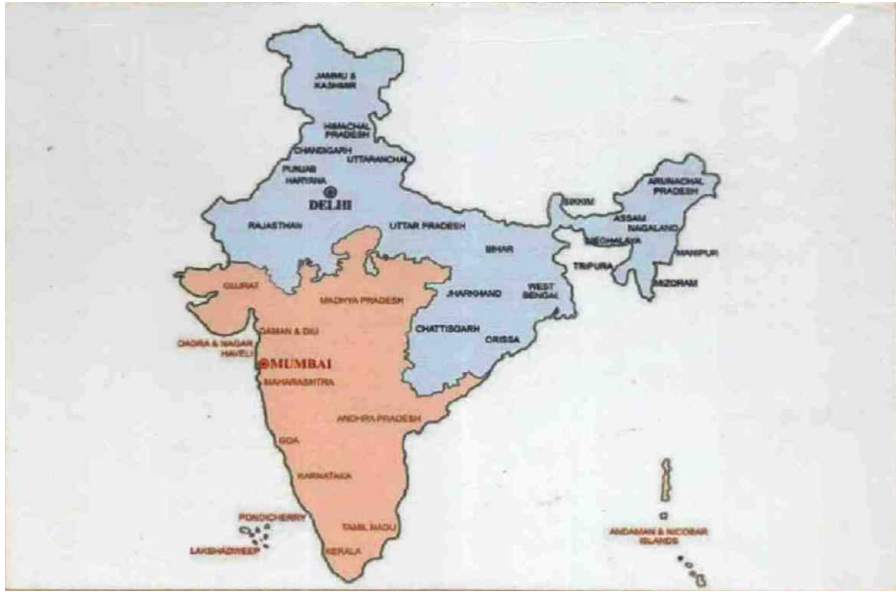
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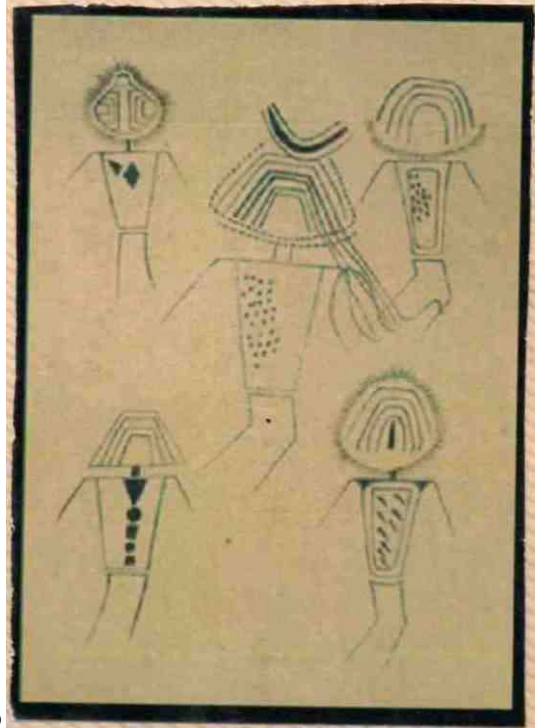
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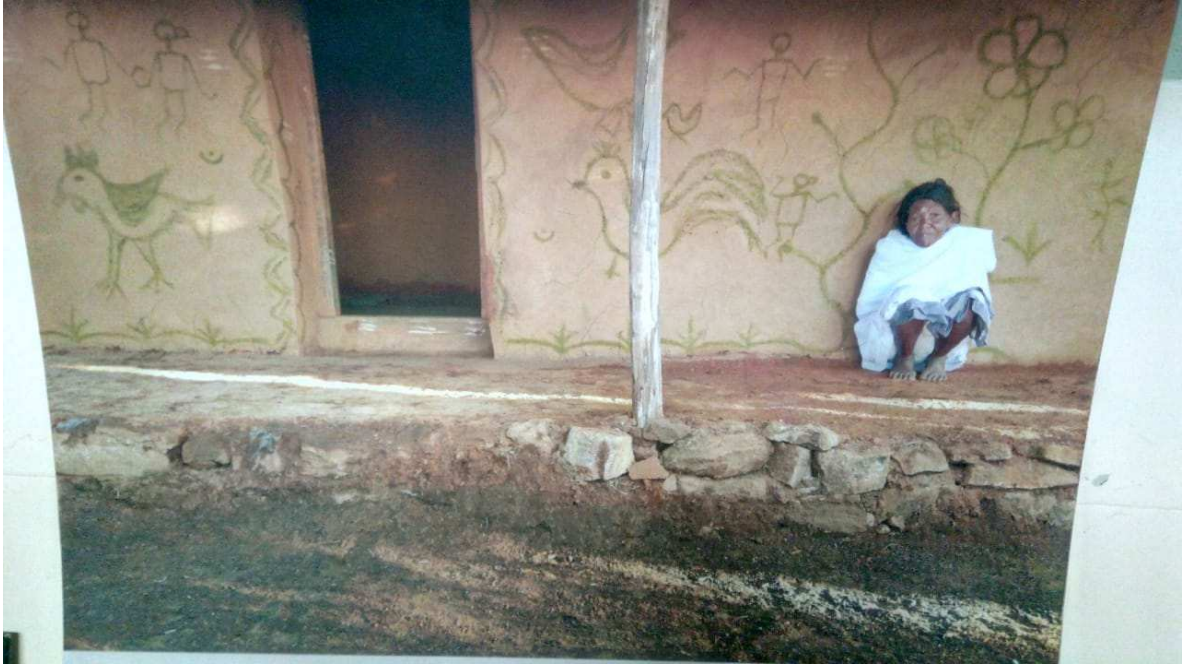
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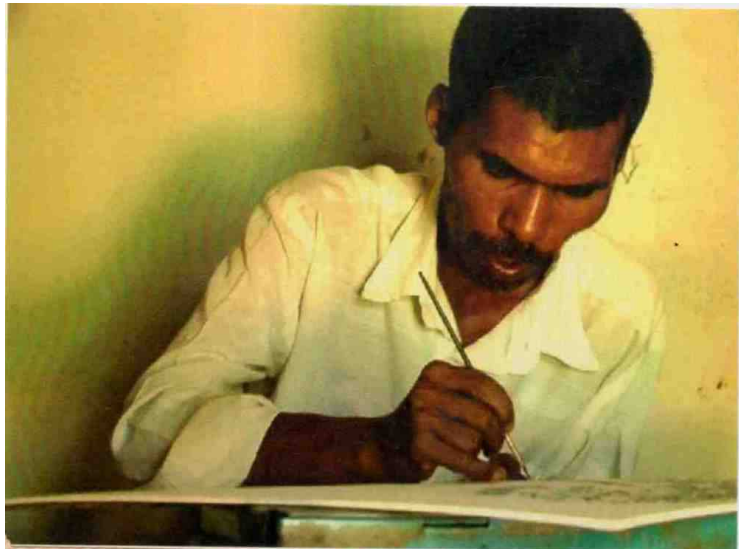
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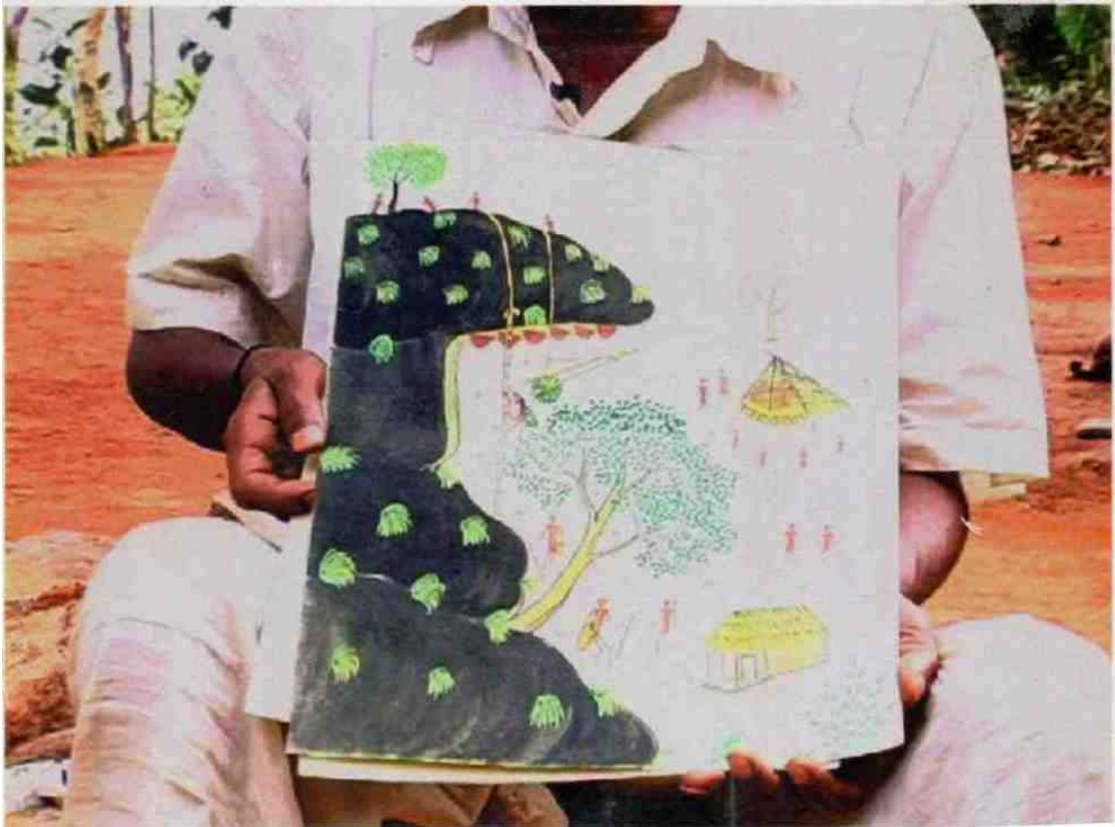
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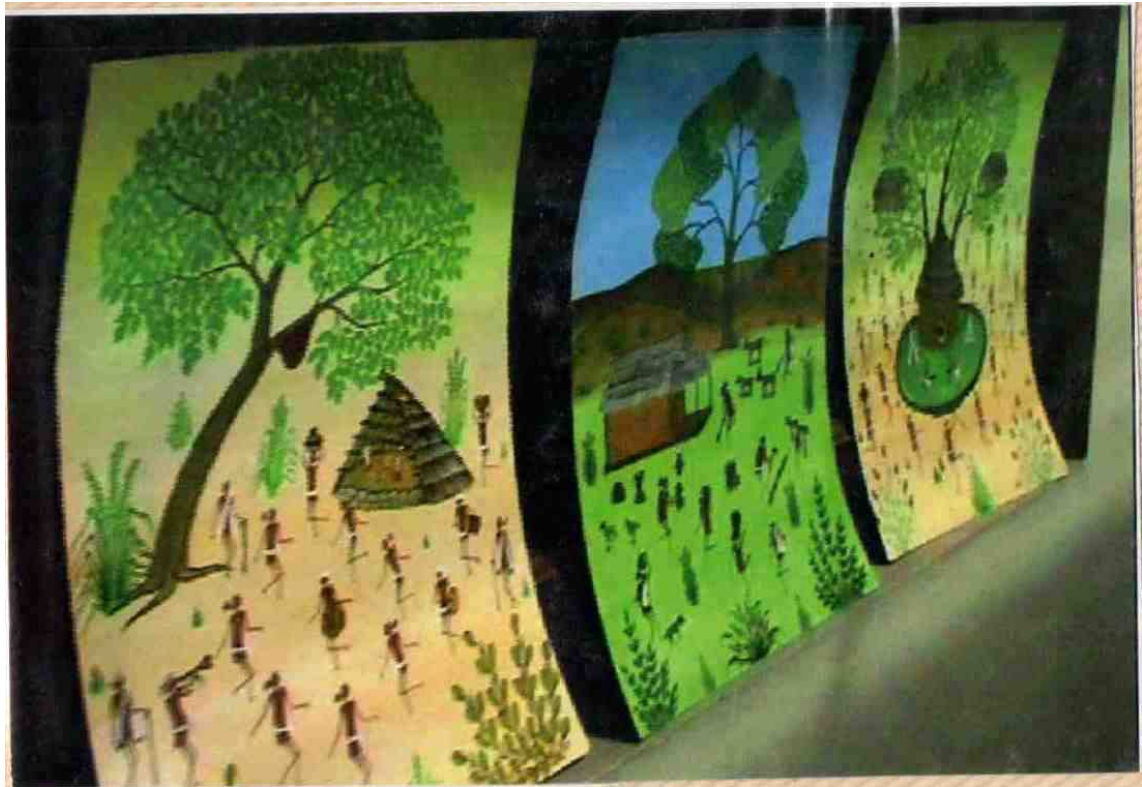
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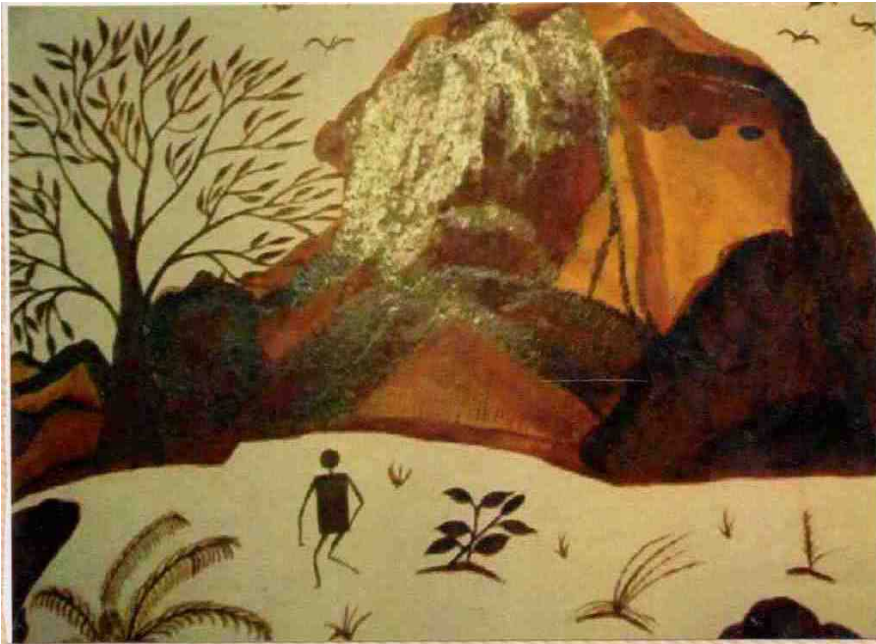
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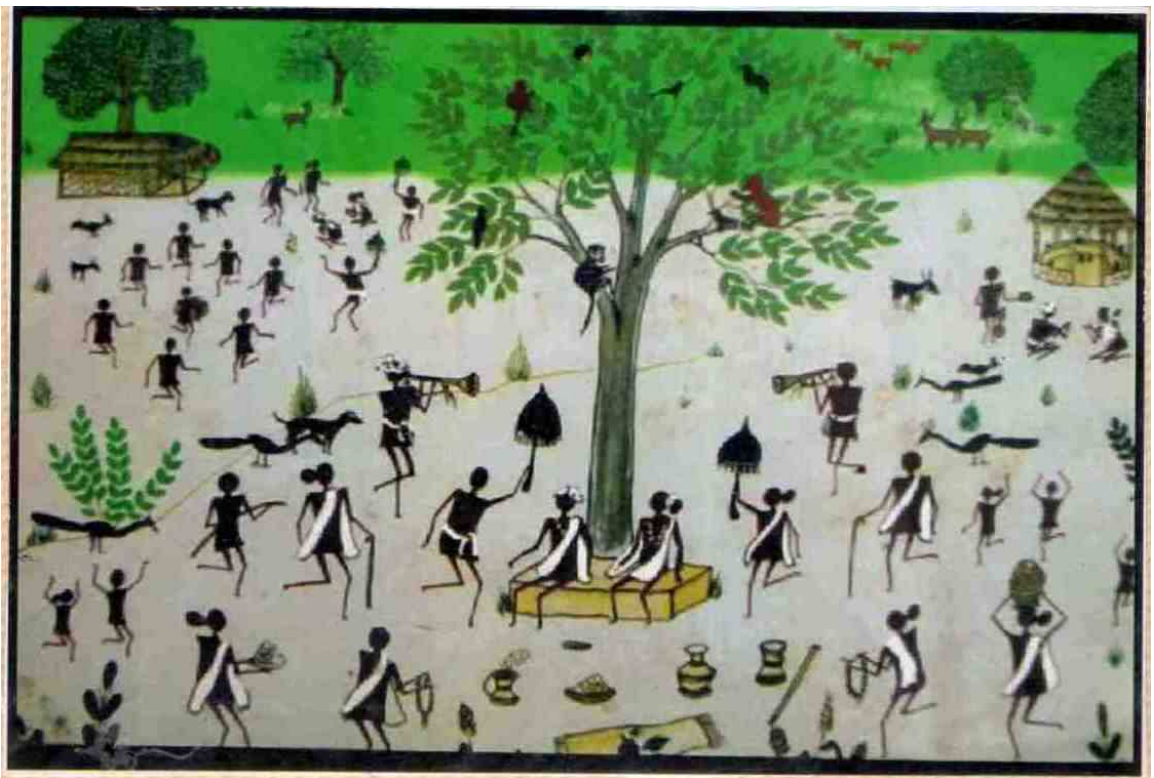
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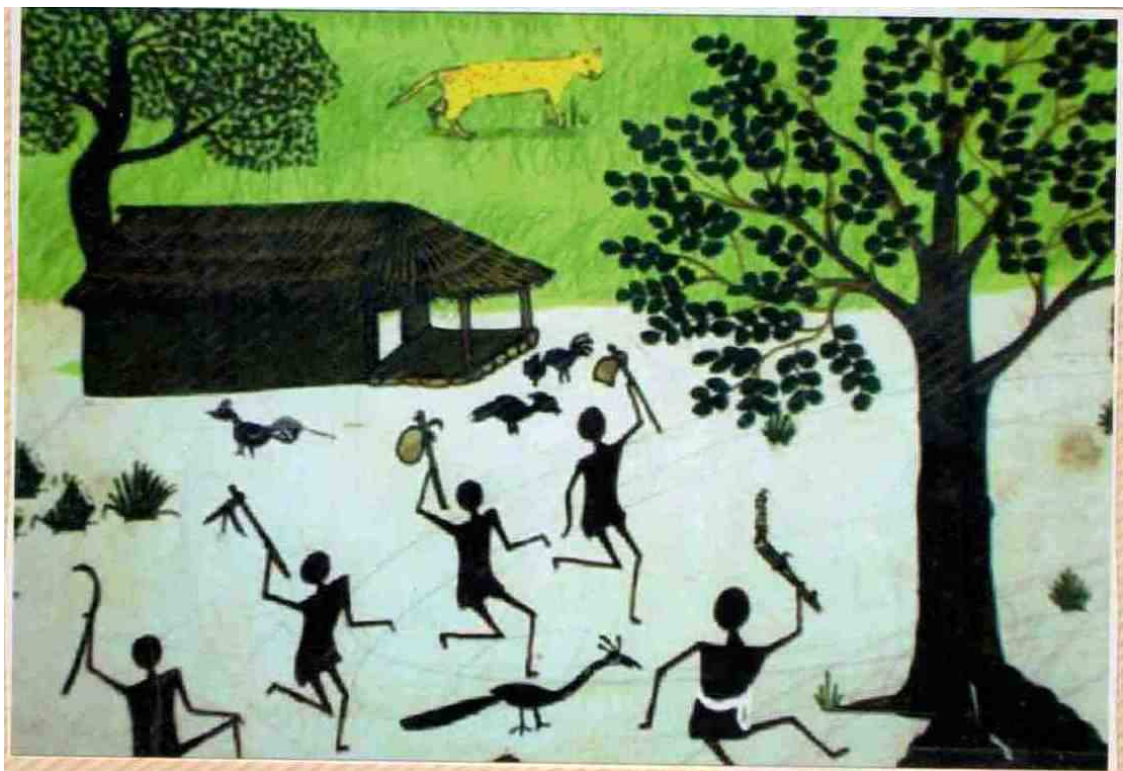


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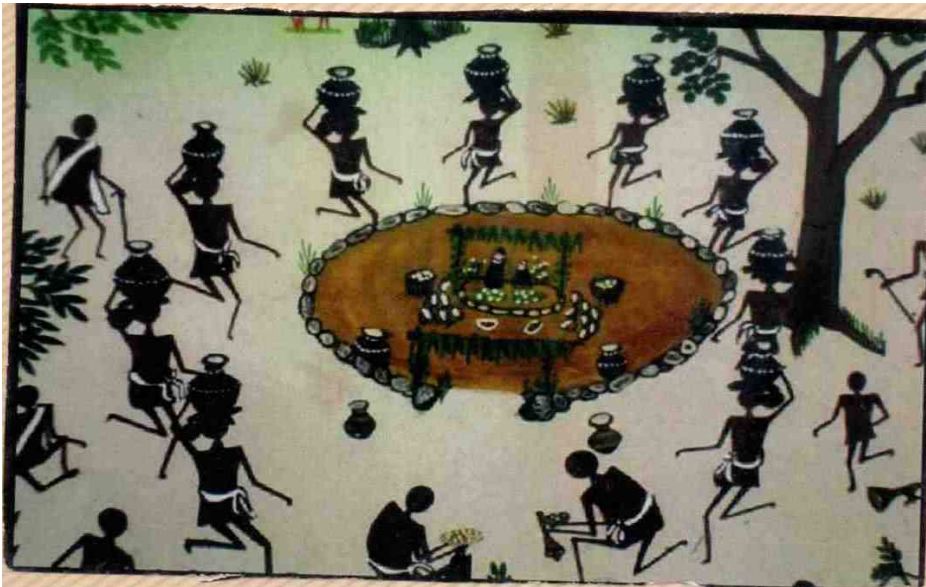
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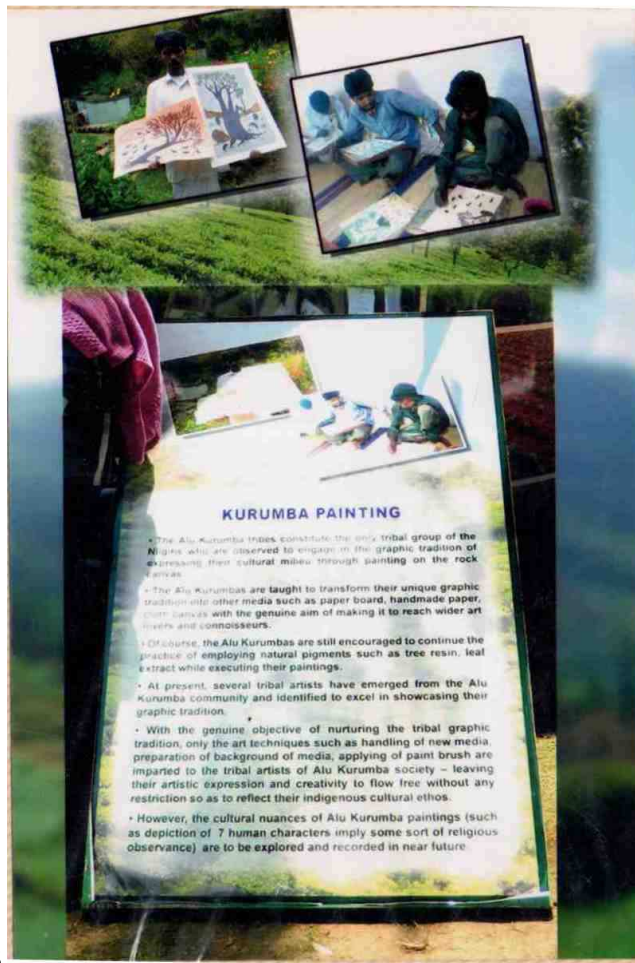
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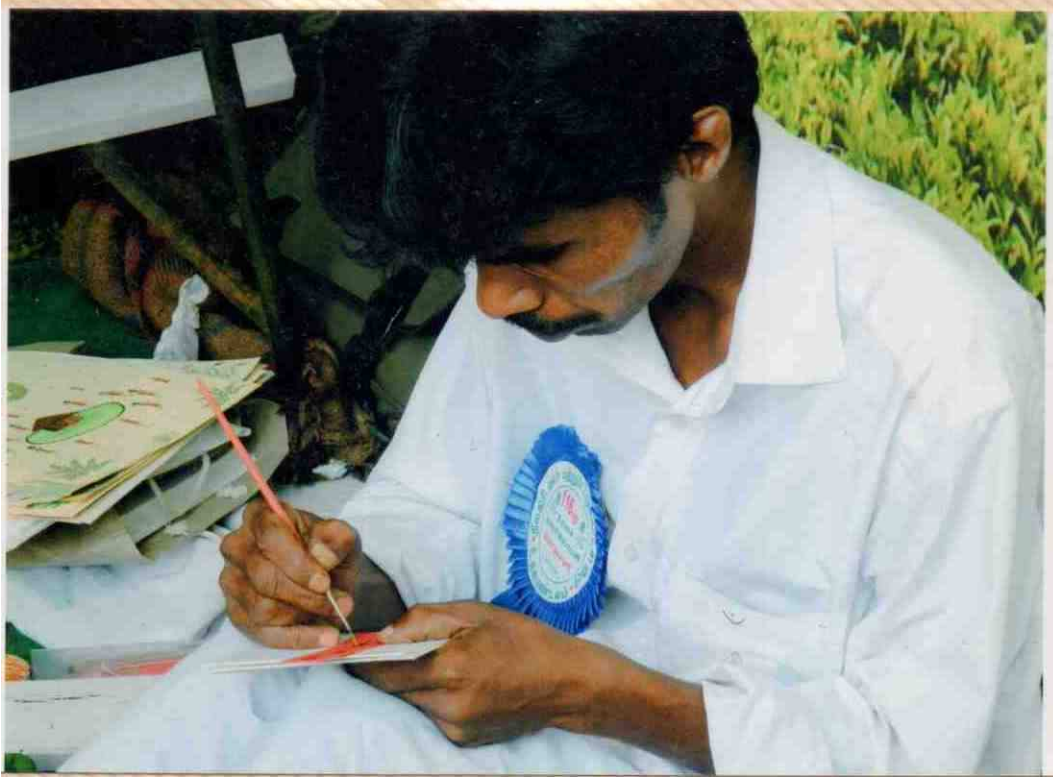
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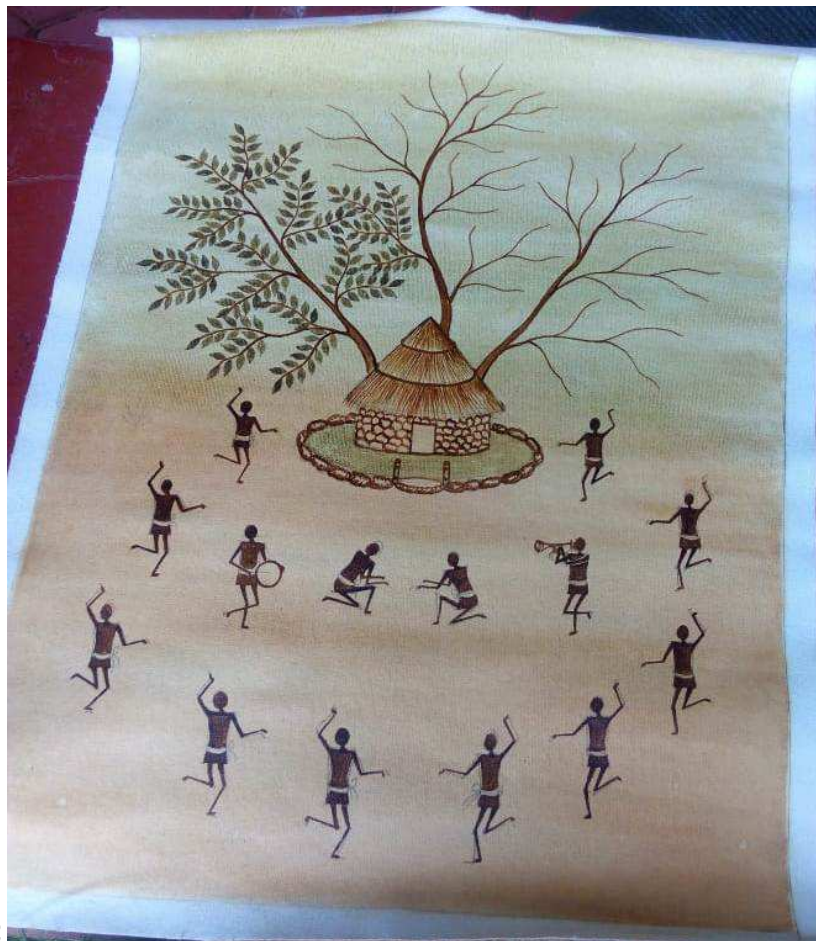
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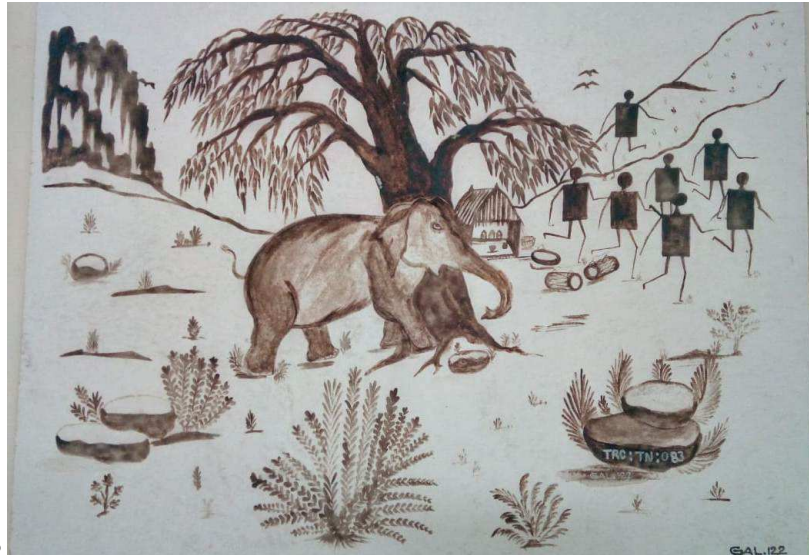
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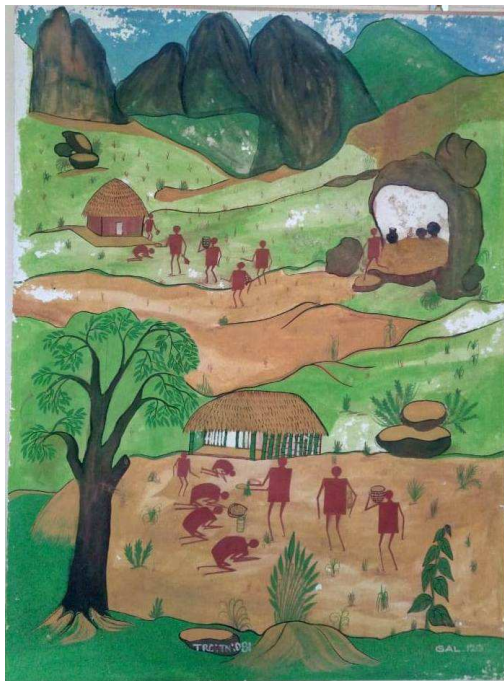
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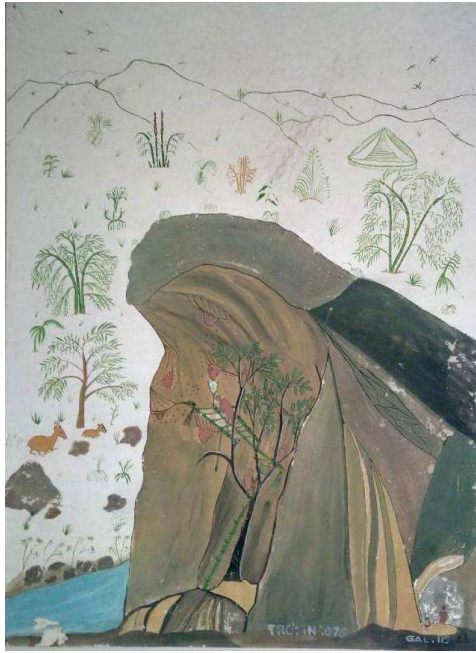
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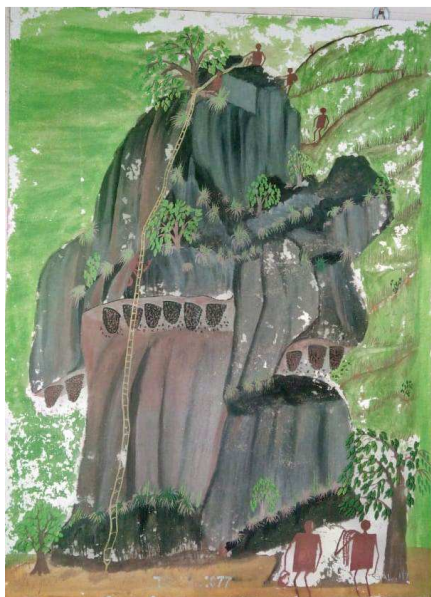
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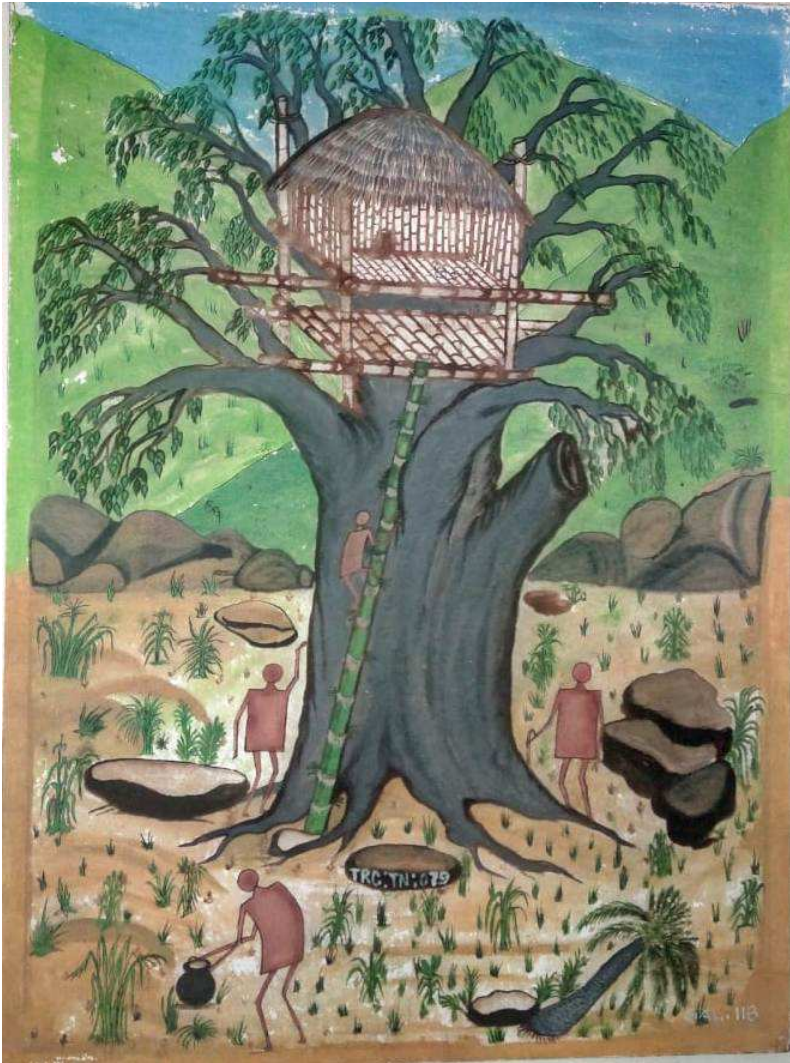
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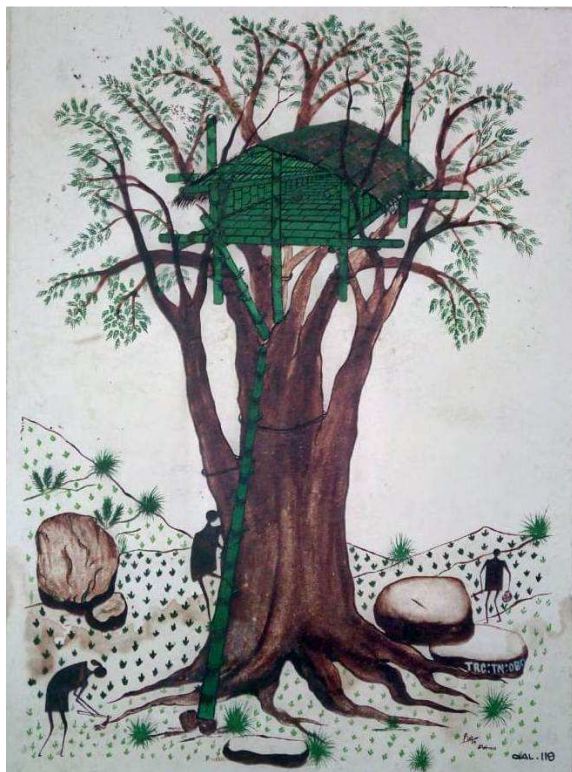
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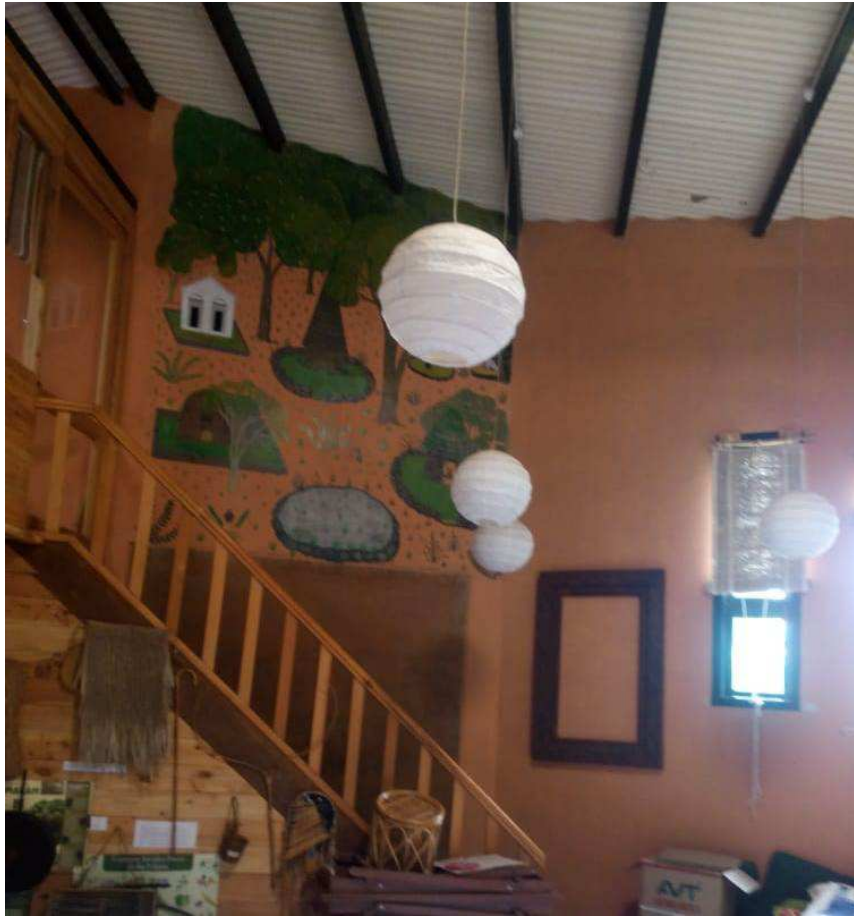




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Keystone
A GROUP FOR ECO-DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

கீஸ்டோன்

The concept of "keystone" emerges from the nest-building behaviour of some birds in nature. These permanent nest structures serve as habitat for several life forms. Such "keystone" species become crucial in providing opportunities for other associated beings to grow and evolve. Thus, Keystone Foundation is born out of a simple ecological principle of the interdependence of natural systems.

கீஸ்டோன் அமைதி நோக்கி நிறுவப்பட்ட இயக்கம். இது உலகின் பல்வேறு பகுதிகளில் உள்ள பல்வேறு இனங்களின் மூலமாக உருவானது. இது ஒரு சிறிய அளவிலும் இருப்பினும் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் என அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. இது உலகின் பல்வேறு பகுதிகளில் உள்ள பல்வேறு இனங்களின் மூலமாக உருவானது. இது ஒரு சிறிய அளவிலும் இருப்பினும் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் என அழைக்கப்படுகிறது.

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Keystone
A GROUP FOR ECO-DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

VALUE STATEMENT

கீஸ்டோனின்ப் மதிப்புகள்

Keystone Foundation believes in Inclusiveness among all people with whom we work and engage with. This is through Openness and Trust. We believe in good communication that builds, creates, solves, clear pathways for a better understanding and work environment. Motivation, Freedom and Innovation are the cornerstones of our values.

கீஸ்டோன் நிறுவனம் தனித்தனித் தனிமை செய்கின்ற மறுமலர்ச்சி மூலமாக செயல்படும். இது உலகின் பல்வேறு பகுதிகளில் உள்ள பல்வேறு இனங்களின் மூலமாக உருவானது. இது ஒரு சிறிய அளவிலும் இருப்பினும் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் என அழைக்கப்படுகிறது. இது உலகின் பல்வேறு பகுதிகளில் உள்ள பல்வேறு இனங்களின் மூலமாக உருவானது. இது ஒரு சிறிய அளவிலும் இருப்பினும் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் கீஸ்டோன் இயக்கம் என அழைக்கப்படுகிறது.

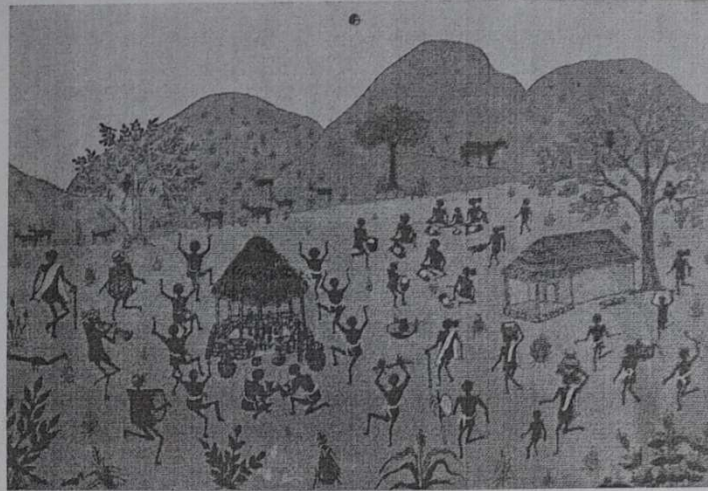
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குறும்பர் ஓவியங்கள் KURUMBA PAINTINGS



நீலகிரியில் வாழும் பழங்குடி இனத்தவரான குறும்பர்கள் ஓவியர்கள் ஆவர். அவர்களுடைய ஓவியங்களைச் சமயச் சடங்குகளிலும் மற்றும் முக்கிய விழா நிகழ்ச்சிகளிலும் வாழ்வியலின் வரைபடக் கருக்களை பயன்படுத்திக் கொண்டு இருக்கிறார்கள். இத்தகைய வரைபடக் கருக்களை எழுத்துப் பாரையின் முற்காலப் பாரை ஓவியங்களில் இருந்து பெற்றிருக்கிறார்கள்.

Kurumba are the graphic artists of the Nilgiris. This art related to their rituals and can be seen only during festive occasions although the Kurumbas once used to draw these graphic motifs in their day-to-day cultural lives. The motifs have derived from the ancient rock paintings of Eluthu Paarai.



Kurumba Art from The Nilgiris, Tamilnadu Artist - Krishna

The art is primarily ritualistic, describing various facets of tribal life in the remote forests of the Nilgiris. Kurumba huts are built of leaves and wood, women drying food grains, men collecting honey, weddings and rituals, earthen pens for hens, 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. Some of the artists still use this method, which is slow and cumbersome, but beautiful. These days they work on paper and use water and poster colours.

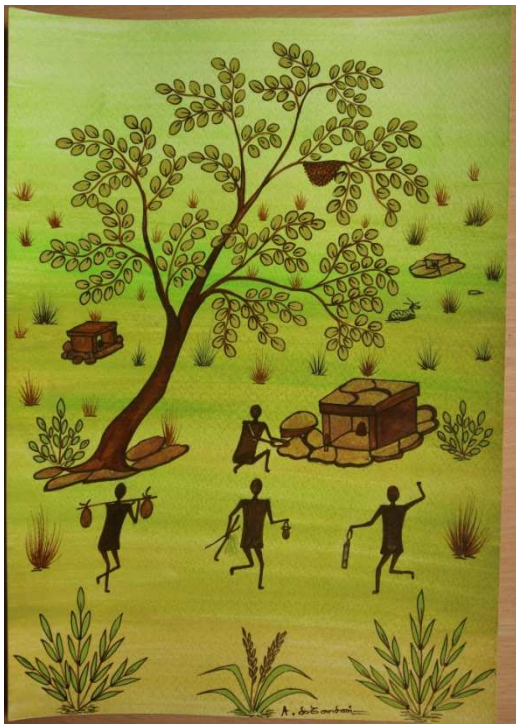
The figures are flat and similar to Warli, with rectangular bodies. However, in spite of the 2-dimensional nature of the stick figures, the Kurumba artists are able to create lines of simple and fluids movements.

The Kurumbas artists need support for their continued growth , so that more number of youth take to this art..

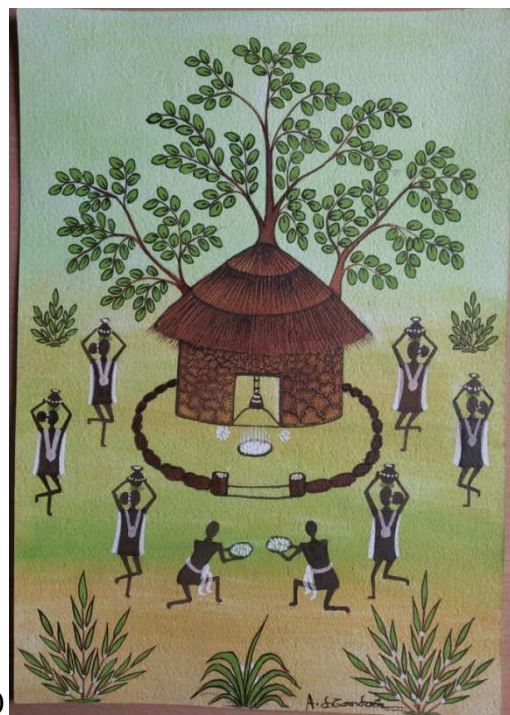
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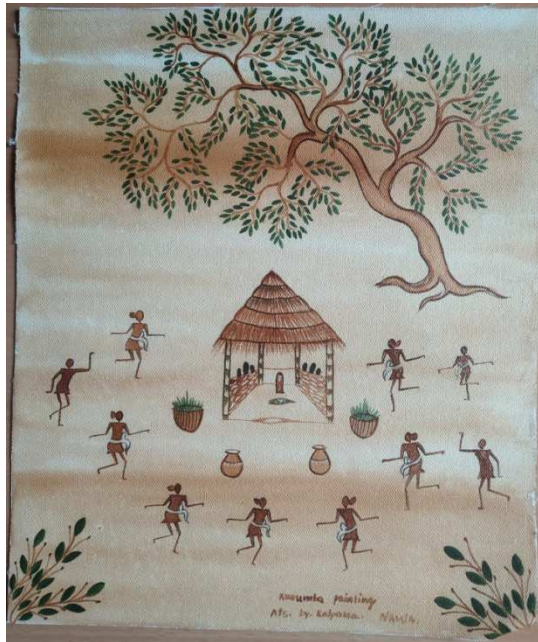


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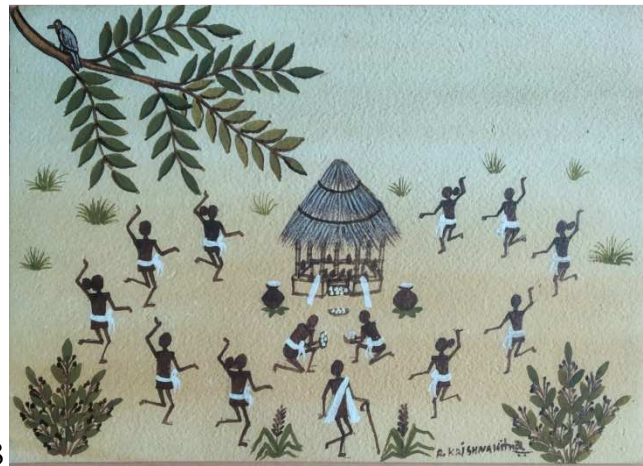


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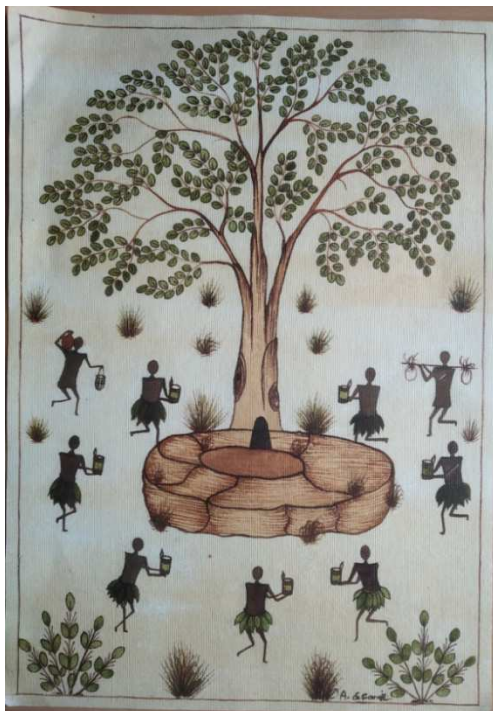




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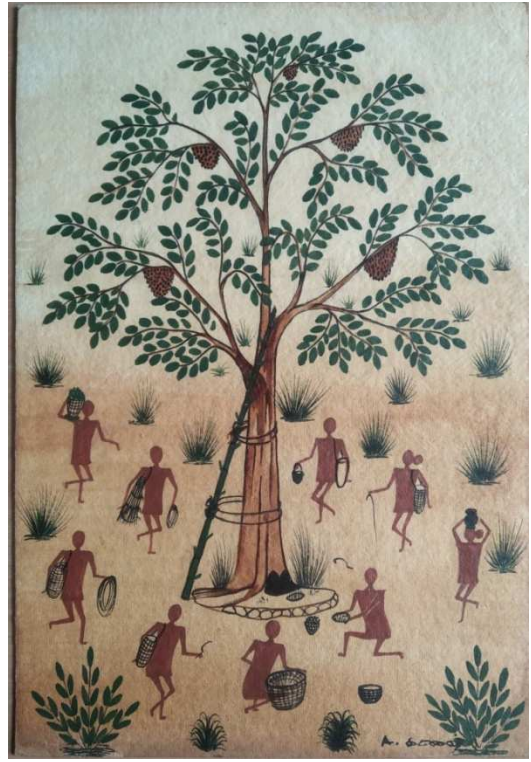
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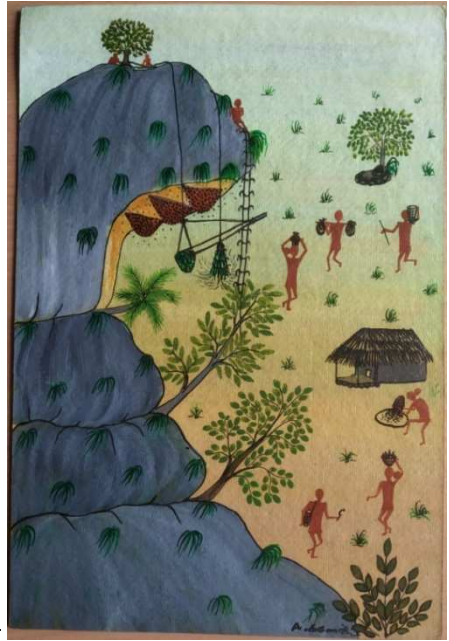
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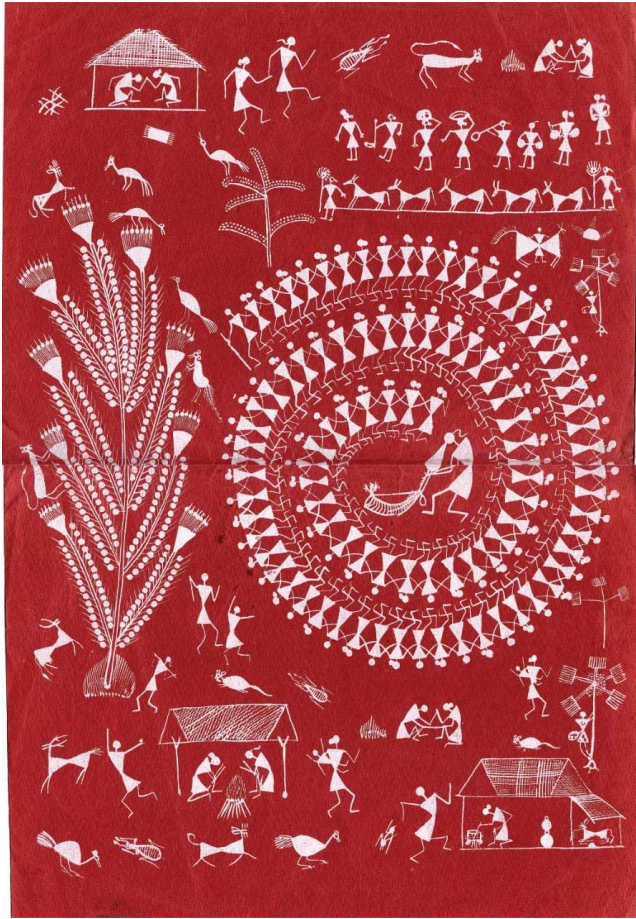
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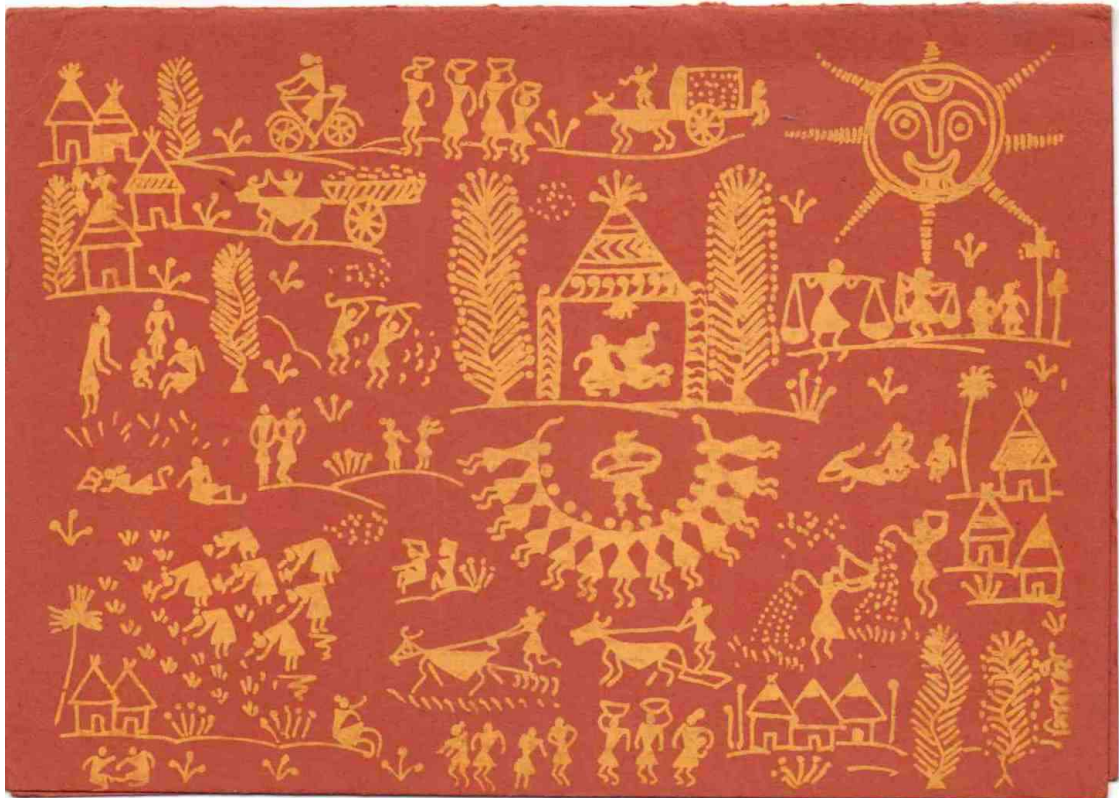
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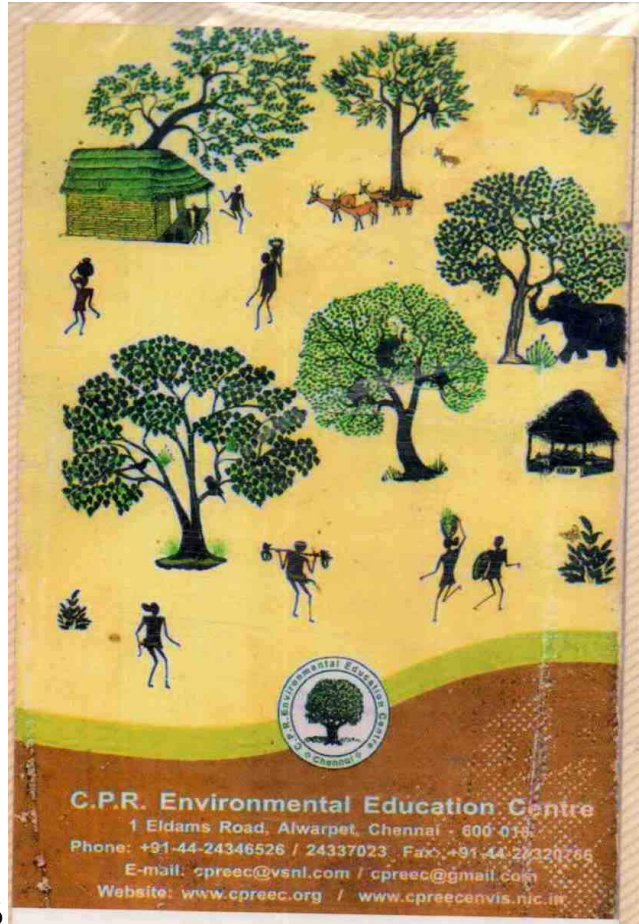


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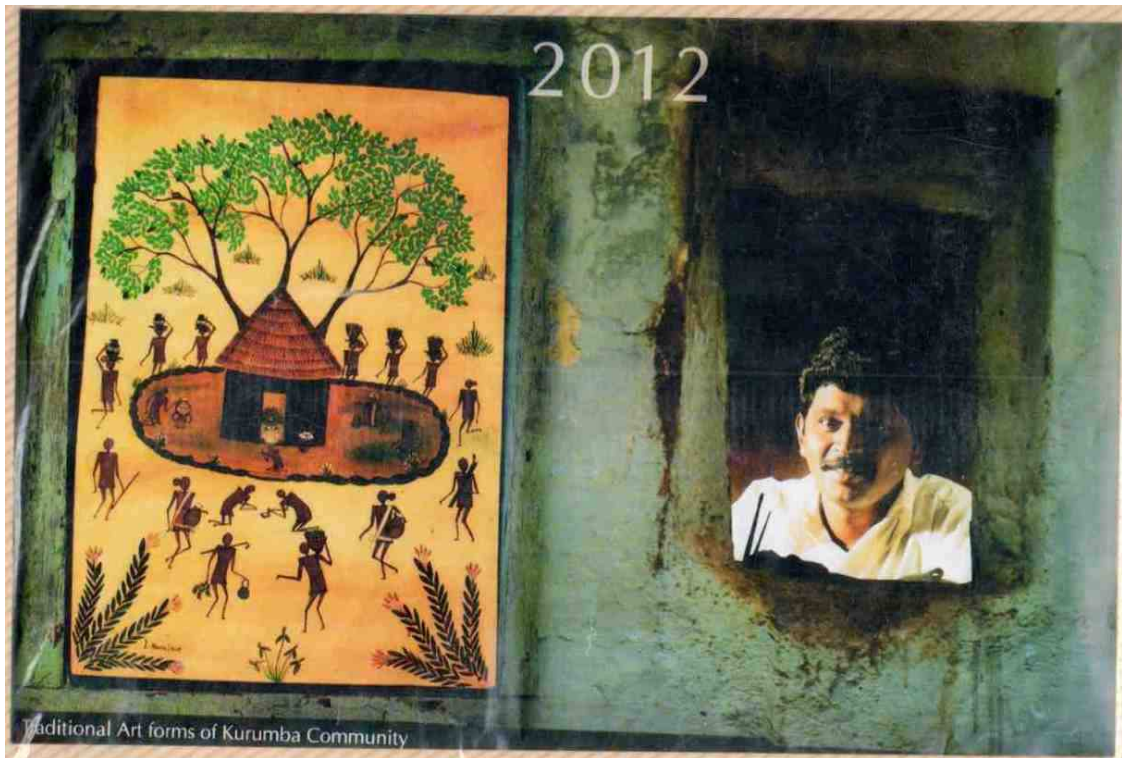
SPLITTING ATOMS FOR THE PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY OF THE NATION



भारत सरकार
Government of India
परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग
Department of Atomic Energy



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