CHAPTER III

Technique of Warli Paintings
The traditional drawings in Warli paintings are the Cauks. The most significant Mother Goddess (Palaghat) is shown in the Cauk. Other characters in the traditional painting are Pancha Sirya Dev, the five headed god and the headless warrior, who is drawn either in standing position or riding a horse. Pancha Sirya Dev is the archaic symbol of the cosmic cycle of life and death (Gupta, 2008). Symbolic communication has been one of the important criteria for these paintings. Whether on an outer wall of a house or a temple or in the inner parts of a dwelling or place of worship, there has been an underlying purpose of symbolic communication. Symbolism in art acts as a standardized or stylized expression of various concepts by which these symbols crystallize into a set shape or instantly in recognizable form. The prominence of symbolism connected with fertility, creation and nature. The forces of supernatural powers are also depicted with the symbols which is a way of appealing these powers.

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Iconic and non-iconic forms and rituals are designed to accompany worship. Thus the symbols in painted forms arise inevitably as a means of communication.

The material traditionally used in these paintings is rice powder, which supposedly processes magical power, and it is believed that this can scare away the evil spirits. Many of the drawings are without an image, figure or narration but have consistent and continuous geometry. The visual effect of these symbolic shapes is at one with their efficiency and irregular strokes of brush or stick, firmness of style, uneven, non rhythmic or repetitive forms are not deformities but the distinctive traits of this art. Thoughts, surface, tools and pigments are characteristic feature of the paintings.

For the painting, the wall was prepared with cow dung; a rectangular part of the wall was given a coating of geru (red mud). When this had dried up, a brownish red surface was created.

To prepare the surface they crouch around the rice hole sifting the flour by shaking it in a winnowing pan and allowing the husk to fall on the floor. The finer portion was collected in a wicker basket. Small amounts of this were mixed with water in a Vati (metal cup). The colours used by Warlis are not permanent but the paintings are made again and again on different

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occasions. Colours of the Warli painting background are Henna, indigo, ochre, black, earthy mud, brick red and white made of rice paste to paint, occasionally yellow and red dots accompany white colour. They use a bamboo stick chewed at one end to make it as flexible as paintbrush. They also use thin reed like pens for painting made up of sticks broken from Baharu tree. With the help of these pens or brushes and rice paste they start painting on the surface created before.

i) **Dev Cauk (Chowk)**

The square painting made on the wall is known as *Dev Cauk* (chowk). Cauk basically means square. It is made with an outline of a square drawn on the inside of the house wall. They start filling up the squarish frame towards inside from these four lines with geometrical strips. In the corners, figures
of moon, sun, comb and ladder is drawn with Tarpa (a wind musical instrument) and Ghangli (a string instrument).^4

ii) Lagna Cauk

Like Dev Cauk, there is another painting known as Lagna Cauk. In this painting a decorative square is drawn and in its centre the Suhasinis draw a horse on which the bride, groom and groom’s sister is shown sitting. Around the horse are the dancers, musicians and Dhavelris (women who perform wedding).

iii) Kanna

There is another squarish painting, known as Kanna the symbol of virginity. This painting is drawn only in the bride’s house. A multiplication sign is prominent in the square. The figure is then coated with yellow (turmeric) powder, red (Kunku) powder

and orange (shendur) powder to make it colourful and attractive⁵.

**iv) Muthi**

The Warli women perform the ritual of *Muthi* painting, when the new rice is brought home from the field. Rice grains are finely powdered and mixed with water to make this paste and imprint their fist prints on the front walls of the house, granaries, inner walls of the kitchen, ploughs, on baskets which are used for keeping *Bhakari* (bread)⁶. *Muthi*, means fists are repetitive imprints of fists are made to bring home fistful of grains. Multiplicity of such fist prints is supposed to ensure abundance of food in

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the home and abundant yield in the field. (Bokare, 1995:217)

X) Tarpa

One of the outstanding characteristic of Warlis is their love for music, dance and liquor. They dance on the tune of the Tarpa (a wind musical instrument) for centuries. The Tarpa is a long portruding, phallic shape instrument prepare by Warlis themselves and its size varies from one to six feet.

According to Yashodhara Dalmia’s study entitled the The Painted World Of Warlis (1998) the Tarpa dance is performed by the youngsters and the elderly people just watch it. The dancers never turn their back to the Tarpa. Tarpa is considered to be an instrument given to the Warlis by Narandeva itself. Another interesting aspect of the Tarpa dance is its movement pattern which is anti-clock in nature. The Warlis believe the

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cosmic forces move in an anti clock direction. One of the important themes of Warli painting is the famous tarpa Dance Painting. The movement in Tarpa dance is very quick and full of excitement.8

![Figure 53 Tarpa Dance Painting of Diwali Night](image)

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On Diwali, the festival of lights, as the lamps are lit and firecrackers go off, the Tarpa, the Warli pipe is used to summon young couples of the village to dance in a ring. It is a merry-go-round of light and sound and festivity.
