

Design Resource

## Saura Painting - Raghurajpur, Orissa

Mural Painting Art

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

Aakash Sharma

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/saura-painting-rahurajpur-orissa>

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## Introduction

Orissa is an enhanced cultural city and is rich in the tribal culture. Of which Saura is one of the most popular tribes in the country with some attractive murals and paintings, this art is prominent on the walls of this tribal group. This form of art is frequently found in Raghurajpur Rayagada, Gajapati and Koraput districts of Orissa. A study of their arts and painting traditions reveals the rich ancient tribal art idiom, which is still in vogue with popular appeal. The Sauras are particularly famous for rich variety of their paintings based on spiritual and ceremonial themes. Their deity instructions great religious dedication from the tribal people. Sauras establish a very significant and ancient tribe of our country. Each Ideal contains various symbols and signs to convey special meaning for which it is meant. The pictograms are categorized into different sections as per their meaning and purpose. These paintings convey great aesthetic sense even the painting activities are getting commercialized now a days. Specially, the Lanjia Sauras continue the old artistic diction in its original form. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the various aspects of icons with special reference to its iconology, iconography and painting tradition of the Sauras of Orissa.

The Sauras are prevalent in Orissa and are found in nearly all the districts. However, their main attentiveness, we find in Ganjam, Gajapati and Koraput districts. They are called by various names like Sabara, Saur, Sora and Saura etc. At present they are found in Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. In the North-East States like Assam and Tripura, they have quite sizable population. The term Saura has been derived from two words namely Sagories means the Scythian words for axe and Saba Raye meaning Sanskrit term for carrying a dead body. Their language is an uncultivated one without any standardization. It varies between individual to individual and region to region. In fact it belongs to Austric family of languages to which Mundari is allocated. According to the sources, "Sauras who give the impression of being rather matter of fact and prosaic are surprisingly picturesque and metaphorical in their speech."

The census reports show that the Saura population is growing rapidly with about 6.26 per cent of the total tribal people of the state and on the basis of their mathematical strength they occupy 3rd position among the 62 tribes. The sex ratio comes to 1030 females per 1000 males. They are academically and socially reversing. From their presence, they resemble the Pre-Dravidian tribes. They have long heads, flat noses with prolonged alae. The brow ridges are prominent and there is unhappiness at the root of the muzzle. Facial prognathous is vivid. Their hair is wavy and curly. Some have plain hair as well. The skin color is brown to dark brown but fair complexioned are also not rare. They are not muscularly built like the Kondhas. The noteworthy feature is that they are very competent in climbing, running and walking on hills. From their appearance they appear PreDravidian. Their dress consists of loin cloth of about 6 feet long and about two inches in breadth. It is plain and at times we find decorated with red tarsals at the border. This is tied around the hip which hangs down into two strips, the one in the rear being longer. Often they wear single necklace of beads. The Saura women put a waist cloth with grey limitations that reaches up the knees.

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The skirt is usually 3 feet long and about 2 feet broad. In winter season, she covers the upper part with additional piece of cloth. The cloth is knitted by the Dombas. At present mill made and ready-to-wear dresses are being used. The women do not put heavy decoration. A few necklaces of beads, wooden plugs, spiral rings made of brass, bell metal or aluminium in the fingers and toes, little ring in the alae of nose and metal anklets are worn by them. These are generally bought from the local market. The Saura villages are mostly situated in the dense jungle area. Often it is seen hidden in the forest clad hills making it problematic to approach. A zigzag steep hill paths approach the village. In summer, they sleep on the verandah. The houses are built in the slopes or foot hills. They live in small concentration of about 200 households. In case of big village we find a series of hamlets scattered here and there. However, their villages do not conform to any specific type of payment pattern. Houses are built in row leaving a street in between. In many cases the houses are jumbled up and there are thin lanes and small openings to which the door of the houses are fixed. The houses are rectangular in shape and are fairly high. The plinth is very high in proportion to roof. The walls of the houses are made of stone and mud with a high balcony. In some cases houses are built of bamboo and wood plastered with mud. The walls are colored red with red earth. There is an elevated store to keep household items. The open space is used for husking rice. The hearth is found near a wall in one side. The fire goes on burning constantly. Near the kitchen the household utensils are kept. Earth ware vessels are used for cooking and storing. They sleep on mats made of palm leaf. Large number of baskets of various sizes are also found. Well to do men or headmen use cots.

Their economic life rests on shifting cultivation. Hunting and fishery which are some other sources of economy. They are in fact famous for adjoining cultivation. They are also unique due to absence of clan or sub-organization. Their marriage is a simple affair. They cremate their dead and their religion is very enchanting and elaborate. They worship their ancestors for peace, peacefulness and richness. The Sauras are best known for their wall paintings called 'saura art'. One can find a set of sketches elaborately drawn on their walls. The Sauras do not eat the newly harvested crop of the year without this ceremony. They first offer these to God and their forefathers.

We find graphic account of this tribe for ex; Sauras or Savaras in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The devotion of Savari to Rama in Ramayana is an epic folk lore of India. In the Mahabharata we find reference about Jara Savara who stabbed an arrow to Krishna and destroyed him. His body flowed into Mahodadhi, sea near Puri in the form of a wooden log from which the current Harmony of Jagannath is said to have been built. Prior to that, tradition says that Savara chief Viswavasas was worshipping Nilamadhava Visnu in the unknown blue hill of Orissa, Nilachal. Learnt archery observing the teaching technique of Guru Drona from a distance excelled Pandavas and Kauravas in archery. His devotion to Guru and his disadvantage for his Guru is unmatched in mythology and history. Such is the noble Savara tradition in Mahabharata. In the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela dated to 1st century B.C. Savaras of Orissa were called Vidyadhardhivasas. They constitute an important segment of his turbulent army which victoriously marched over South and North India. Asoka had no control over the Savara territory which was called Atavika Kingdom in the 3rd century B.C. Thus the Savara tribes of Orissa have a hoary glorious past.

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Raghurajpur a renowned place for innovative crafts in Orissa/ Odisha.



The outline is drawn, the colors are filled.



Jewelry boxes decorated with traditional designs.



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Artisan Manoranjan Pradhan explaining about his work.



Artisan involved in making the wooden frame.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

These paintings are conspicuous for their elegance, charm, aesthetic and ritualistic association. In fact these signs are their literature and viewpoint. The clear meaning becomes ostensible when the ministers or the picture men interpret.

Following are the tools and raw materials used for the process of saura painting:

- Gondh: Glue which is extracted by the tree.
- Hammer: A metal object controlled on a wooden handle used to hammer a nail.
- Beading Wood: Half an inch long straps of wood used for boarders.
- Nail: A metal object used to join beading wood on a plywood.
- Plywood: Layer of multiple wood stuck together which is used for painting.
- Seashell Powder: Finley crushed seashell powder.
- Fevicol: A glue used to develop the paint used for painting.
- Butter Paper: It is used to make a cone which holds the paint.
- Scissors: It is used to cut the butter paper cone.
- Pencil: A stationary used to draw in the board.
- Scale: A stationary used to measure the area of frame.
- Compass: A stationary used to draw circular images.
- Coconut Shell: It is used as a container to store paints.
- Brushes: Flat and round which are used to paint the frame.
- Acrylic Paint: Stationary used as an art medium.
- Ground White Stone: Natural white stone powder.

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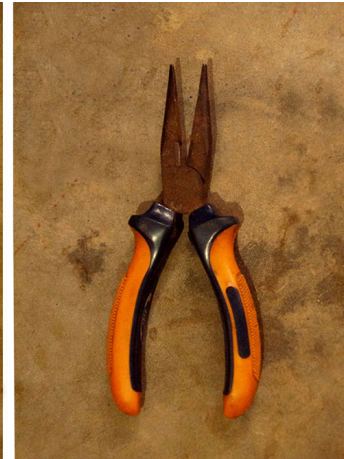
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Axel blade and cutting plier used for cutting materials.



Thinner and glue made in tamarind seed used to mixing with color.



Nail and frame hook used during frame making process.



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Different sizes of brushes used to apply color on the frame.



Oil painting color used for coloring frame.



Wooden stick used as border.



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## Making Process

Sauras painting make extensive use of symbolically pregnant that reflect the quotidian tasks of the Sauras. People, horses, elephants, sun, moon and the tree of life are periodic motifs in these paintings. These were originally painted on the walls of Saura's adobe huts. The paintings' backdrop is prepared from red or yellow ochre earth which is then painted over using brushes fashioned from tender bamboo shoots.

A plain wooden plank is taken on which accurate measurement is drawn and artesian cuts it accordingly with the help of hand saw. A beading wood of about half an inch is measured and cut for framing which is nailed with the help of a hammer. The paintings backdrop is prepared from red or yellow ochre earth or matt enamel paint which is then painted over using brushes and keeps for drying in an open area. Artesian use natural dyes and chromes derived from ground white stone, hued earth, and vermilion and mixtures of tamarind seed, flower and leaf extracts. Sea shell is crushed until it turns to gentle powder which is mixed with fevicol, gondh, water and acrylic paint. A cone is made with the help of butter paper in which artesian pours the paint, seals manually and cuts out the tip for the paint to flow easily. Once the paint is ready, the dried frames are line drawn with the help of pencil and other tools like scale, compass etc. after completing the drawing, artesian starts painting by applying gentle pressure on cone and moving the cone parallel to drawn line. This process required a lot of focus with sharp edges following with a consistency while compressing the cone. After every pencil lines are covered with the paint, artesian then starts to paint human figure in a form of geometrical shapes and abstract looking nature which involves plants, trees, animal and other living objects. After completing the painting, artesian takes a flat brush and paints the borders with the help of a black enamel paint. The paint takes about 24 hours to be completely dried. Artesian fixed a metal hook which is used to hand on the wall and packs the painting for shipping it to the customer.

The aesthetic beauty of tribal art is diverse from the development came into the contemporary visual Art situation especially in contemporary design, and tribal arts implications in the modern advertisement and relationship with the consumer. It is in tribal art where life and creativity are attached. The tribal arts have a unique compassion, as the tribal people possess an intense awareness very different from the established and developed society. Their minds are flexible and intense with myth, legends, snippets from epic, multitudinous gods born out of dream and fantasy.

Tribal art in India takes on different manifestations through varied medium such as Pottery, Painting, Metalwork, Dhokara art, Paper-art, Weaving and Designing of objects such as jewelry and toys. Often accent gods and legends are transformed into contemporary forms and familiar images. Fairs, festivals, and local deities play a vital role in these arts. But this aspect of tribal art is yet to be explored.

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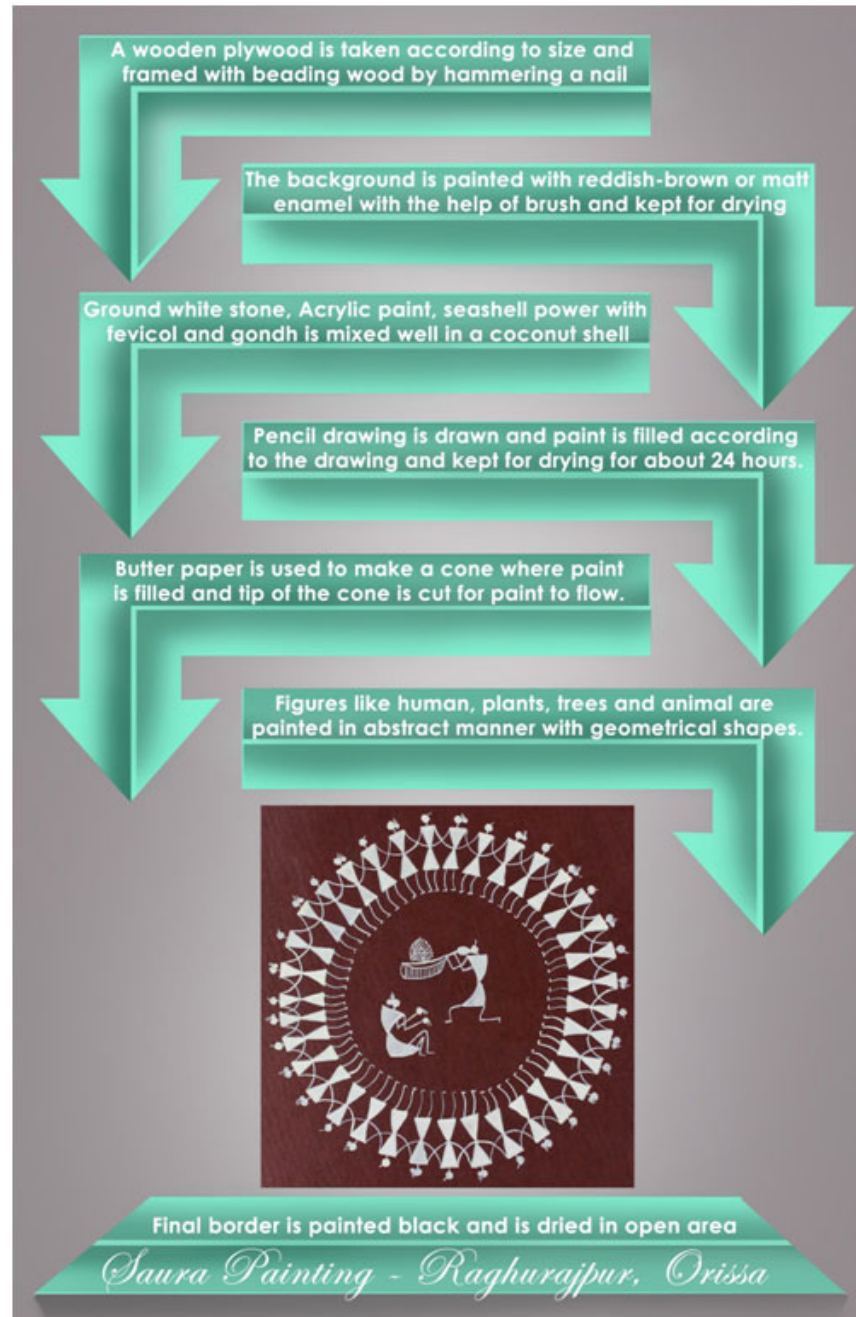
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Artisan cutting the plywood in to required size.



Artisan measuring the frame size.



Gluing the wooden piece to make the frame.



Sand paper is used to smoothen the surface.



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Flat black & brown color is applied to the frame.



Frames are ready to be painted.



Compass is being used by artisan to draw circle.



Sea shell power mixed with tamarind seed liquate.



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Paint prepaid with sea shell power is filled inside the cone.

Traditional design is being drawn on the frame.



Borders are decorated with traditional designs using the sea shell paint.



Finally completed frame kept for drying.



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## Products

Ikons are worshipped during special religious and cultural occasions such as child-birth, harvest, marriage and the construction of a new house. Ikons are not commissioned frequently and an existing one can be regularly used for ordinary rituals. The building of a new house however necessitates the commissioning of a Saura painting, which is painted in a dark corner inside the home where its creation is accompanied by the recital of a specific set of prayers. Today the Saura paintings have been succeeded by artists and paintings are often executed in non-traditional locales. Their diversity, detail and unique style have given saura paintings an 'in-vogue-appeal' and increasing popularity in recent years. The influence of markets and increasing awareness about the other's forms have led to both Saura and Warli paintings picking up details of technique and style from the other. They have also been popularized in recent times as an avenue for skill and job creation and have increasingly been used to decorate items like greeting cards, stationery, decorative wall hangings and interiors. The Saura paintings are made in various sized starting from 2 square feet to 8 square feet and even available in rectangular shapes. These magnificent products are available in wide range starting from 200 to 900 (Indian Rupees), all of which is been delivered to the customer directly as well as with the help of an agent.



Elaborate detailing work on frame inspired by old tradition.

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A collation of saura paintings.



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Saura painting beautifully done on handmade boxes that can be used to keep jewelry or to send invitation cards in them.



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## Video



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