

Acknowledgement, Aspiration and Creation.

Chirayu Kumar Sinha (India)

I was born and grew-up in the state of Chhatisgarh, India.

Terracotta Folk Art of India is too vast a subject and too ancient to say so. I am writing about the Terracotta Art of my State. Where I grew-up and has a direct influence on my work.

Chhatisgarh - situated in central India, has rich history but recent geography. The state arrived on the map of India and the world on November, 2000 with Raipur as its capital. The state is rich in minerals like Iron ore, Copper and Aluminum. That is why you find Steel, Aluminum and Cement Plants in abundance.

Chhatisgarh has a vivid variety of fascinating handicrafts. Tribal Arts depict several expressions and emotions and also portray the socio-cultural ambience of the people of the state. Since 32% of the population is Tribals; the rich history of Tribal Art is seen in all walks of life. Be it child-birth, marriage or any other occasion of wish fulfillment, they celebrate by making Terracotta items. They are found in almost all homes. Motifs range from Idols to animal and bird forms. Most popular motif is the Horse as it is considered very auspicious.

The point of genesis of many of Chhatisgarh's artistic expression is the Mother Earth itself.

While its fertile soil yields forests of wood, from its depth are extracted rich ores of metal. The very soil itself is pliant enough to be moulded into pleasing three dimensional forms- giving rise to Terracotta Pottery. The crafted objects are attributed with meaning deeper than expressed through their physical form. Tradition extends to all handicrafts created by the people of this state.

Potters collect clay from river-banks, lakes or other water bodies, breaking it into smaller lumps; soaking and kneading it with sand and animal dung. Some also mix rice husk. Some Tribals mix Red and Black clay mixture to shape various forms. The Black clay in particular is used for fashioning pots and figures as it has the malleability to assume any form.

The pieces are baked by Pit-firing as it has been done through centuries. Easy availability of wood from the forests makes the process all too easy.

The potters still follow ancient processes for making Votive Terracotta. Votive Terracotta is representative of their ritualistic aspect of the Tribal's life, symbolizing their fears and aspirations.

Shaped and moulded, both by hand or potters wheel, the animal and bird figures represent the ethos of ancient cultural stages of human life. The potters adhere strictly to the forms and motifs associated with each tribe.

There is a unique custom among all potters- to make life-size items, some even gigantic. Figures of characters related to the story of Lord Krishna. Once the offering of the Votive Terracotta is made, the figures are affixed with wheels. According to the custom in the region, it is compulsory for the children to play with them. When these idols break, they are stored on the roof-tops. This is considered very auspicious as these motifs keep the spirits away.

The glorious past is also seen in the Terracotta Temples. Brilliant and detailed, these Temples have withstood the ravages of time.

The Terracotta Art of the tribal regions may appear to be crude and simple, but forms created and passed-on from generation to generation by potters are the result of the merging of many needs-

socio-religious, functional and carefully conceived to embody utility, comfort, self-expression and spiritual fulfillment.

Creation:

Since childhood, I have watched Tribal women use Jewellery and accessories to add as adornments on their body. These can be anything found in the forests (Eg. Flowers,) or as manufactured items of the modern world are becoming available to them, you see the wide variety of colorful accessories. When ever , we see these girls, we call them...”Chhamiya.” Commenting...’Why you are dressed like a Chhamiya?

They have a vibrant beauty, hard to explain. My Portraits are embodiment of everything Tribal. The features, the Jewellery and accessories... all making the viewer feel., how much has changed in the globalised world.

But one thing remains constant... A women’s desire to dress-up to look the most beautiful. An aesthetic I see will never change.



