

From Canvas to Couture: Translating Gond and Baiga Tribal Paintings into Contemporary Garment Collections with Marketing Perspective

Dr. Vishakha Shrivastava¹, Dr. Priya K. Dubey²

¹Professor, SoAP&D, SAGE University, Bhopal, India

²Professor, SOM, SAGE University, Bhopal, India

Abstract: This paper explores the transformation of Gond and Baiga tribal art traditions into contemporary garment collections, emphasizing both cultural preservation and strategic marketing. Originating from the tribes of central India, Gond and Baiga art are deeply rooted in animistic beliefs, nature worship, and spiritual storytelling. Gond art is distinguished by its intricate dot-line infill and stylized depictions of animals and deities, while Baiga art centers around body tattoos and symbolic motifs that reflect ritual and identity. With evolving mediums—from mud walls to canvas, textiles, and digital design—these visual languages have found new relevance in fashion. Designers now adapt tribal motifs through embroidery, digital printing, and sustainable materials, crafting garments that retain heritage while meeting modern aesthetic sensibilities. The paper highlights prominent artists such as Jangarh Singh Shyam, Bhajju Shyam, and Jodhaiya Bai Baiga, whose work bridges tribal narratives with global art forums. From a marketing perspective, the research identifies how tribal-inspired fashion lines build authentic brand identities, engage ethical and luxury-conscious consumers, and use channels like influencer marketing and experiential campaigns. While these innovations promote cultural revival and economic empowerment, they also raise questions about ethical representation, scalability, and the need for fair artisan collaborations. By integrating art history, fashion innovation, and marketing strategy, this study underscores how Gond and Baiga paintings can evolve from static canvases into dynamic couture—representing a fusion of identity, ecology, and storytelling.

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I. GOND TRIBAL ART

Practiced by the Gond tribe of central India, especially Madhya Pradesh, Gond art has ancient roots tracing back to prehistoric cave paintings. Deeply spiritual and nature-centric, it features animals, trees, folklore, and deities like Bada Dev. The belief that “viewing a good image brings good fortune” drives its creation. Traditionally painted on walls and floors during festivals and rituals to invoke good fortune. Deeply tied to animistic beliefs, mythology, and oral story telling. The Jangarh Kalam style, pioneered by Jangarh Singh Shyam, transitioned Gond art to canvas

and global galleries. Characterized by intricate patterns, dots, and lines that create movement and texture. Artists often use vibrant colors and stylized forms. Traditionally painted on mud walls using natural pigments; now adapted to canvas, paper, textiles, and even digital formats. Evolution: Pioneered into contemporary art spaces by Jangarh Singh Shyam, Gond art has gained global recognition while retaining its storytelling essence. Bhajju Shyam Author of London Jungle Book; Padma Shri awardee; blends urban themes with tribal motifs. Durga Bai Vyam Known for intricate paddy seed motifs; co-author of “The Night Life of Trees”.

II. BAIGA TRIBAL ART

The Baiga tribe, primarily from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, views art as a divine gift from Goddess Mavai, who taught them to use natural materials like clay and leaves. Reflect their animistic beliefs and deep reverence for nature. Common motifs include animals, birds, plants, and ancestral spirits. Arts is often created during festivals, healing ceremonies, and daily chores. Believed to be taught by Goddess Mavai, using natural materials like clay, leaves, and sap. Includes tattoo art (Godna), wall murals, and symbolic body markings. Includes body tattoos, wall paintings, and ritual art. Tattoos are symbolic and often tell personal or spiritual stories. Natural pigments from roots, leaves, and minerals. Art is often created during festivals, rituals, and daily chores [6].

Baiga art is not just decorative—it's a medium of spiritual expression, identity, and environmental awareness. Jodhaiya Bai Baiga Padma Shri awardee; transitioned from laborer to internationally recognized artist; paints Baiga mythology and nature. Ashish Kachhwaha Painter who documents Baiga tattoo patterns and lifestyle; co-founder of Mudra collective. Manoj Dwivedi Wood sculptor inspired by Baiga rituals; collaborates with Ashish on cultural exhibitions.

III. DIFFERENCE

Gond art often anthropomorphizes animals—tigers playing instruments, birds dancing, etc.—to reflect tribal cosmology.

Baiga: Freehand engraving, symbolic repetition, earthy tones. Intricate dot-line infill, vibrant colors, layered storytelling. Baiga motifs are closely linked to tattoo symbolism, representing protection, identity, and spiritual passage

IV. CURRENT VISIBILITY IN MAINSTREAM DESIGN

Fashion: Designers like Rahul Mishra incorporate Gond motifs into couture collections, blending tribal storytelling with wearable art.

Interior Design: Workshops like MANIT Bhopal's Gond Interior Design Lab teach students to integrate tribal folklore into spatial design.

Public Art: Murals, installations, and exhibitions in urban spaces showcase tribal aesthetics with contemporary themes like climate change and migration.

Digital & Print Media: Gond and Baiga art feature in children's books, branding, and textile prints, often used to promote eco-conscious and ethical design.

V. TRADITIONAL TOOLS

Gond: Brushes made from twigs or bamboo; pigments from charcoal, soil, leaves, cow dung [1].

Baiga: Clay, turmeric, charcoal, sap from Kohla trees; brushes from twigs or neem branches [1].

VI. STYLISTIC FEATURES

Modern Adaptations

- Use of acrylics, canvas, and digital media while retaining traditional motifs.
- Artists like Bhajju Shyam and Jodhaiya Bai Baiga have brought these styles to international platforms

Gond and baiga tribal paintings into contemporary garment collections

VII. CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Gond and Baiga art have received contemporary relevance, tribal art has gained global interest because of environmental awareness and sustainability of the arts. Art forms which follow sustainability and environmental friendliness reflect the modern age problem of biodiversity and its preservation. Some artists particularly explore issues like climate change and deforestation through their art work, this shows their adaptability to contemporary issues. These unique artistic expressions are being preserved and promoted by several NGOs, governmental organizations, and online platforms. These programs significantly contribute to the support of regional artist; they provide a platform for these Tribal artists to increase their visibility and reach a larger audience.



Figure 1: Forest Life in Bhil by Kamlesh Parmar Gond Artist Mahesh Shyam

Marketing Perspective: From Tribal Canvas to Fashion Couture

VIII. BRAND IDENTITY & STORYTELLING

It starts from Cultural Narrative Gond and Baiga art offer rich storytelling rooted in nature, mythology, and ritual. Fashion brands can leverage this to build authentic brand narratives that emotionally connect with consumers and ends into Visual Differentiation: The intricate dot-line patterns of Gond and symbolic motifs of Baiga tattoos create distinctive visual identities for garments, helping brands stand out in a saturated market.

Consumer Segmentation

- Ethical Fashion Enthusiasts: Eco-conscious buyers are drawn to garments that reflect sustainability and cultural preservation.
- Luxury Buyers: Couture collections inspired by tribal art can appeal to high-end consumers seeking exclusive, handcrafted pieces.
- Diaspora & Cultural Patrons: Indian diaspora and art lovers may value garments that reflect indigenous heritage.

Marketing Channels & Strategies

- Collaborations: Partnering with tribal artisans or NGOs adds credibility and supports community empowerment.
- Influencer Marketing: Fashion influencers can showcase tribal-inspired garments, emphasizing their cultural and ethical value.
- Experiential Campaigns: Pop-up exhibitions, fashion shows, and storytelling videos can immerse consumers in the tribal art journey.

- Digital Platforms: E-commerce sites and social media can highlight the artisan's story, process videos, and behind-the-scenes content.

Product Positioning

- Limited Editions: Positioning garments as limited-edition art pieces enhances perceived value.
- Sustainable Luxury: Emphasizing eco-friendly dyes, handcraftsmanship, and fair-trade practices align with global sustainability trends.
- Cultural Revival: Framing collections as part of a movement to revive endangered art forms adds emotional depth.

Challenges & Ethical Considerations

Cultural Appropriation vs Appreciation: Brands must ensure respectful representation and fair compensation to artisans. Maintaining the integrity of tribal motifs while adapting them for fashion requires sensitive design translation. Handcrafted processes may limit mass production, requiring premium pricing and niche targeting.



Figure 2: Final Product

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