



A Thesis Submitted to Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for The Degree of Master of Design

To bring forth the Gond Art of Patangarh through Publication Design

MDes, Department of Design, IIT Hyderabad | June 2021

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Project Guide
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Approval Sheet

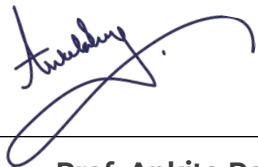
This thesis entitled 'To bring forth the Gond Tales of Patangarh through Publication Design' by Diksha Surendrakumar Singh is approved for the degree of 'Master of Design' from IIT Hyderabad.



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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words, and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be a cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources that have thus not been properly cited, or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.



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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my guide Prof. Ankita Roy for guiding me throughout the project. Her valuable suggestions helped me complete the project within the provided timeline.

I would also like to thank the faculty in Department of Design Prof. Deepak John Mathew, Prof. Prasad Onkar, Prof. Neelkantan, Prof. Delwyn Judo Remedios, Prof. Shiva Ji, Prof. Seema Krishnakumar, Prof. Shahid, Prof. Srikar for their constant feedback during review presentations.

I would thank the people at Gond Village Patangarh, Madhya Pradesh who shared their experiences and artworks with me. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their help and support during the completion of the project.

Abstract

The gond residents in the green hills of the village Patangarh, Madhya Pradesh produce one of the most vibrant traditions through their art that translates their culture and folklores into gond paintings. To understand this I visited the gond village of Patangarh and interacted with the artists who shared their experiences with me, their stories that give birth to their art. While interacting with the local artists, I got to know more about their everyday routine, their art methods and various challenges related to their everyday lifestyle. Based on these observations and the secondary research, I decided to come up with an illustrative publication that would display their life and art in the form of gond narration as the people in the metropolitan cities are less aware about these tribes and gond art which is one of the major challenge faced by them as their art is not providing them enough monetary returns hence most of the artists are either farmers or are found doing odd jobs to support their livelihood and art supplies. The project would include understanding and developing a narration based on the gond elements.



Entrance of Gond Village Patangarh, Madhya Pradesh

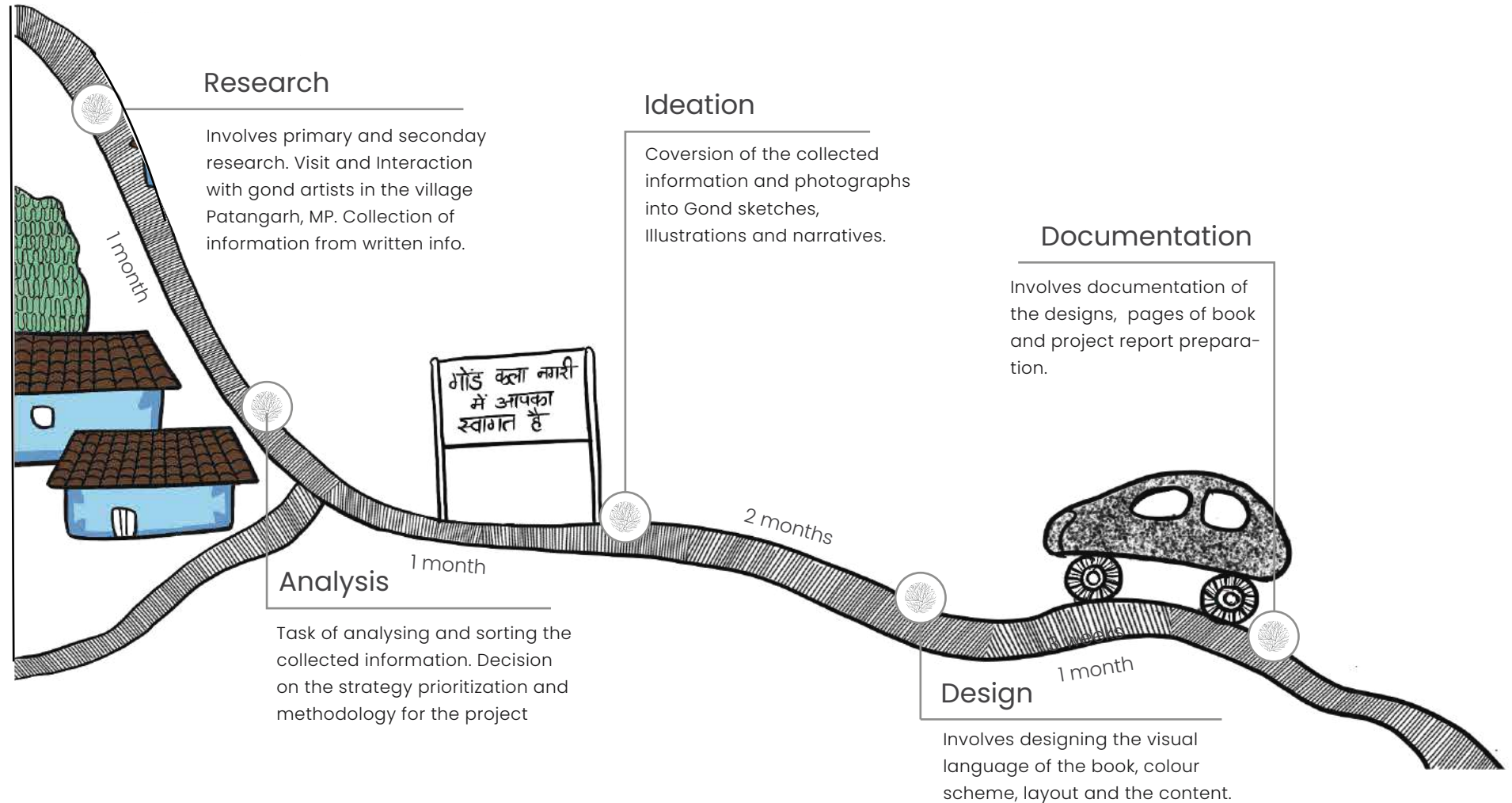
The final deliverable is a gond publication design that provides illustrated information about the life and art of these tribes in the village of Patangarh, Dindori.

Keywords : Tribal, Gond Art, Patangarh, Gonds, Publication Design

Contents

Approval Sheet	2	5 Design	
Declaration	3	5.1 Illustration style	29
Acknowledgements	4	5.2 Colour Scheme and typeface	30
Abstract	5	5.3 Book layout and content arrangement	32
1 Process Timeline	7	5.4 Book cover design	34
1.1 Challenges due to covid	8	6 Final Book Design	37
2 Research		7 Conclusion	56
2.1 Life and culture of Gonds	10	8 Future Scope	56
2.2 Gond Art	16	9 References	57
2.3 Analysis of Gond Graphic novels	19		
3 Methodology			
3.1 Strategy Prioritization	23		
3.2 Project Brief	24		
3.3 Methodology	24		
4 Ideation			
4.1 Decision on the content of publication	26		
4.2 Decision on Illustration style	26		
4.3 Decision on narrative building	28		

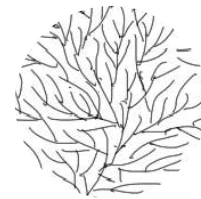
1. Process Timeline



1.1 Challenges due to the pandemic

The pandemic caused certain challenges during the project completion. Due to the lockdown restrictions, interaction with the village people was limited and communication with the gond artist was conducted through phone calls.

Certain covid restrictions during the travel caused difficulty in the collection of information and photographs. Home isolation resulted in lesser motivation and work efficiency which were the major barriers during the process of project completion.



Research

This section contains an overview of the village's people, their life, their art and their culture. This was collected through secondary research of written materials and through observation and interaction done during my visit to Patangarh

2.1 Life and Culture of Gonds

2.1.1 The Gond People

The Gonds, are the largest Adivasi Community in India, The word Gond comes from Kond, which means green mountains in the dravidian idiom [3] The gonds decorate the floors and walls of their homes with beautiful paintings which translate their every-day perception of the world into colourful and patterned paintings known as gond art. They pass their stories and art to future generations. The Pardhan gonds, a sect within the tribal community are the major storytellers whose primary task was to carry on the traditions and histories of gonds. [12]

Following is a documentation of the observations during my visit to patangarh. Due to covid travel restrictions, I relied more on the secondary research. Hence to detail it the pages of certain written sources especially the book 'Origin of Art' by Bhajju Shyam and Kodai Matsuoka [1] were considered for information collection.

2.1.2 Water problem in the village

The problem of water has been persistent in the village since a long time as there is no piped water in the village.

The water situation has changed in the village over the last ten years as previously women would walk miles in the heat to the Narmada river. But now with the development of wells and handpumps, it's more accessible. The River Narmada is about two kilometres from the Gond village of Patangarh.

Water became more accessible after the wells were dug in the village Women used to carry heavy pots from the well to their homes and it was the toughest part of their day as every morning they used to climb down the hill where the well is situated. The village people are very careful about the use of water and learn to divide water as per its usage. For eg. one bucket for bath, one for cooking, similarly one bucket for drinking and for other chores [1]

The village well is considered an important development and apart from providing water, it is also a spot of social interaction for the village women [1] The development of hand pumps was considered to be very important in the village and water was made more accessible to them.



Figure 1 : Mother instructing child to use the handpump (left). Village well (right)

Previously it was women who use to bring water to the home. Nowadays, even men are seen carrying water on their shoulders using the home made tool made of ropes and wooden stick for support. Small children can be seen trying their hands on the village handpumps as instructed by their mothers as seen in fig 1, Women and children line up for a turn at the handpump [2]

2.1.3 Farming is the main source of Income

Most of the artists in the village are farmers and they are well aware of the seasonal rhythms. People in gond village are very hardworking whether on fields or at home. Women also work in the farms to support their family. Both men and women are seen grazing cattle in the village as in figure 2 (left). According to a gond belief in the book 'Origins of art' earth consists of seven types from fertile land to forests.

It is known to gonds the time of sowing the fields which is when a green worm emerges out of the earth and according to gonds a traditional insect called battar is seen in swarms which means that it is about to rain. [1] The people here majorly have wheat and soyabean as a crop which is the source of money to them. Onions and potatoes are the common crop and yield of vegetables is dependent on season. Traditional crops include lentils and mustard seeds in figure 2 (right) from which their oils are extracted and also have certain medicinal uses [1]



Figure 2 : Man grazing cattle in the village. (left). Mustard seeds (right)

2.1.4 Home crafted tools for everyday use.

The gonds in the village are very well efficient in creating tools for everyday tasks like farming, threshing, fetching water and fishing. These tools are traditional in nature as in fig 3. and are usually made of local materials available to them.



Figure 3 : Man carrying water on his shoulder using the homemade tool of rope and wooden stick (top left). Plough (top right. Tool used for collecting fishes (middle left). mill stone (middle right). Sickle used for farming (bottom left). Winnowing tool (bottom right)

2.1.5 Gond Homes are beautifully decorated.

Gonds have an appreciation of beauty therefore the walls in many houses are covered with beautiful wall paintings known as 'Bhittichitras'. The traditional gond houses were made of mud which are now being replaced rapidly with concrete houses due to unavailability of materials like wood etc. The gond houses in the village are majorly painted in the shades of blue and greens as these colours act as cooling agents during hot summers. The walls, the courtyards, even the shelves are decorated and painted with beautiful Bhittichitras as shown in figure 4.



Figure 4 : Wall Bhittichitra outside a Gond House

The gond women paint beautiful drawings on the floor known as 'Dighna'. The gond art is believed to be evolved from this traditional practice of painting on the floor as according to a gond belief 'beautiful images painted on the walls and floors of the house bring prosperity'[1]'Dighna' has an important cultural significance and is considered auspicious. Each woman has her own unique style of painting dighna which depict certain meaning and are remade with time, simple dignas are painted on everyday basis whereas during festivals, women make detailed dighna drawings. Women are mostly seen decorating the courtyards with murals and floor dighnas as in figure 5. Vistors are then welcomed in these courtyards and the celebrations are held. [1]



Figure 5 : Women applying mud on the courtyard floor.

The gonds create decorative motifs on the bottom half of their houses. The gond houses also have a third layer on the outside for support known as the base, It serves as the seating area for people and is an important element for social interaction during evenings. These base are projected towards the outside and are decorated with colourful motifs [14] as shown in figure 5.



Figure 5 : Decorated base outside a gond home

2.1.6 Trees are important part of gond culture

The Gonds have always lived very close to the Nature and share a deep connection with the Flora and Fauna of the village. Trees have a very important significance in Gond culture and are considered sacred because of the belief that Gods exist within them [1].

Each tree in the village is considered special and among all the trees, the Patan tree as in figure 6, situated on the top of the hill is a central figure to the Gond village. The Gonds believe that their Lord 'Thakur Dev' resides within the tree and rules the world that is below the ground [1].



Figure 6 : The patan tree is a central figure in the village

The Gonds share a close bond with the trees of the village. Each tree has its own uniqueness and is considered important. Some trees provide food and some are used to make medicines while other trees are considered sacred and play an important role during village festivals.

The Mahua Tree is considered sacred in the Gond culture. Oil is extracted from its seeds and the blooming flowers are fermented to make a local liquor. According to a Gond tale of Mahua tree - a Gond leader was once taking a stroll in the countryside. He was looking for something exquisite that would amuse his guests and make him an ideal host in the village. After a hard day's walk, he found a pleasant place to sit, under a Mahua tree. As he went closer to the tree, he saw a pit filled with water and Mahua flowers that was surrounded by birds. He drank the water and was mesmerized by it. In no time he drifted into a state of joy and was dancing around the tree like those birds. He felt all the more connected with the world and concluded his quest with the discovery of Mahua [13]. Since then, Gonds produce Mahua water. It is regarded as a divine gift and an essential ingredient of any ritual. It is considered auspicious to sprinkle Mahua before ceremonies.

The red coloured Semal Tree holds certain medicinal properties for digestion related problems[1] Similarly the other trees in the village have an important significance and are majorly represented in their Art.

2.1.7 Close bond with the village animals

Gonds share a close relationship with animals. The depiction of animals in their paintings mostly include their relationship with a particular animal, their beliefs and the characteristics of that animal [1]

In the past, the gondes were in close contact with the wild animals. However with development, the forests has moved away from the village and the gondes now share a close relationship with domestic animals. Many men and women could be seen grazing cattle in the village. These animals are an important part of their life and they feel comfortable sharing their spaces [1] and living with them.



Figure 7 : Cows in the Patangarh village

The animals are an important part of the lives of the Gondes. The people are well aware of the characteristics of the animal that they live with [1].

Domestic animals like cows as shown in figure 7, bulls, goat and dogs are commonly found in their houses. The gondes build sheds near their homes for these animals to live. Birds, fishes, snakes and few other small wild animals like wild boar are commonly seen in the village.

2.1.8 The keepers of the Gond stories

The Bhujrukhs keep the ancient Gond stories alive through their singing. [1] These are old men in the village as in figure 8, who recite the gond stories of their kings and folklores.



Figure 8 : A Bhujruk singing gond folklores
Image Source : Google Image

They use a stringed instrument known as 'banda' which is made by them using locally available resources. The strings of the 'banda' are made of horsehair. They sprinkle Mahua on the instrument before singing as it is considered auspicious in gond belief.[1] The Bhujrukhs recite the stories of their kings on several occasions and in front of audience where people interact with him constantly. They are treated with great respect in the village.

2.2 Gond Art

The gond paintings reflect the beliefs and stories of gonds. The gonds are tended more towards visual narratives than verbal and writing.[3] Most of the gond express themselves through the medium of art which has given birth to one of the most vibrant visual traditions of India known as Gond Art.

2.2.1 Sources of Inspiration

Gond paintings are a reflection of man's close connection with his natural surroundings [6]. According to the gonds, every creation whether it is a bird or a rock, is considered sacred. Gond paintings can also take inspiration from myths and legends of India or alternatively, they may also showcase images from the daily lives of the tribe. It can also showcase abstract concepts like emotions, dreams and imagination. [6]

2.2.2 Use of Symbolism

The use of symbolism in the subjects is what makes the art unique and thoughtful where the elements of a theme are imagined to be that of animals and the characteristic of each animal is compared to that of the particular element.



Figure 9 : The elephant, The London jungle book.

Bhajju Shyam represents his aeroplane journey in a symbolic manner Figure 9. which he depicts as an elephant, the heaviest animal that is known to him, because according to him "a plane taking off is like a miracle similar that of an elephant flying".

2.2.3 Use of Bright Colours

The traditional gond paintings were created on the floors and walls of the houses of these gonds and was done using natural pigments from plants, tree sap, charcoal, leaves and cow dung to derive natural colours.[12]

The yellow is taken from 'chui mitti' which is a type of local sand, brown from 'gheru mitti' which is another type of sand, green from leaves and red from the Hibiscus flower [12] Proceeding with the discovery of Gond Art, artists began to shift from walls to canvas and from natural colours to poster and acrylic colours which are used on large canvas rolls and on paper.

The Gond paintings are characterized by its dynamic use of repetited patterns and motifs that conveys a sense of movement to the viewers eye[6] Each artist has his own signature motif that is inspired from his immediate surroundings [10] These motifs are created with great perfection within the outer line. Dots and dashes are majorly found in most of the work of contemporary gond artists.

Motifs of 6 different Gond artists as in figure 10 are studied to understand its meaning & Design that resembles elements of flora and fauna majorly. This would be useful to know more about the significance of motifs in Gond art and the inspiration behind painting a particular motif

2.2.4 Use of Repetitive patterns and Motifs




● Rajkumar Shyam		Combination of circles and lines
● Kala Bai Shyam		Lines and Squares - woven rope
● Gangotri Bai Tekam		2 semicircle - Scales of fish
● Kamla Shyam		Line of Spiders
● Suresh Kumar		2 semicircle with dot in the inner semicircle - drop of water
● Sunita Shyam		Twinkling Stars

Figure 10 : Artist Motifs and their meanings [10]

2.2.5 What Gond Art is like today in Patangarh

The bright and joyous depiction of the Gond themes in paintings make them interesting pieces of Art. However, the use of acrylic and poster colours used by modern day Gond artists due to the unavailability of natural colours today, bring more variety to the paintings. The Gond Artists with relevant skills are approached to paint the murals/large painting scrolls from different cities of India. However many still rely on farming and other jobs to support their art supplies and continue painting. However the artists take painting very important and consider painting as their primary work.

Women take keen interest in creating large canvas gond paintings. Women (figure 11) was showcasing her paintings during the visit, they were made on long canvas rolls for the Kala Ghoda Art festival in Mumbai. The gond painting on an A4 size paper usually takes two days to complete by these Artists. Artists in the village also create Gond Art on other materials like wood, clay and metal. Hasth Kala Bhavan (figure 12) was built to recognize and encourage gond painters in the village. It consists of a collection of artworks by the painters in the village.



Figure 11 : Women Showing work to be displayed at Kala Ghoda Art Festival



Figure 12 : Hasth Kala Bhavan, Patangarh

2.3 Analysis of Gond Graphic Novels

Use of gond narration in books is increasingly becoming popular both among the gond artists to convey these stories and among the general audience. Books like 'The London Junglebook' and 'Finding my way' are well known for their story narration using gond style of narration.

However the aesthetics of each of these book are distinct in their own unique way even though they all share common roots of Gond style. The aesthetics of four gond novels have been reviewed to get an idea of the changing trends of gond elements with respect to the traditional gond painting.

2.3.1 Graphic Novel Bhimayana : Experience of Untouchability, graphics by Subhash Vyam and Durga Bai Vyam

Description

is a graphic biography of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar that signify the experiences of social discrimination faced by Ambedkar and it uses digna (gond art) to narrate the story.

Analysis

A major feature of Gond Art is the relationship between as subject and its surrounding negative space.[4] This is well achieved in the novel where the background elements form a part of the storytelling.

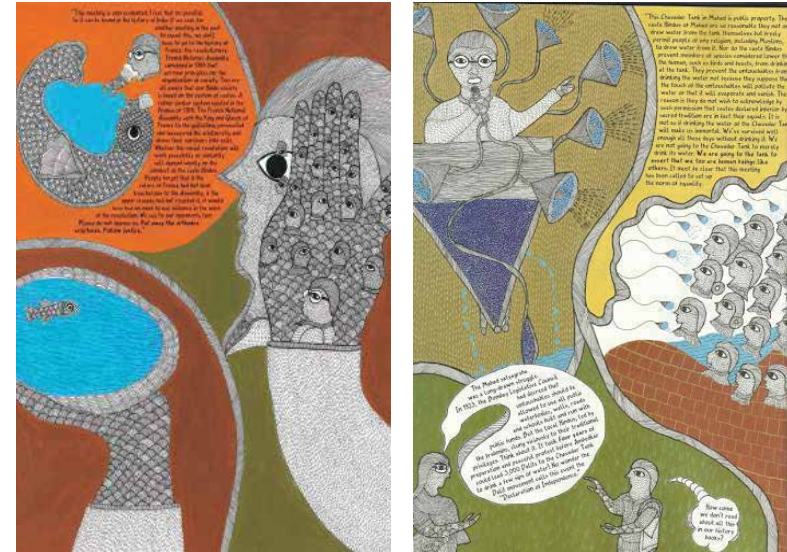


Figure 13: Pages from the graphic Novel, Bhimayana.

Each colour in the background represents a particular surrounding as shown in figure 13. and the motifs are used on it provide information about its surface texture. Another unique aspect was the use of the front profile of human characters as traditional gond art majorly used side profile while representing human figures. The humans are depicted in black and white and there is a lot of colour in the background which draws the attention of the viewer. The book has a characteristic of comics when it comes to dialogues between characters and information arrangement.

In the figure 13, even the shape of the speech bubble resembles a form that is organic and adds meaning to the scenario. The use of symbolism in context of the contemporary scenarios make the narrative even interesting.

2.3.2 Graphic Novel 'The London JungleBook' by Artist Bhajju Shyam

Description

The London Jungle Book by Bhajju Shyam provides his London visit experiences into visuals which was his first ever journey by air to a foreign land. It provides various reflections of the western country through animal symbolism.

Analysis

The forms are very organic and are detailed with motifs which are clearly distinguished from each other. Use of solid bright colours, as painted by gond painters make it truly traditional in terms of aesthetics. The forms are outlined with black lines of lesser intensity.

The gond visuals display a traditional gond art characteristic while the subject is contemporary in nature. He represents his restaurant experience in London to that of an octopus that is confused between the number of food options available in the menu as shown in figure 14. The use of symbolism in the subjects where the elements of London are imagined to be that of animals and the characteristic of each animal is compared to that of the subject. This is what makes the visuals really unique and succeeds in bringing in the essence of gond art in the contemporary domain.

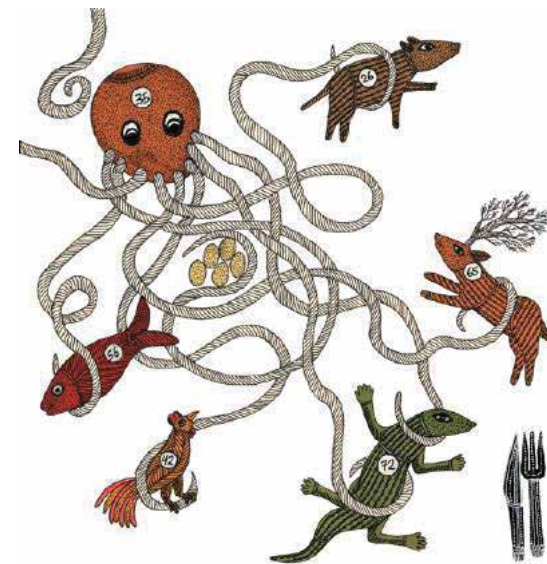


Figure 14. Restaurant menu, The London jungle book.

2.3.3 Graphic Novel 'Finding my Way' by Artist Venkat Raman Singh Shyam

Venkat Raman Singh Shyam is considered as one of the most contemporary gond artists. The book 'finding my way' is about his journeys and experiences as an artist from a remote 'tribal' village in the Patnagarh area of Madhya Pradesh to the art worlds of Bhopal, Delhi and to foreign lands. The narratives are based on his story of survival both physical and artistic in the cities as well as in the art market

The graphics depict elements of gond art but are contemporary in nature. Use of watercolour and black pen work make the combination even unique as shown in figure 15.

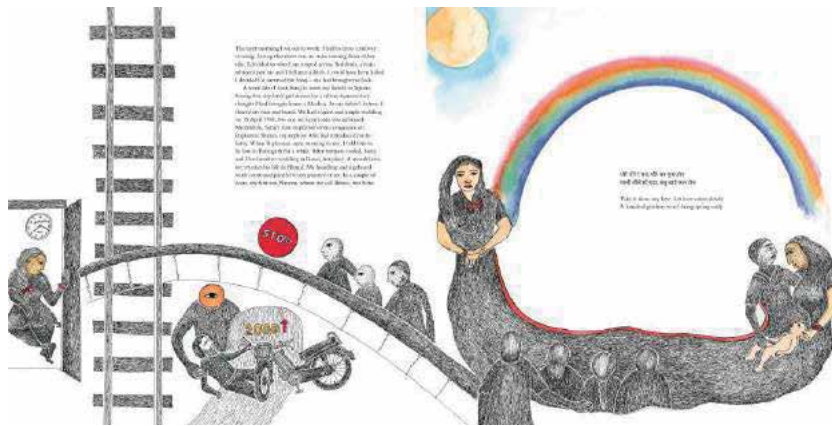


Figure 15 : Page from the book 'Finding my Way'.

Traditional gond paintings make use of solid colours on which detailed motifs are drawn. The use of watercolour opened new possibilities of mixing two different colour mediums giving it a traditional yet contemporary feel all together.

2.3.4 Graphic Novel 'I Saw a Peacock with a Fiery Tail' Jnathon Yakagami.

International Designers like Jnathon Yakagami in her book 'I Saw a Peacock with a Fiery Tail' have used die-cutting to provide an experience of reading within the visuals as shown in figure 16, without printing the poem twice [8].

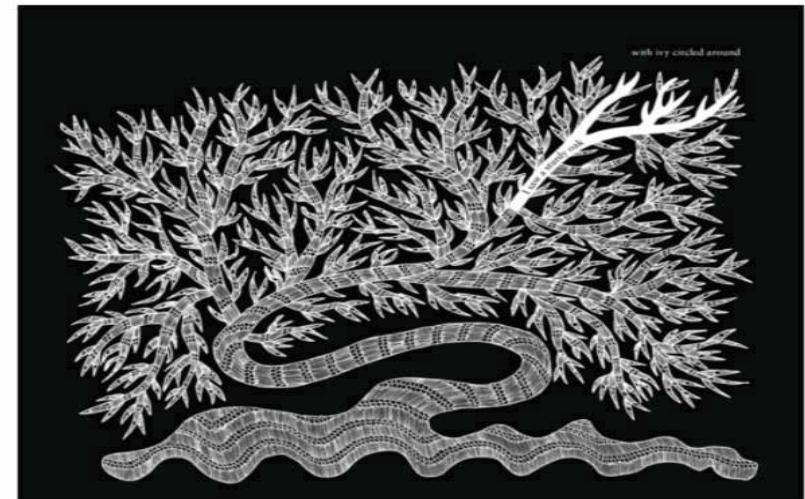
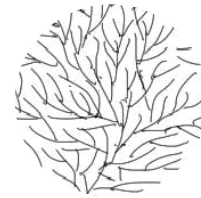


Figure 16 : Page from the book, I Saw a Peacock with a Fiery Tail' by Jnathon Yakagami.



Methodology

Task of analysing and sorting the collected information. Decision on the strategy prioritization and methodology for the project.

3.1 Strategy Prioritization

Various design strategies were considered for bringing forth the awareness to a wider audience in metropolitan cities.

3.1.1 Intervention in UI/UX Design

The possibilities of bringing gond art knowledge to an online platform was looked into. Designing of an educational website about the village and its art, culture traditions or a platform that would be used to sell/showcase the work of these tribal artists. The information could be accessed by anyone who own a smartfone or a computer. However as the village locals are less equipped with technology and are not aware of its usage, this intervention would have left a digital gap between the painters and its audience

3.1.2 Intervention in Educational Design

Consisting the present scenario where the opportunities to learn tribal arts from these tribals are minimal for the people in the cities. An approach to design a do it yourself educational kit for children/adults that makes them aware about the art, motifs and patterns etc

3.1.3 Intervention in publication Design

To bring forth the information Publication in the form of a book which could be used by general audience to get the information. Publication design was considered a suitable option as it stays and can be accessed by people without relying on digital devices.

1. Information book - containing gond culture/ their evolution/ art and process and the present application of Gond art in the form of visual storytelling.

2. Graphic book - A book containing a series of self stories or Taking an existing text heavy book and representing the story using gond narratives.

3.1.4 Branding and Campaining

The gond art style can be brought to a wider reach thus an approach to contemporize it into a modern brand using graphic design solutions and campaigning was looked into.

3.1.5 Display Typeface Design

An approach to design a typeface using Gond patterns, motifs and forms.

The project progressed with a publication design that would narrate information and tales of these tribes through gond narratives. This would inform people about these tribes and their life and at the same time aware them about the art style through the graphics.

3.2 Project Brief

The project is based on Publication Design.

The most important part of this project is the information. Secondary research is conducted through the online written sources to gather the information about the life and culture of these tribes. Literature on the Gond Art & Traditions provided insights on how the everyday life of the tribes in these rural areas of Dindori, Madhya Pradesh give rise to their Art that is driven by detailed motifs and organic forms inspired by local flora and fauna. Based on the Research, the content of the book is aimed to cover various aspects of the present day life of these tribes through gond Illustrations. It would focus more on the everyday life and culture of the Gond Tribes, and also on their Art.

3.2.1 Major Stakeholders

People living in Urban Areas who wish to seek knowledge about the art and life of Gond tribes can refer to the publication for information.

Expanding its exposure to the general population through the medium of Publication Design will contribute towards the betterment of the lives of these tribal painters

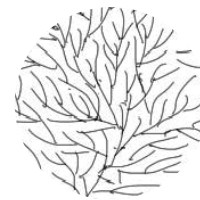
3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 A Primary (ethnography study) and Secondary Research would be conducted to gather the information required for this project. Information on life of the Gond Tribe, their Art Style in the Gond village of Patangarh.

3.3.2 Visit to Dindori Gond Village and Observations of their daily Life and Cultural Aspects
Artist Interaction with some of the Gond painters will provide an in-depth understanding about them.

3.3.3 Brainstorming and Ideation to convert the collected information/Gond Poetries into Visual Narratives

3.3.4 Design and Documentation of the Publication. This stage Involves designing the visual language of the book, colour scheme, layout and the content. Also documenta_ tion of the designs, pages of book and project report preparation..



Ideation

Conversion of the collected data and photographs into Gond sketches, Illustrations and narratives

From all the possible solutions, publication design solution was considered to proceed with. Hence various aspects of the publication from segregating the collected information to sketching the narratives and thumbnails was conducted.

4.1 Decision on the content of publication

Since the information collected about the gonds and their art is vast. I decided to include only the important aspects of their life and tried to segregate them into various themes. These themes included about the cultural significance and everyday life of these gonds. Their problem of water in the village, their relationship with trees and animals. a few of their beliefs and tales, their houses, art and what their art is like today.

4.2 Decision on the Illustration style

The Visual Narratives were sketched as shown in figure 17 using gond style of painting and the emphasis was to keep the narrative style simple and easy to understand for people who are not much aware about the gond style. Thus the use of colour and pen together while colour was used only to highlight certain elements. The sketches were later detailed as shown in figure 18.

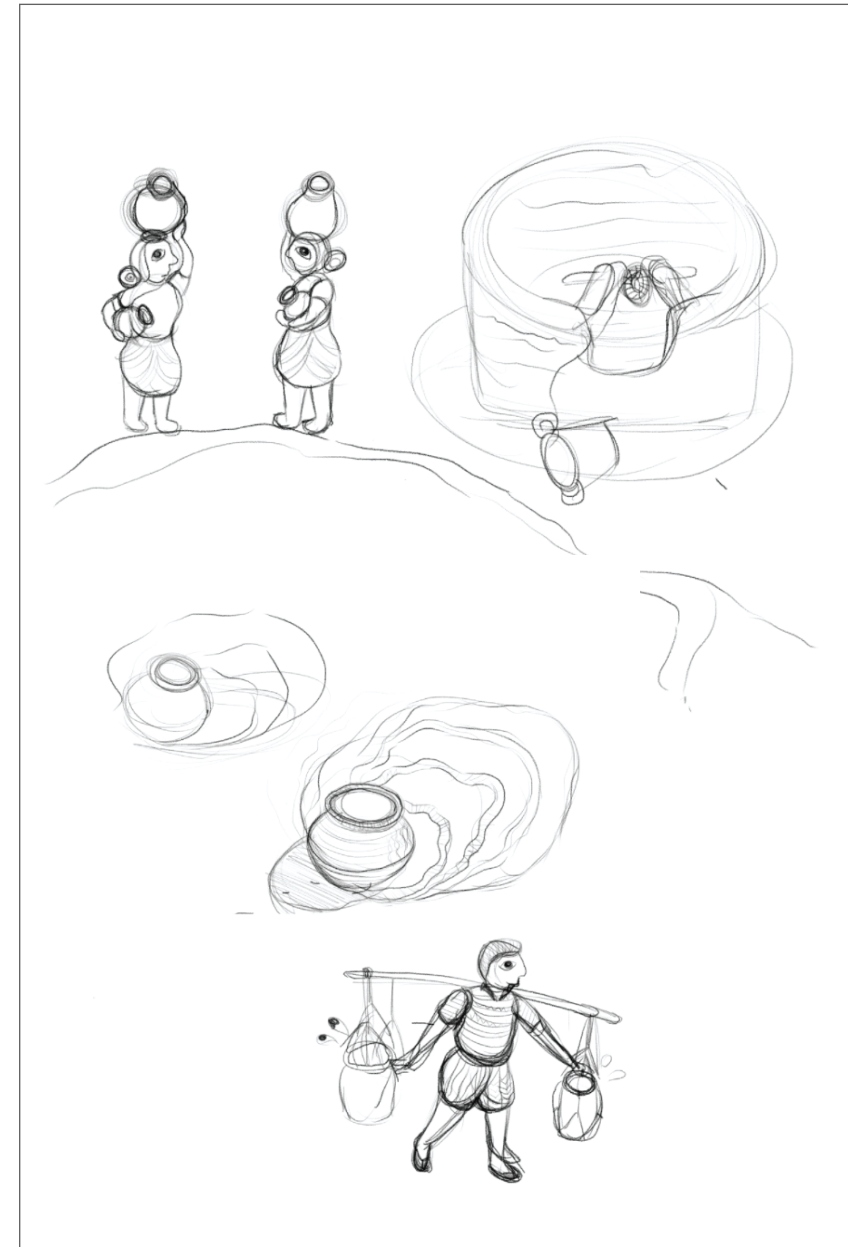


Figure 17. Initial Sketch Explorations

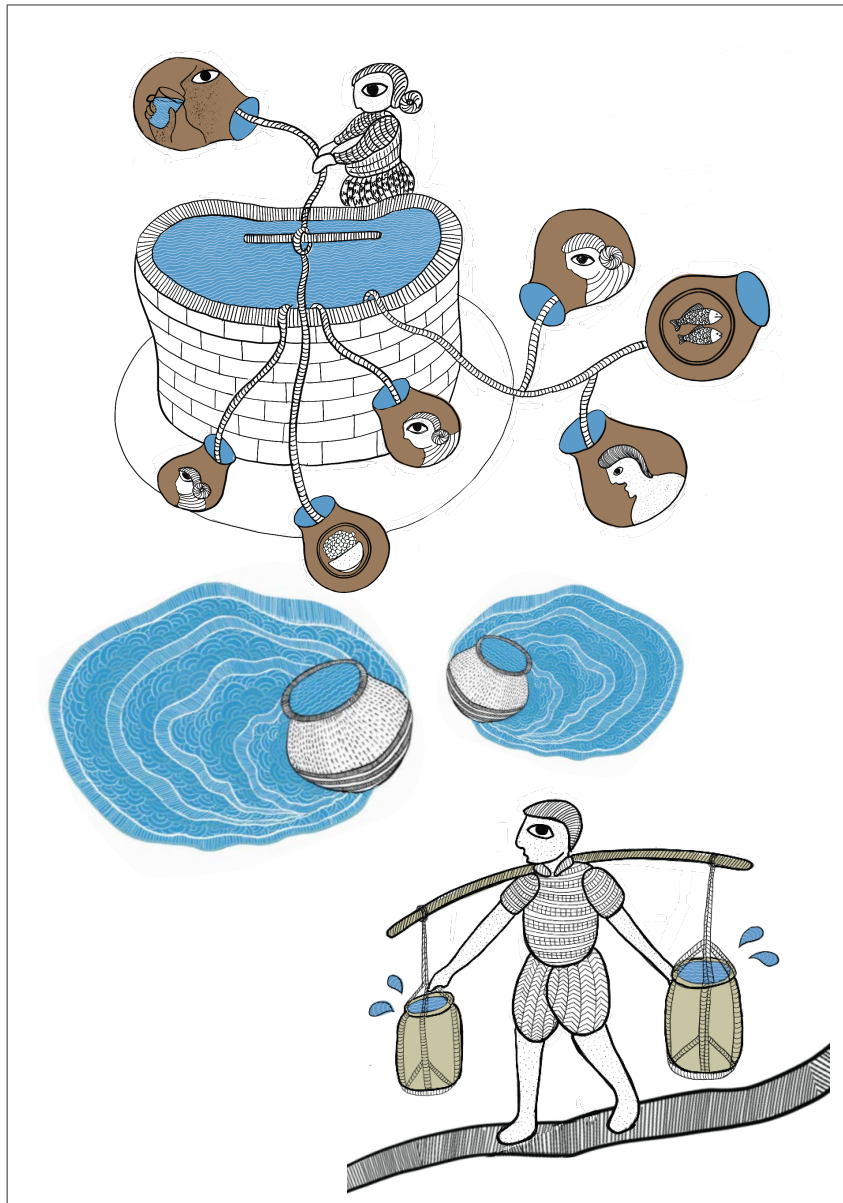


Figure 18. Final coloured sketches (designed)

To provide geographical information about the history of gonds, a map of gondwana region and its forts, was redesigned in the style of Gond art by adding necessary features to it .(figure 19).

Gond Kingdom of Garha Katanga

Major Forts

- Constructed Forts
- Acquired Forts
- Boundary of Gond Kingdom
- District Boundary
- State Boundary

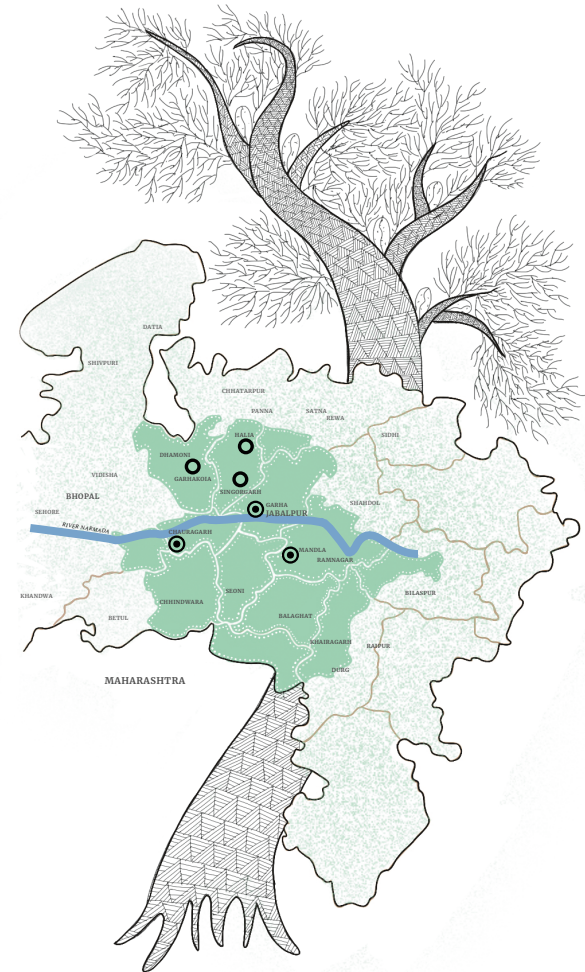


Figure 19 Map showing the major forts of Gondwana region (designed)

4.3 Decision on the narrative building

After sketching the concepts, small book thumbnails were sketched as shown in figure 20 to get an idea of narration and arrangement of the graphics in a storytelling format.

Based on the nature of graphics, it was decided to use both the left and right sides of the book for storytelling. This would make it interesting and result in more involvement of the reader.

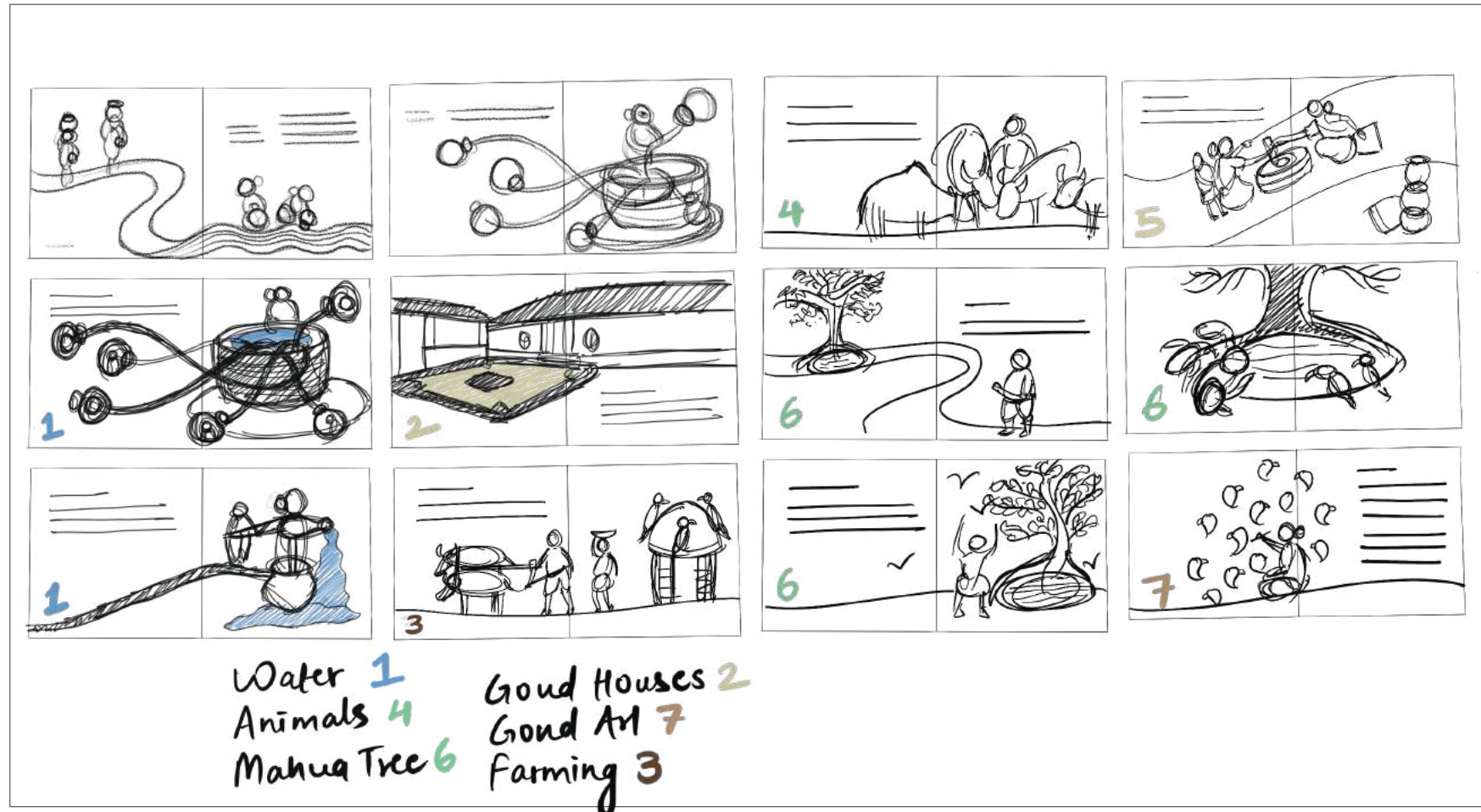
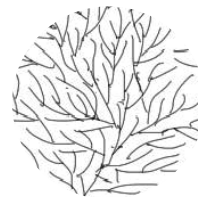


Figure 20. Thumbnail sketches of the book pages



Design

Involves designing the visual language of the book, colour scheme, layout and the content.

5.1 Illustration Style

The analysis of Gond Graphic Novels provided me inspiration to see the gond style of art from a different perspective. Many contemporary artists are exploring new possibilities to contemporize the art in terms of its style that is in the use of forms and stylized motifs, fusing two different media together. The aim for my publication was to contemporize Gond Art style while the traditional gond elements (line, forms, motifs) remain the same. Inspired by the work of Artists Bhajju Shyam and Sunil Shyam, I used a combination of pen work and colour where the use of colour was only to highlight the important elements in the painting as shown in figure 21



Figure 21 : Painting by Bhajju Shyam (left) and Sunil Shyam (Right)

Characteristics of the Illustrative style for Publication

The Visual Narratives are based on Gond style.
Emphasis on contemporizing Gond Art.
Use of Colour and Pen Outline together.
Use of colour only to highlight the important elements.
Use of not more than 2 colours in Graphics.

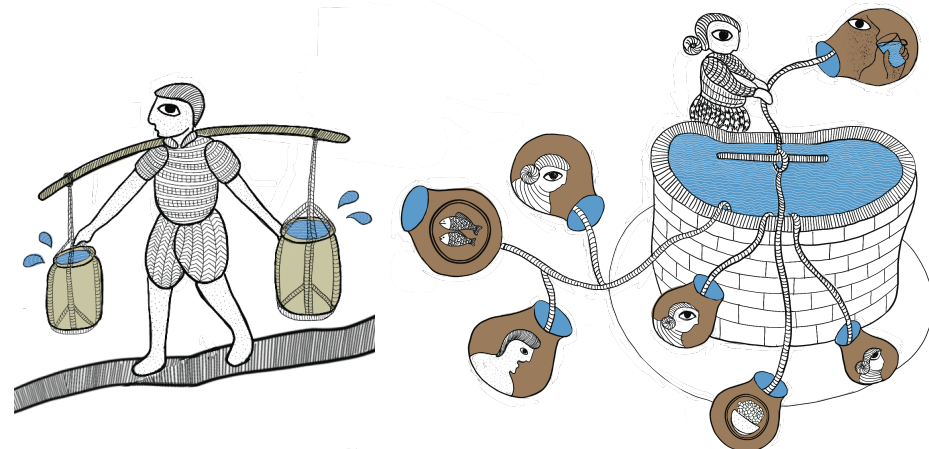


Figure 22 : Illustrative style used in Publication

5.2 Colour Scheme and typeface

Earth colours and shades of blue and Green as shown in figure 23. are considered for publication as these colours are widely used by gondes to paint their houses. White colour is basically limestone mixed with water.

The blue colour is achieved by mixing distemper powder with colouring agents, along with the limestone paste and water. Both of these are easily available in the local market and these colours also act as cooling agents during hot summers [14]



Figure 23. Colour scheme of the publication graphics

From Narmada River to Home.

Previously it was women who use to bring water to the home. Nowadays, even men are seen carrying water on their shoulders using the home made tool made of ropes and wooden stick for support. Small children can be seen trying their hands on the village handpumps as instructed by their mothers as seen in figure 1, Women and children line up for a turn at the handpump.

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From Narmada River to Home.

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An Alternate colour palette was used for text in the Publication as shown in figure 24 Initially a similar grey was considered for both digital and print mediums. However after getting it printed , the visibility was less. Hence it was realized that the grey which had a good visibility on digital medium was not providing proper readability in the print.

5.2.1 Typeface selection

Font Features - Traditional, Decorative, Good Readability, Patterns, heritage

The major characteristics of the font were to provide a good readability to the readers on a print medium, and should blend well with the gond style that is decorative and traditional in nature. Hence the font Merriweather was chosen for the overall content of the publication as the font displays these features and Merriweather being a Sheriff font, was going well with the graphics as it has the heritage feel of old news papers.

Figure 24. Font colour for various mediums

Font size was chosen as per requirement which varied from 17 px. for the heading, 12 px. for the body text and even smaller sizes like 10 px for chapter names and page numbers at the bottom of the layout as mentioned in table 1.

For Headings Bold - 17 px	The Story of Water
For the body of the text Regular - 12 px	The Story of Water
For the bottom text (page no) Regular - 10 px	The Story of Water

Table 1. Font weight and size in the publication

5.3 Layout and Content Arrangement

The book orientation was decided to be a square. Different Layouts were tried to arrange the graphics and content of the publication together as shown in figure 25.

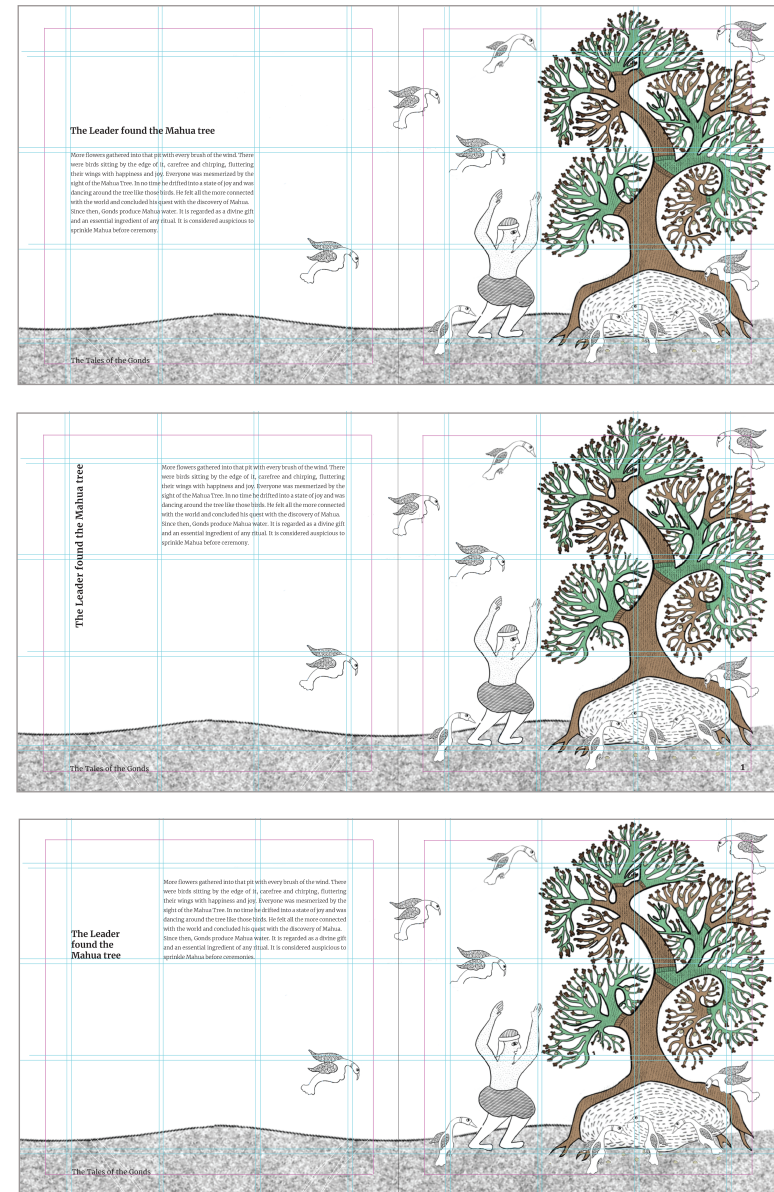


Figure 25. Layout Explorations of the publication

Out of these, layout three was finalized as it was balancing the content arrangement and the graphics more harmonically and it was also suitable with more number of graphics.

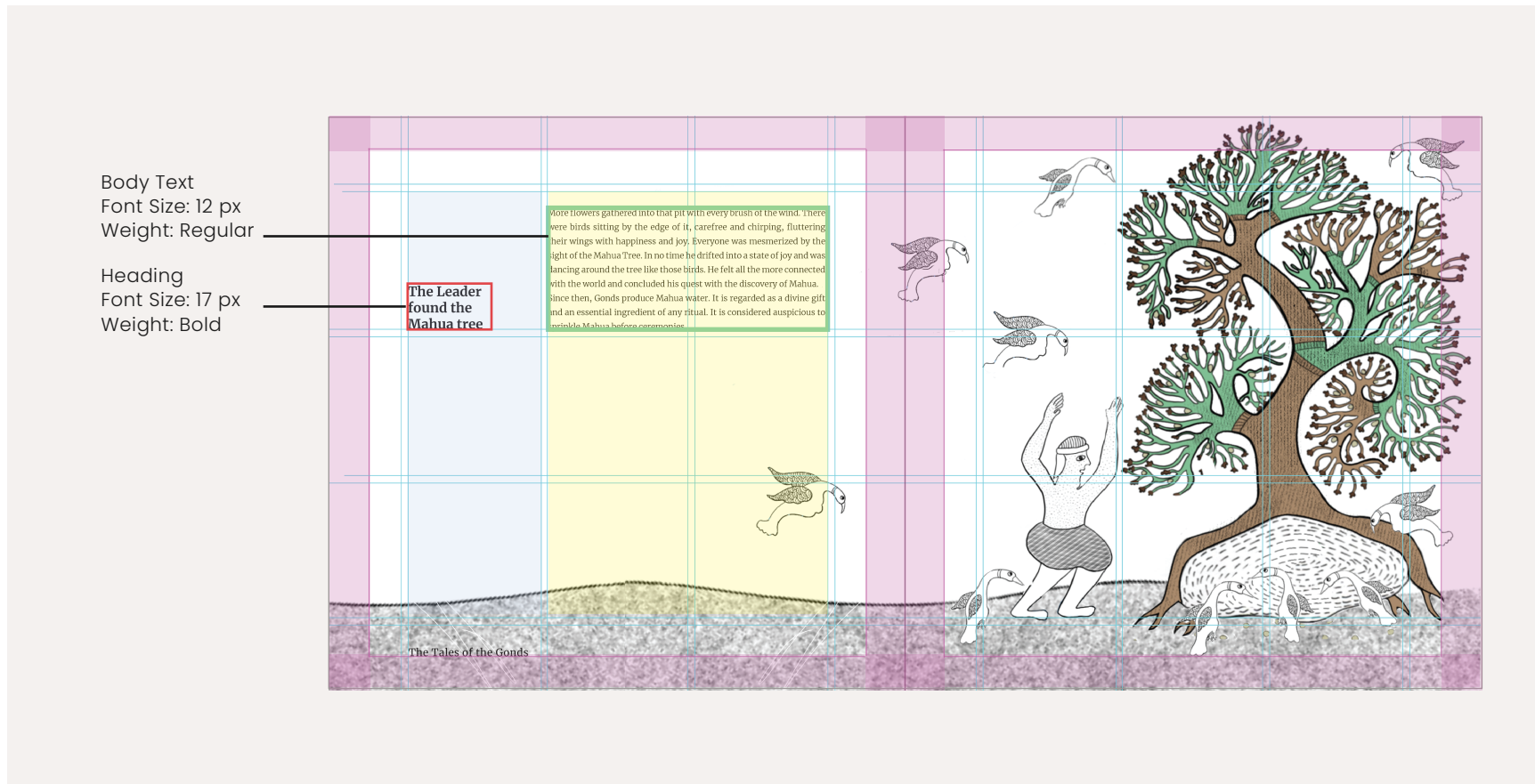
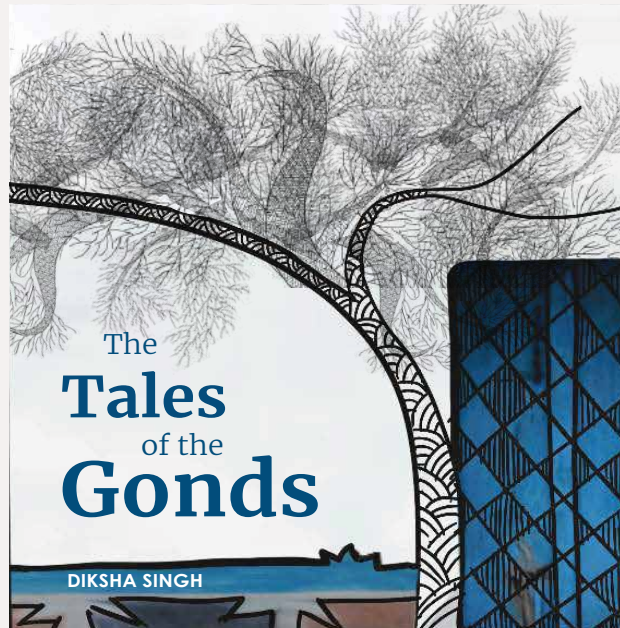


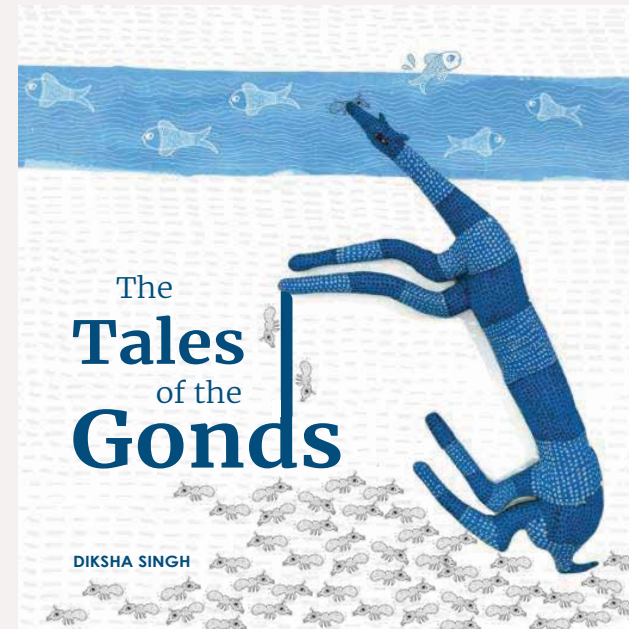
Figure 26 : Layout with grids

5.4 Book Cover Design

The cover of the book is an important part of the book. Hence following two concepts were explored



Concept 01 - Represents the traditional style of Bhittichitra art made on the walls by gond. The door in the right corner represents the entry into the book as one opens it.



Concept 02 - Represents the locally found anteater in a gond style of art. This was actually a photograph taken during my visit. The combination of photography and gond art elements created on it provide it a contemporary outlook.

Based on the choice of the people, concept 02 was finalized as the final cover design (figure 27) as it provides a contemporary look along with the traditional style of gond art.

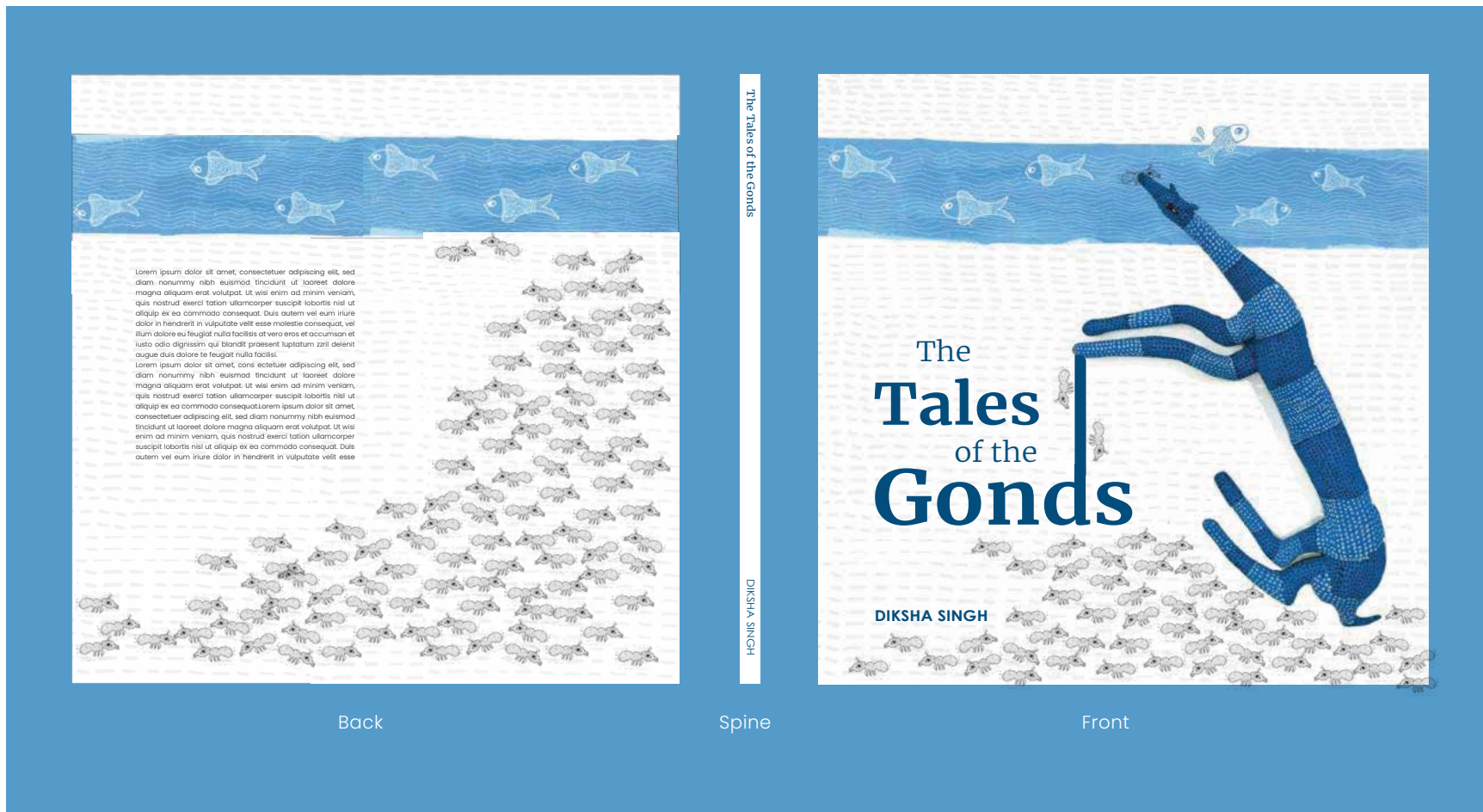
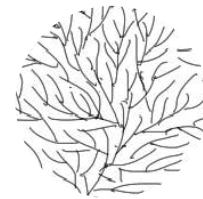


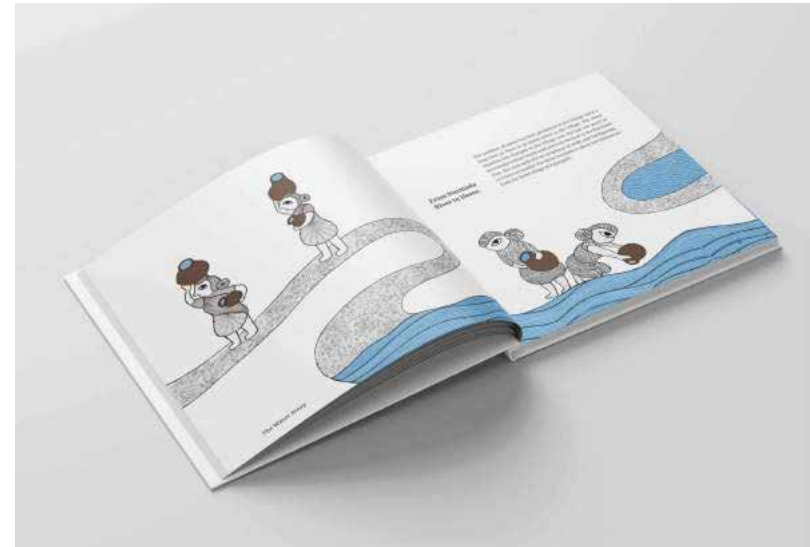
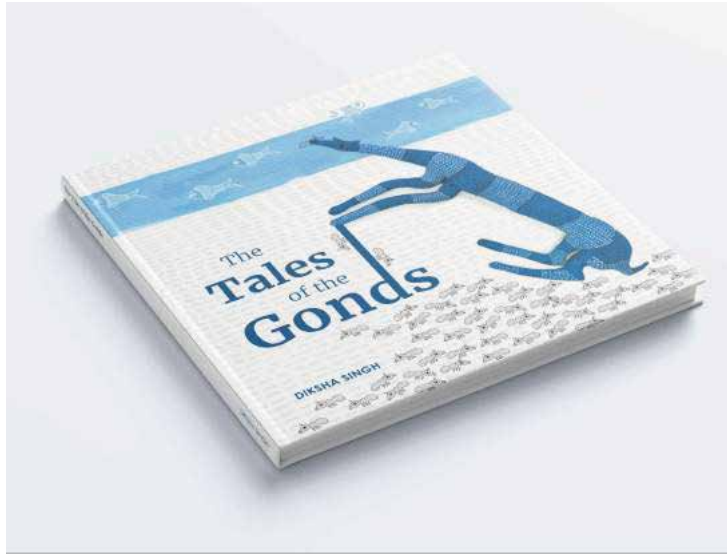
Figure 27 : Final Book Cover Design

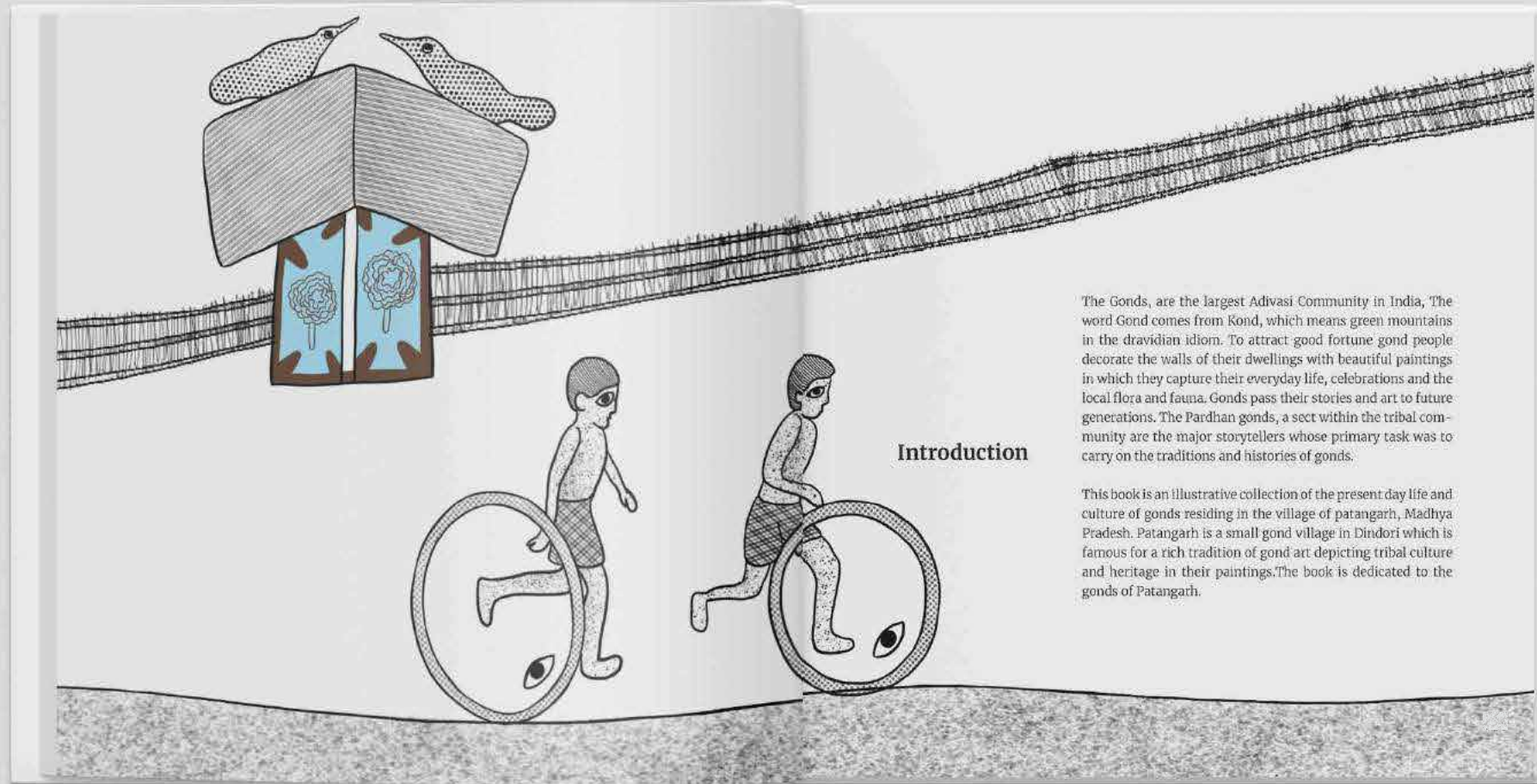


Final Design

Includes the final Publication Design

To bring forth the Gond Tales of Patangarh through Publication Design





Introduction

The Gonds, are the largest Adivasi Community in India, The word Gond comes from Kond, which means green mountains in the dravidian idiom. To attract good fortune gond people decorate the walls of their dwellings with beautiful paintings in which they capture their everyday life, celebrations and the local flora and fauna. Gonds pass their stories and art to future generations. The Pardhan gonds, a sect within the tribal community are the major storytellers whose primary task was to carry on the traditions and histories of gonds.

This book is an illustrative collection of the present day life and culture of gonds residing in the village of patangarh, Madhya Pradesh. Patangarh is a small gond village in Dindori which is famous for a rich tradition of gond art depicting tribal culture and heritage in their paintings. The book is dedicated to the gonds of Patangarh.

History of the Gonds

The first historically recorded Gond kingdoms came up in central India's hilly region in the 14th and 15th century AD. The first Gond king was Jadurai, who deposed the Kalchuri Rajputs, at whose court he had earlier worked, to grab the kingdom of Garha Mandla (modern Mandla and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh). The most illustrious rulers in this dynasty were the iconic queen, Rani Durgavati, whom the Gond community reveres, and Hirde Shah, the first Gond king to adopt Islam. The second kingdom of Deogadh (Chhindwada in Madhya Pradesh and Nagpur in Maharashtra), was created by King Jatba in the 15th century.

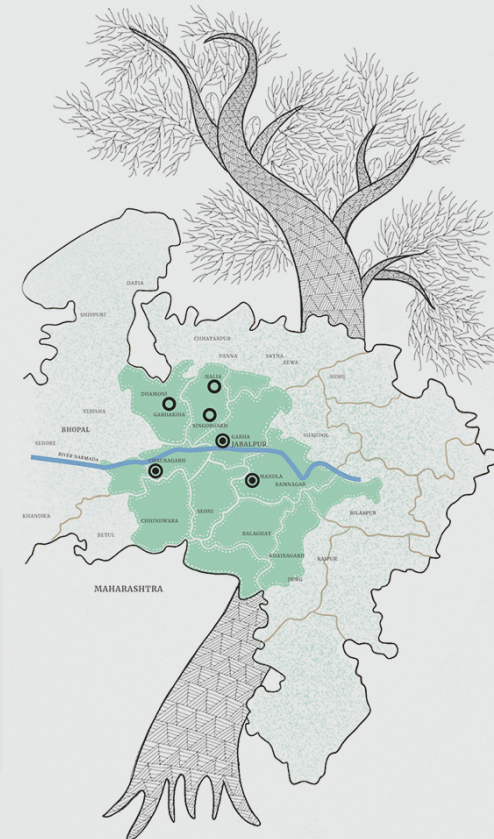
One of his successors, Bakht Buland Shah, converted to Islam to win the favour of emperor Aurangzeb. However, he did not demand conversion from his subjects and married a Gond woman. He fell into disfavour in Delhi after he plundered some Muslim kingdoms of Deccan. Around the same time as Deogadh, the Kherla (Baitul in Madhya Pradesh to Chikhaldara in Amravati district in Maharashtra) kingdom also came up. Its first king, Narsingh Rai, who deposed a Rajput ruler, had love-hate relationship with the Rajput and Muslim rulers in his vicinity who attacked his fort due to its geographical accessibility. The kingdom was later annexed by Bakht Buland Shah.

The Chanda kingdom (Chandrapur in Maharashtra), a contemporary of the Kherla and Deogadh kingdoms, produced several remarkable rulers who developed excellent irrigation systems and the first well defined revenue system among the Gond kingdoms. The sway of the Gond kings came to an end in the 18th century after Raje Raghujji Bhonsale, a warrior of the Bhonsala Maratha clan, first annexed the Nagpur-Kherla kingdom, while Gadha Mandla was taken over by the Peshwas. Chanda held out for a little longer, but with the advent of the British who first entered into treaties with the Marathas and then annexed them, the last traces of Gond rule were wiped out.

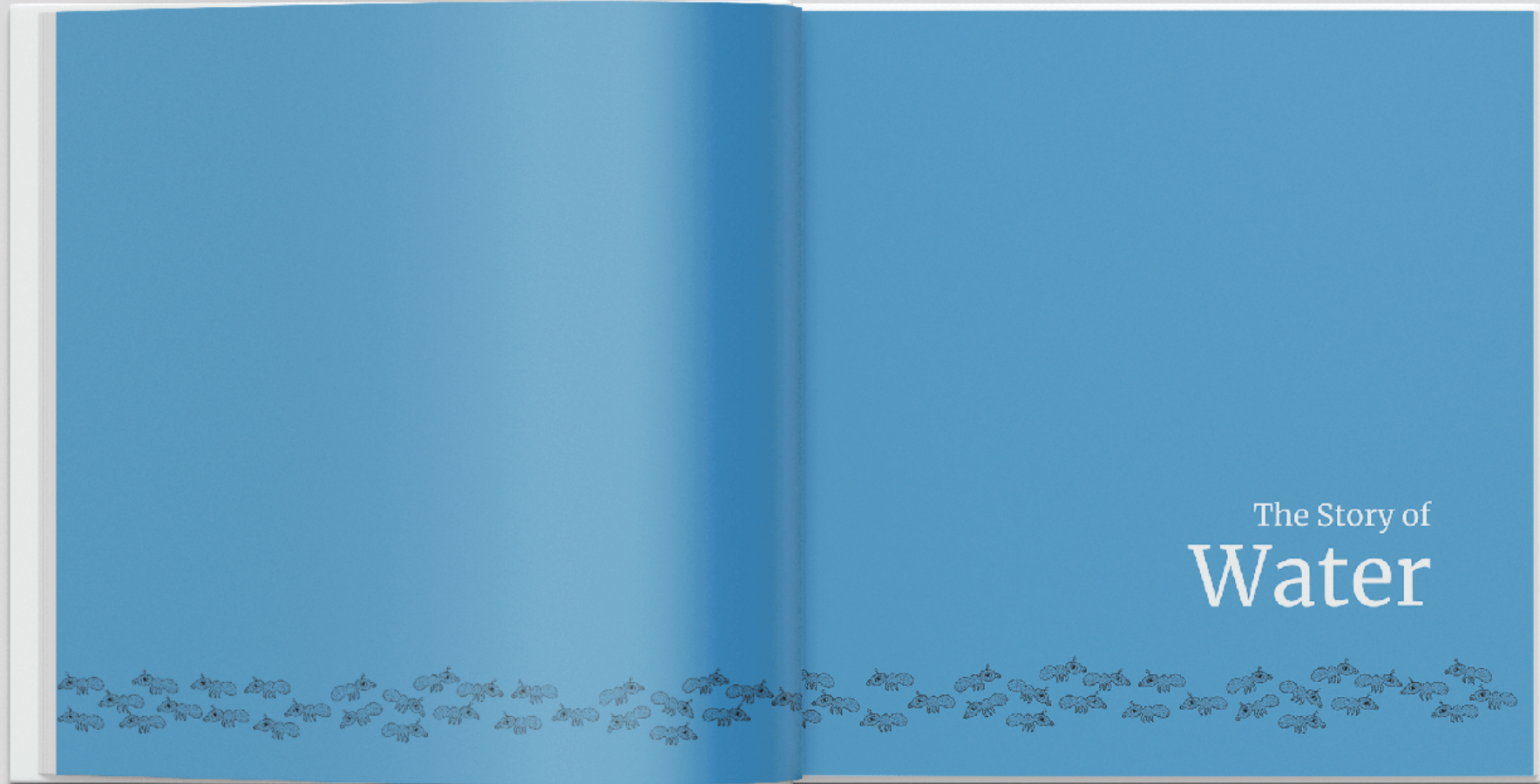
Gond Kingdom of Garha Katanga

Major Forts

-  Constructed Forts
-  Acquired Forts
-  Boundary of Gond Kingdom
-  District Boundary
-  State Boundary
-  Water Body

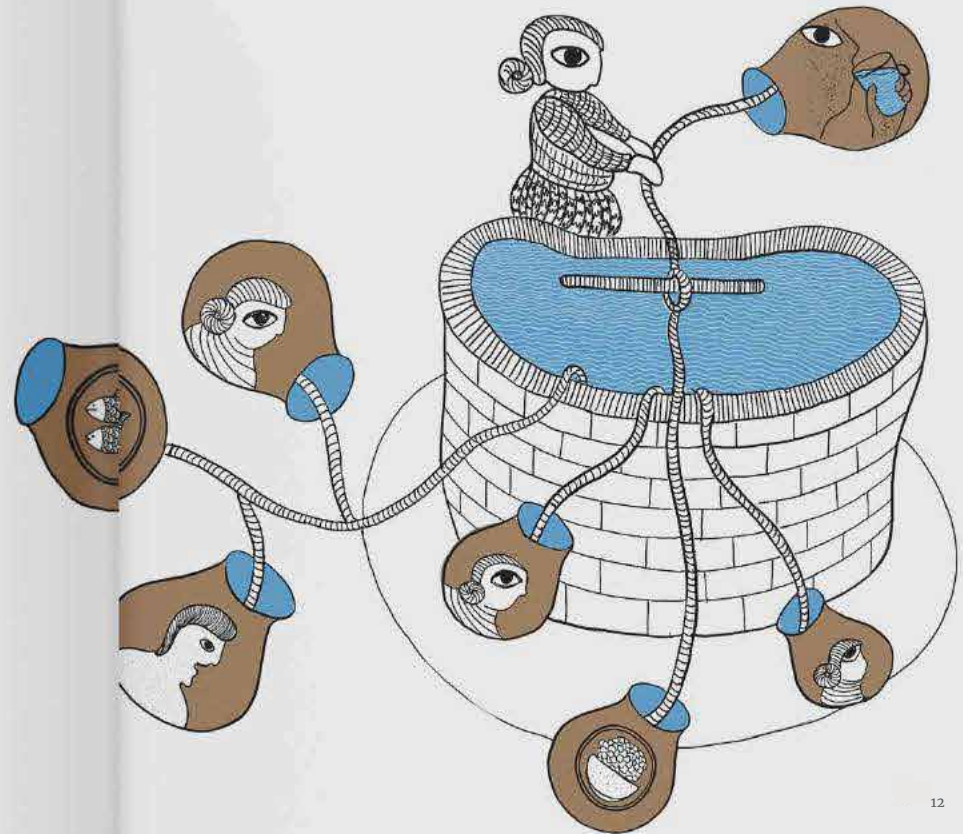


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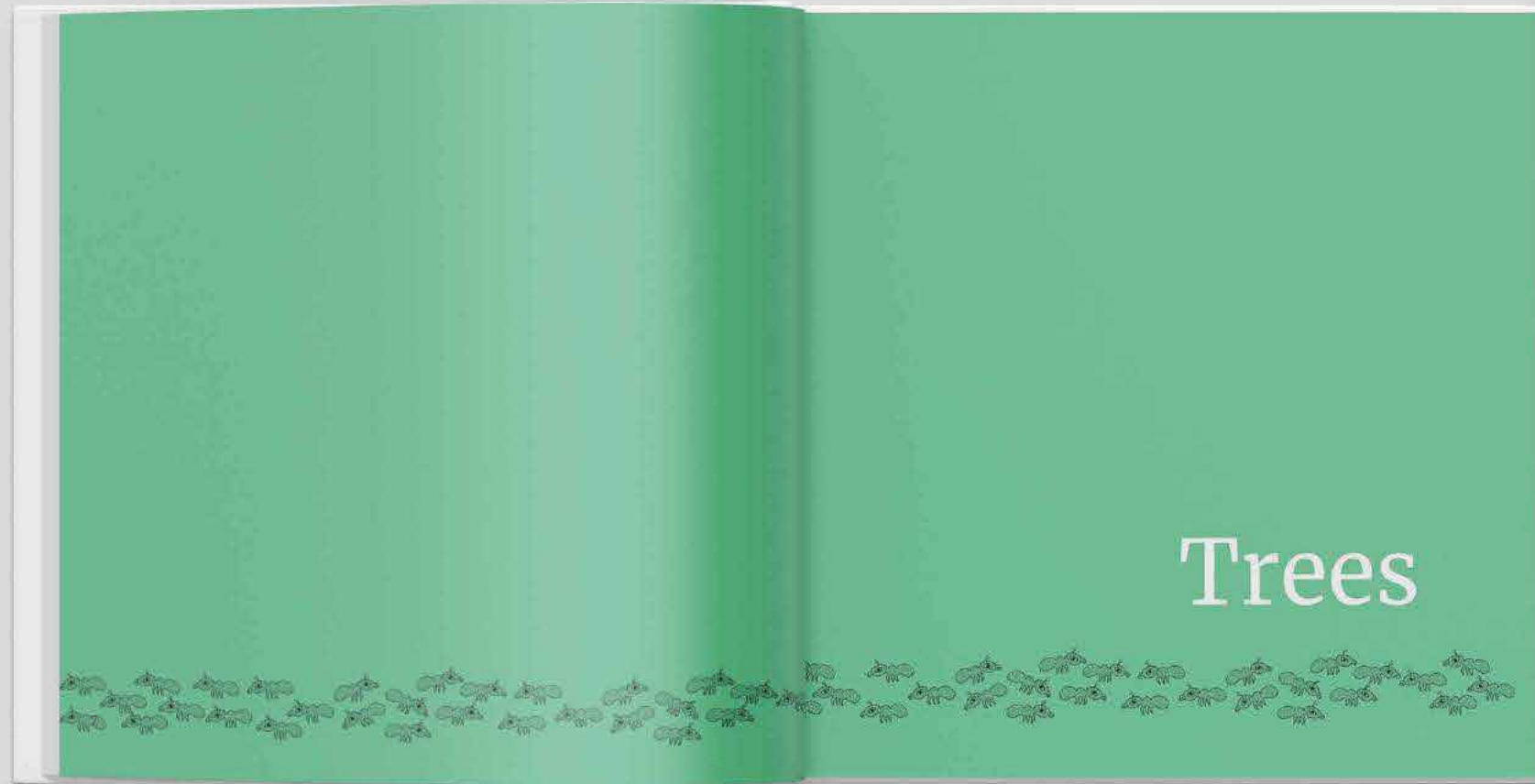


Village wells

Water became more accessible after the wells were dug in the village. Women used to carry heavy pots from the well to their homes and it was the toughest part of their day as every morning they used to climb down the hill where the well is situated. The village people are very careful about the use of water and learn to divide water as per its usage. For eg. one bucket for bath, one for cooking, similarly one bucket for drinking and other chores. The village well is considered an important development and apart from providing water, it is also a spot of social interaction for the village women.



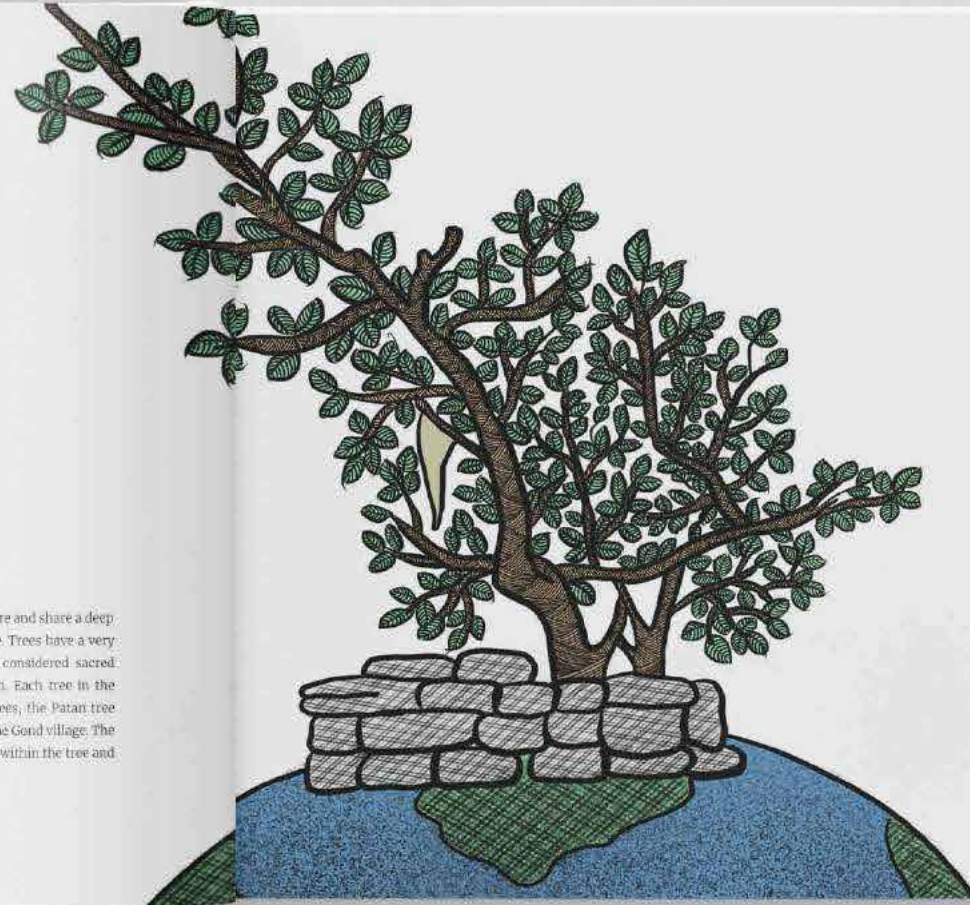
To bring forth the Gond Tales of Patangarh through Publication Design





The central figure of Patangarh

The Gonds have always lived very close to the Nature and share a deep connection with the Flora and Fauna of the village. Trees have a very important significance in Gond culture and are considered sacred because of the belief that Gods exist within them. Each tree in the village is considered special and among all the trees, the Patan tree situated on the top of the hill is a central figure to the Gond village. The Gonds believe that their Lord 'Thakur Dev' resides within the tree and rules the world that is below the ground.



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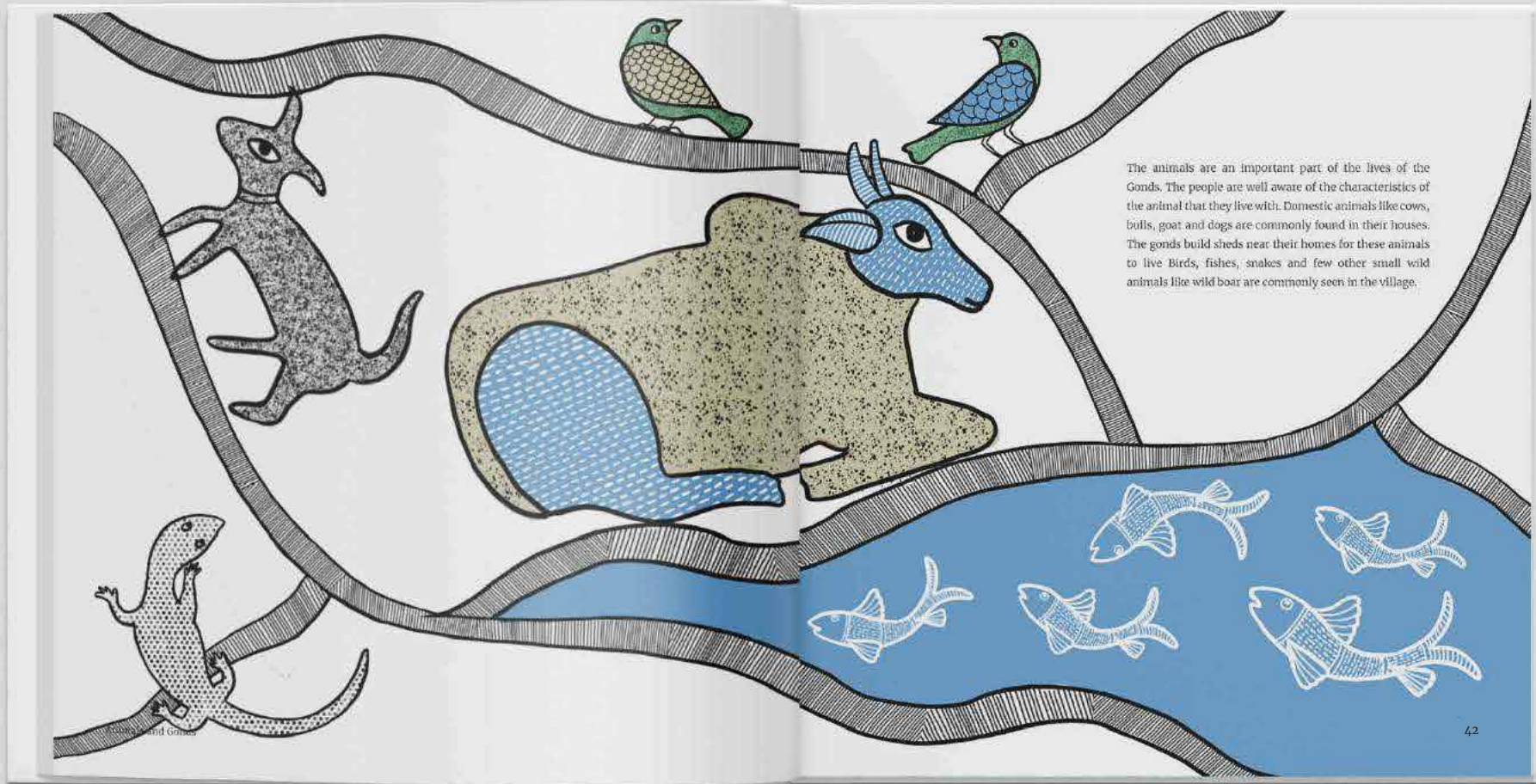


Gonds and the
Animals

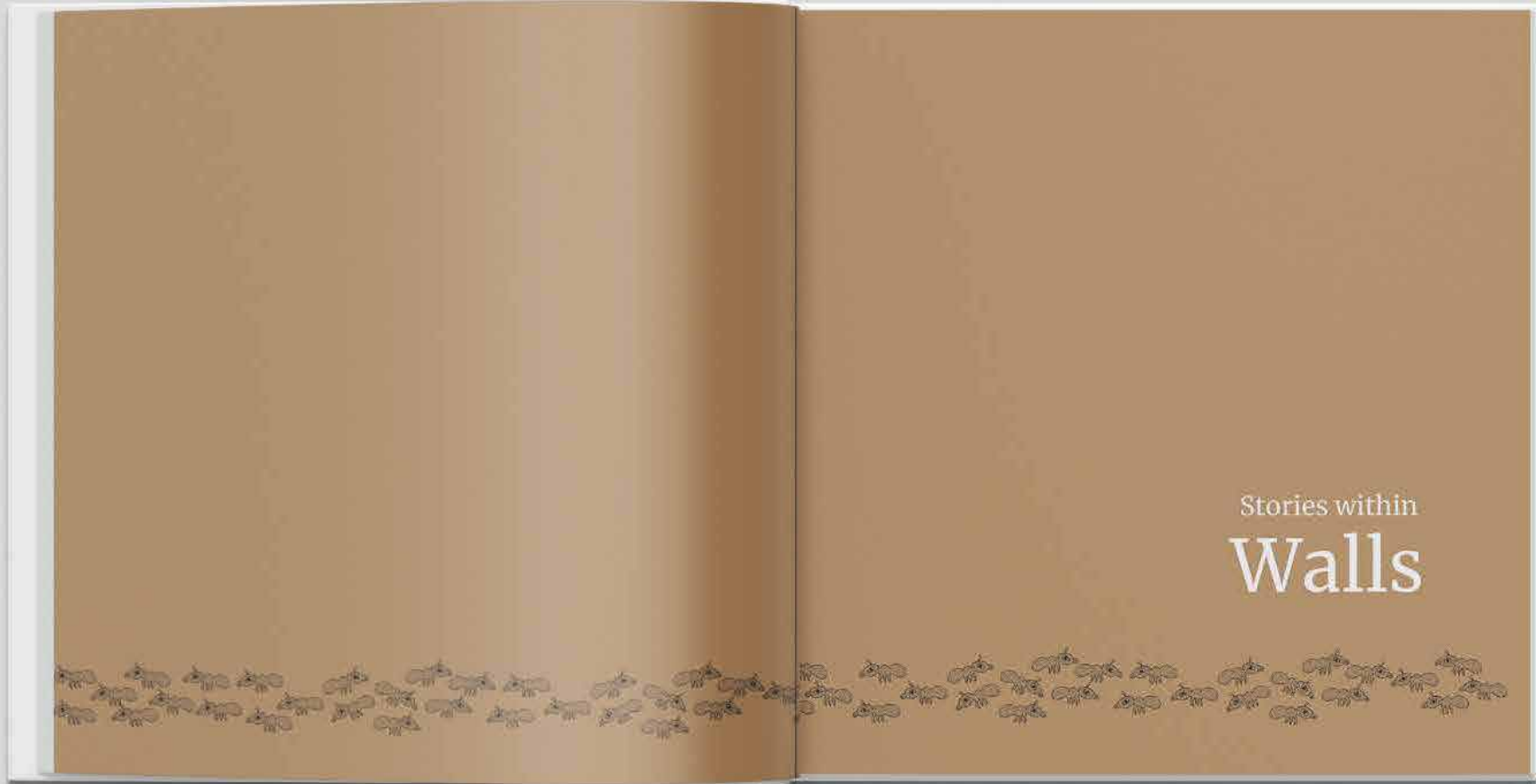
Close bond with Domestic Animals

Gonds share a close relationship with animals. The depiction of animals in their paintings mostly include their relationship with a particular animal, their beliefs and the characteristics of that animal. In the past, the gonds were in close contact with the wild animals. However with development, the forests has moved away from the village and the gonds now share a close relationship with domestic animals. Many men and women could be seen grazing cattle in the village. These animals are an important part of their life and they feel comfortable sharing their spaces and living with them.





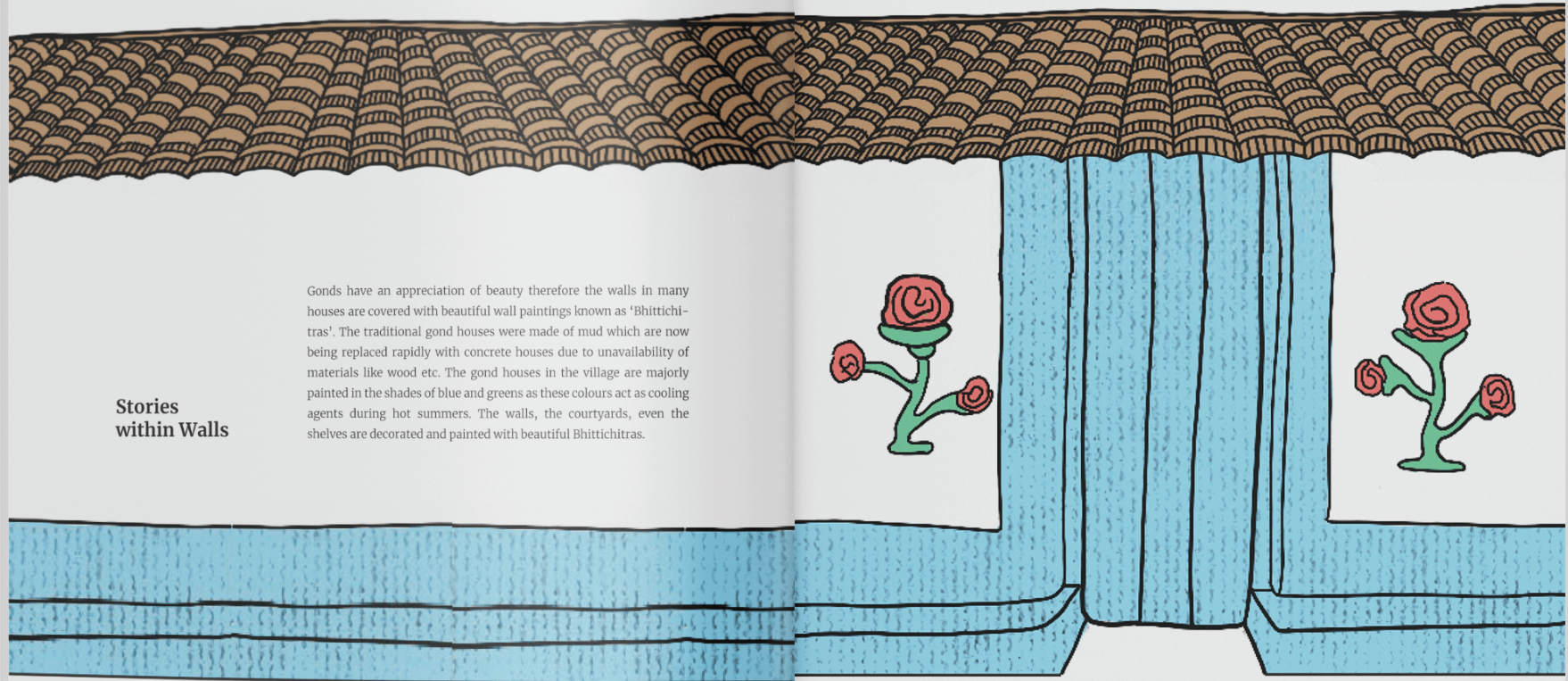
The animals are an important part of the lives of the Gonds. The people are well aware of the characteristics of the animal that they live with. Domestic animals like cows, bulls, goat and dogs are commonly found in their houses. The gonds build sheds near their homes for these animals to live. Birds, fishes, snakes and few other small wild animals like wild boar are commonly seen in the village.

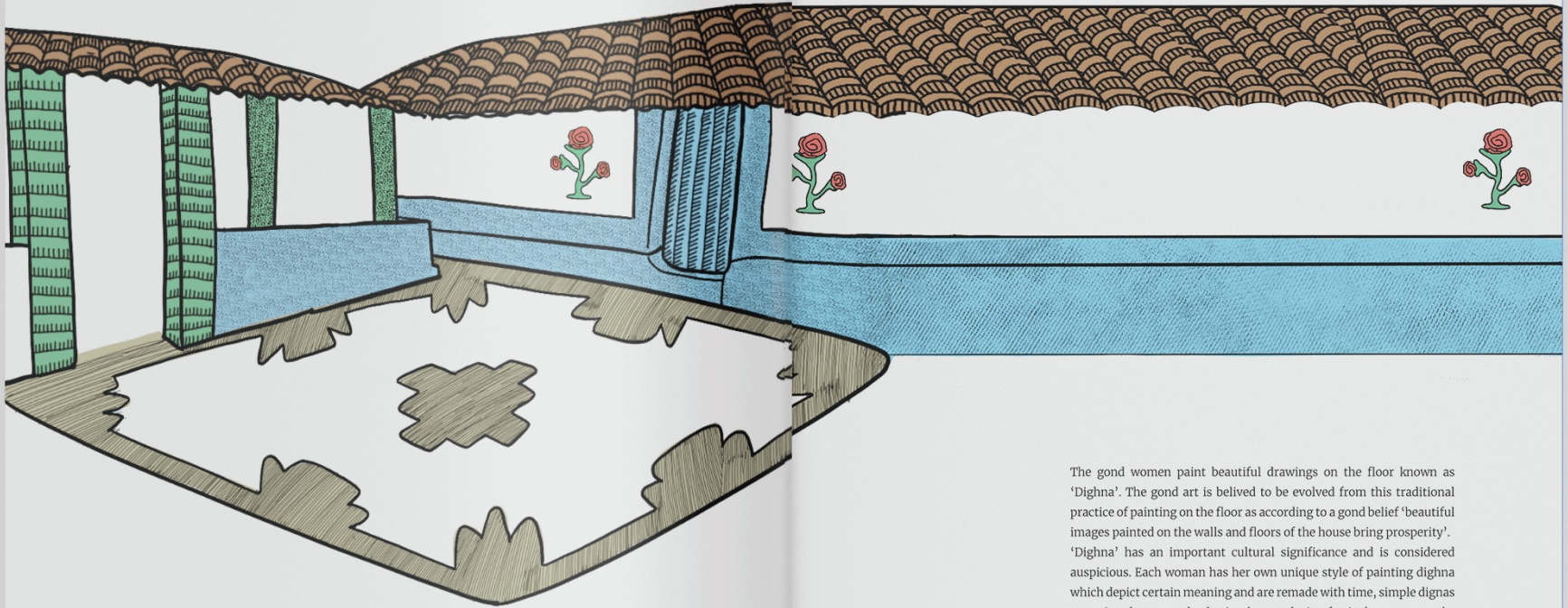


Stories within
Walls

Stories within Walls

Gonds have an appreciation of beauty therefore the walls in many houses are covered with beautiful wall paintings known as 'Bhittichitras'. The traditional gond houses were made of mud which are now being replaced rapidly with concrete houses due to unavailability of materials like wood etc. The gond houses in the village are majorly painted in the shades of blue and greens as these colours act as cooling agents during hot summers. The walls, the courtyards, even the shelves are decorated and painted with beautiful Bhittichitras.





Floor Dighna

The gond women paint beautiful drawings on the floor known as 'Dighna'. The gond art is believed to be evolved from this traditional practice of painting on the floor as according to a gond belief 'beautiful images painted on the walls and floors of the house bring prosperity'. 'Dighna' has an important cultural significance and is considered auspicious. Each woman has her own unique style of painting dighna which depict certain meaning and are remade with time, simple dighnas are painted on everyday basis whereas during festivals, women make detailed dighna drawings.

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Gond Art



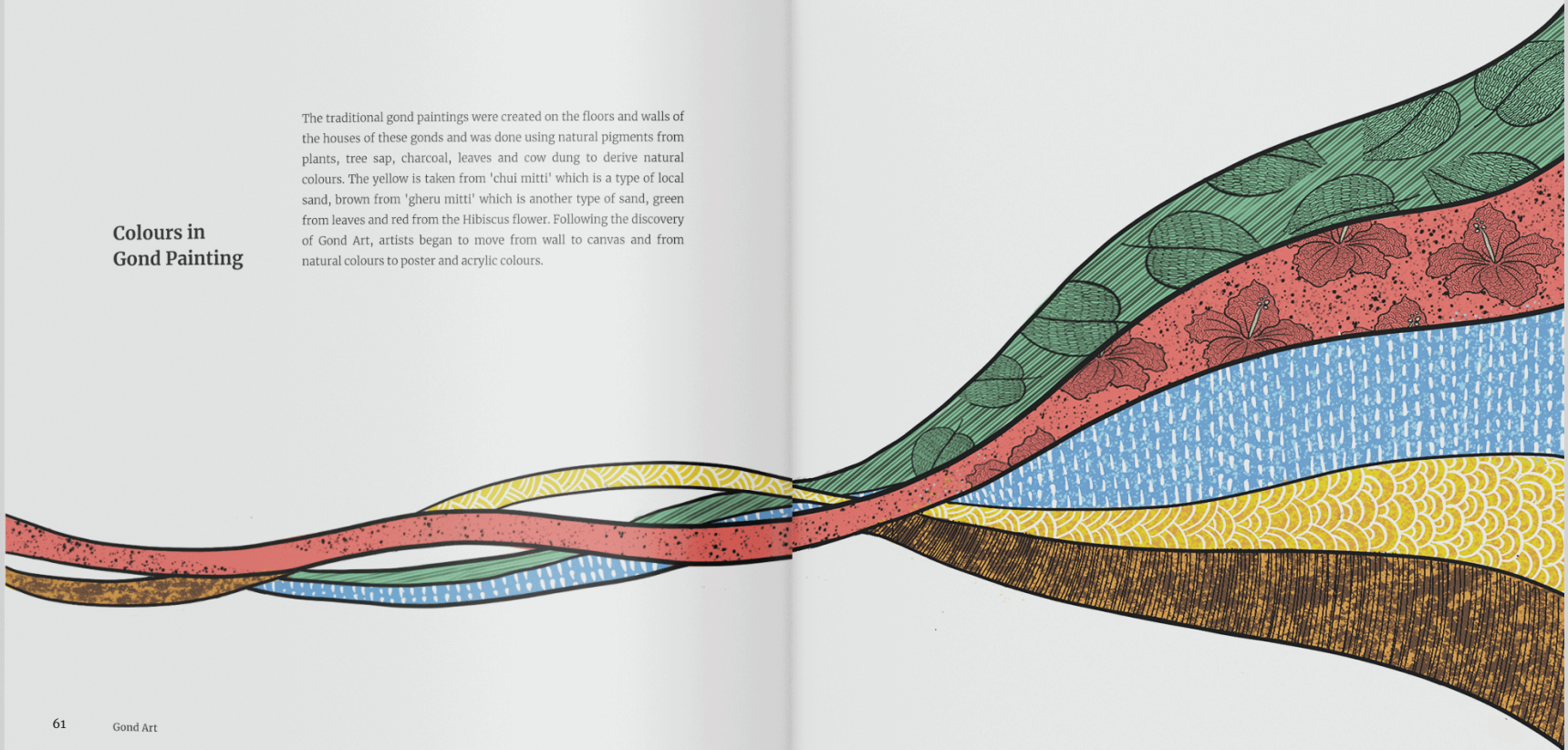
Gond Art

The gond paintings reflect the beliefs and stories of gonds. The gonds are tended more towards visual narratives than verbal and writing. Most of them express themselves through the medium of art which has given birth to one of the most vibrant visual traditions of India known as Gond Art. According to the ancient gond belief, beautiful images brings good luck. Hence gond create paintings that use vibrant colours and intricate patterns called motifs. These patterns are repetitive in nature and create a sense of movement in the paintings. In most of the contemporary paintings, large sections are created in black and white creating the necessary contrasts to the eye.

However this approach is very different to the traditional art where use of colours was maximum. Gond paintings are a reflection of man's close connection with his natural surroundings. However, while a majority of Gond paintings do take inspiration from nature, it isn't the only source of inspiration. Gond paintings can also take inspiration from myths and legends of India or alternatively, they may also showcase images from the daily lives of the tribe. It can also showcase abstract concepts like emotions, dreams and imagination. The use of symbolism in the subjects is what makes the art unique and thoughtful where the elements of the theme are imagined to be that of animals and the characteristic of each animal is compared to that of the subject.

Colours in Gond Painting

The traditional gond paintings were created on the floors and walls of the houses of these gonds and was done using natural pigments from plants, tree sap, charcoal, leaves and cow dung to derive natural colours. The yellow is taken from 'chui mitti' which is a type of local sand, brown from 'gheru mitti' which is another type of sand, green from leaves and red from the Hibiscus flower. Following the discovery of Gond Art, artists began to move from wall to canvas and from natural colours to poster and acrylic colours.



What Gond Art is like today

The descendants of the Gond Tribe have taken the art to paper and canvas today, making them beautiful vibrant paintings come into the limelight, Art connoisseurs from across the country buy these paintings and bring life to their art walls in their homes and in the Museums. The Elements of Gond Art Paintings still remain the same, with artists trying to cover the aspects of lifestyle of a typical Gond Tribal family. Today, Gond art is recognised as one of the most popular and rather unusual forms of Tribal Art, making its way into Tribal handicrafts of India that have high artistic value.

The bright and cheerful depiction of the Gond themes in paintings make them interesting pieces of Art. However, the colours used by modern day Gond artists are synthesized with chemicals to bring more variety to the paintings and also owing to the unavailability of natural colours today. The Gond Artists with relevant skills are approached to paint the murals/large painting scrolls from different cities of India. However many still rely on farming and other jobs to support their art supplies and continue painting.



7. Conclusion

Problem statement was to bring forth the art and culture of the Gonds of Patangarh for which the proposed solution played a major role in creating a path for further development. The design in my opinion succeeds in providing information about the life and art of these gonds through their style of painting. The purpose was to increase the reach of these artists to a wider audience in cities who can read about these tribes as well as understand their style of painting through the gond illustrations which I tried to achieve through the publication.

8. Future Scope

Due to certain covid related restrictions, the interactions with the village people and artists was very limited which in my opinion would have provided more insights and understanding of their culture and would have made the publication a lot more interesting. Another major area that could be worked upon is the content writing of the publication as it can be made more interesting through words.

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