

ORISSAN HANDICRAFTS - TIMELESS TRADITION

Orissan craftsmanship is unique for its technical perfection and artistic excellence. The Orissan handicrafts, dominated by religious themes, are a fascinating combination of beauty, grace and utility. The creations are gorgeously alive, blending the modern with the traditional and the material range from grass to metal.

The workmanship and skills of Oriya artists are famous across the world. Significantly, most handicrafts in the state have their roots in the rituals and traditions of the famed Lord Jagannath of Puri. Brass work, silver filigree work, stone carving, applique work and pattachitra are all illustrations of artistic excellence.

Broadly based on textile, stone, metal, Orissan handicrafts also based on a variety of paintings including the age old mural paintings. The silk and cotton sarees of Orissa have worldwide fame. The striking feature of Orissa textile is the "Ikat"- an intricate process of tie and dye in silk and golden thread. Leading textile types include the Passapali (chess board) design, the double ikat design of Sambalpur and the gold embroidered ones from Sonepur. The Bomkai ikats, whose motifs are drawn from the Shakti cult are also in great demand. Valued at anything between Rs. three thousand to about Rs. one lakh, most of these items are acclaimed for their intricate designs and artistic excellence.

The applique market of Pipili, a small town near Puri, preserves and practices a tradition dating back to over one thousand years. Applique, a French word, is a technique of superimposing patches of coloured fabrics on a basic fabric. Applique items like Chhati (big umbrella), Chanduas (canopies) and Tarasa (a heart shaped fan) are closely associated with temple rituals. Conventionally five basic colors red, black, yellow, green and white were used, but with the time and demand more colors have been added. Items like garden umbrellas, shoulder bags, ladies hand bag, wall hangings, lamp shades etc. have been runaway hits in both the domestic and the international markets.

The queen of Orissa's handicraft is the silver filigree work locally called "tarakasi". Unique to Cuttack city and nearby areas, the process involves making of fine strands of silver wire which are then shaped into various designs. The finished items include ladies ornaments, fancy items, bangles, vermilion container etc. Filigree products comprise an important export item of the state.

Dhokra (brass) and bell metal industry has also flourished in the State and engages quite a few artisans. Dhokra casting is essentially a folk craft, practiced by an aboriginal caste known as Sithulias and is limited to few pockets in Keonjhar and Mayurbhanja districts. The lost wax process is still followed. The raw material used is not of pure brass but an alloy of copper, zinc and other scrap metals to give it typical antique look. Beautiful decorative, pieces are made even as the folk design is kept intact.

The raw materials used for bell metal industries are an alloy of copper and tin. The products can be categorized into three groups i.e. items produced through process of beating, those by casting and residual flexible brass items like snake, fish etc. This craft is practiced by the Kansari community. Bell metal is used for making temple bells, gongs, manjira, ankle bells beside utensils and other fancy items.

Stone carving art is perhaps the most ancient, as is evident from the 2200 years old elephant sculpture of Dhauli. These craftsmen have kept the art alive and still use their chisel and hammers to bring stone blocks to life in an aesthetic manner. The stones used are generally the khandolites and granites for detailed delicate carvings. The modern decorative pieces depict images from the temples and other Buddhist sculptures. The most famous of all is the Sun temple wheel.

Orissa is proud of its ancient painting tradition. Tribal mural painting is a centuries-old tradition and can be seen on the mud walls of tribal hamlets. The Saura and Juanga paintings have caught the attention of art lovers and slowly found their way to the international market. Another form of painting is the famous Pattachitra of Raghurajpur. This art form is generally used for religious painting and revolves around religious rituals. Traditionally practiced by maharanas, the art is practiced on a hard surface, prepared by treating cloth with lacquer. Lately Raghurajpur has been declared as the ethnic village by Government of India for the promotion of this art.

There are many other forms of crafts like horn work, lacquer work and Papier Mache that have been languishing for want of patronage and fund. Another neglected art is the making of combs by tribal communities. Out of the living tribes in the state 10 to 15 tribal communities know the art of comb making. The saying goes, 'those who don't make combs cannot buy them. They vary from community to community according to the materials used and the shape and size.

Courtesy Source : Orissa Guide March, 2006

CULTURE

Orissa unfolds a panorama of refined forms of art crafts. Its music and dance has been flourishing for ages and has lured many. The unique dance forms like Odissi and Chhau are world famous with several internationally renowned exponents, while Odissi music is charming, colourful and encompasses various streams. A number of folk traditions also lend a captivating presence.

The very best of Indian Classical Dance comes alive against the awe-inspiring backdrop of the Sun Temple at the Konark Dance Festival held on December 1-5, every year.

The school of Pattachitra, traditional paintings of Orissa, has been kept alive at the artist's village of Raghurajpur, just outside of Puri, where over 200 families practice the art from family sketch books handed down from generation to generation.

Orissa has a tradition of exquisite handicrafts. Silver filigree work of Cuttack, horn work of Cuttack and Parlakhemundi and the famous applique work of Pipili are known for their exclusive styles.

Brass and bell metal ware, particularly vases and candle stands are beautiful as well as durable. The black stone bowls and plates of Nilagiri and Khiching and multi-coloured stone statues present impressive facets of craftsmanship. Silk and cotton handloom products, especially saris, are simply bewitching. The Sambalpuri Saris and Maniabandhi patas are matchless in their texture and designs.

Odissi Music, Odissi Dance performing Arts - variety in form and style

Animal Mask, Baunsa Rani, Chaiti Ghoda, Changu Nata, Chhau, Dalkhai, Danda Nata, Dasakathia, Dhanu Jatra, Ghanta patua, Ghoomra, Jhoomar, Karma, Kathinacha, Kela Keluni, Krishna Leela, Medha Nacha, Naga Dance, Palka Nrutya, Pala, Puppet Dance, Rama Leela, Ranappa, Samprada etc.