Chapter - 5
Aesthetic based Folk Paintings

Plate No.145
Introduction:

‘Folk art bears witness to power of informal learning. They acquire their skills for the most part informally from others, and with those skills they acquire deeply felt values, stands for excellence and resonant sense of who they are and where they are. What better way to convey to children, the cultural nature of art and the rich artistic traditions of their own community through living practitioners through folk artists themselves.

If the community is a living museum, the professional folk artist is its curator, and as such has an important role to play in identifying and interpreting the folk culture of an area and in working with educators to integrate the indigenous cultural resources of the community in to the curriculum.’
Folk art, predominantly functional or utilitarian, visual art created by hand (or with limited mechanical facilities) for use by the maker or a small circumscribed group and containing an element of retention the prolonged survival of tradition.

Folk art is creation of expression of human struggle towards civilization within particular environment through the production of useful but aesthetic objects and buildings.

Andhra Pradesh had always been known as the land that portrayed cultural and traditional vibrancy through its conventional arts & crafts. The folk and tribal art of Andhra too, are very ethnic and simple and yet colorful enough to speak volumes of rich heritage. The Nirmal Painting tradition of Andhra Pradesh is famous in all the Indian folk art traditions.1,2

NIRMAL CRAFTS: HISTORY

‘Main content found in Nirmal town of Adilabad district in Andhra Pradesh, “Nirmal arts” is acknowledged all across the state, the community of craftsman called ”Nakash” live here, and are engaged in Nirmal Arts, the pictures from Hindu epics like Ramayana & Mahabharata painted.

Andhra Pradesh is a rich land; rich with wide array of fascinating art forms, each art is unique in style, concept, expression and theme.
One such art form which captivates people is Nirmal paintings, named after village where art form has originated in Nirmal in Adilabad District.

**ORIGIN OF NIRMAL PAINTINGS**

Evolution of Nirmal art & craft can be trailed back to the days of the Kakatiyas. The craft is a form of lacquered woodwork that was born in Nirmal town, and since then the art has remained an attraction through all these ages and now—a-days it is made both in Nirmal village and in Hyderabad city.

The motifs used are Frescos from Ellora and Ajanta, Mughal Miniatures & Floral designs.

**CREATION OF NIRMAL PAINTING**

The technique involves lacquering of the wood surface and painting the precise design thereon. The conventional designs can be traced and dawn in chalk on any Board or smoothed wood and then painted in bright, flat colors which are often touched-up with Gold and finally varnished.

The craftsmen utilize the indigenous colors that are made from herbs, gems and minerals. Now—a-days, the Gold found in these paintings is extracted from herbal juices. Over last few years Nirmal work has evolved drastically catter to the
new demands, moving away from just being painters of the epics, the craftsmen now paint motifs in old Indian style.

The Mughal miniatures are crafted exquisitely on soft wood called “Ponnaki” which is strengthened with different coats of pip clay, fine muslin and tamarind seed-paste before it is painted.

The Nirmal art form has originated in the 14th century and artisans were called “Nakash”

During the Mughal Era, the emperor was extremely enchanted by their art form and this resulted in the rulers patronizing their art extensively.

The credit for spreading the word about “Nirmal Paintings” goes to Lady Hyderi, who brought the artisans to Hyderabad, 5 centuries ago.

The subsequent generation of Nirmal artisans did not restrict themselves to mythological themes alone. They forayed into other styles, drawing inspiration from art of Ajanta, Kangra & Mughal Miniatures.

Initially the artists created mythological figures and took inspirations from nature in creating birds, animals and
Nirmal Arts came into its own in 17th century. According to local legend, the Nizam of Hyderabad visited the village of Nirmal, where he was warmly welcomed by the Artisans. They created and intricately designed bud of banana and placed spectacular golden petals inside the bud. This was placed on the Royal Seat and when Nizam opened the bud he was shockingly red by the golden petals. Highly impressed with this, the Nizam began patronizing the artists and their crafts. What makes Nirmal paintings so special is because of the usage of local material to paint and create the craft items.\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{MATERIAL, TOOLS AND PROCESS OF NIRMAL PAINTINGS}

To draw Nirmal painting the below mentioned material and tools are required.

1. Teak Frame
2. Card Board
3. Lac
4. Rubber Tool
5. Decco Colours
6. Sprayer
7. Thinner
8. Trace Paper
9. Bell pins
10. Chalk Powder
11. Clear
12. Water
13. Brushes of Various sizes
14. Palette
15. Water Paper
16. Small nails

We have to make required size of teak frame and to arrange a card board size plank should be suited to the frame then to fix with small size nails, with the help of file (tool), Card board should be made smooth, but these frames are art to the sizes of 8x11, 12x-17 and 17x24(inches) for Nirmal art works.

Before painting the picture, clean the card board neatly and apply Nerolac, Asian paints and lappam in layers. Soak the water paper in the water and cut into required size and pour the water on the assumed card board wash like dishes and finally make clean and tidy.

**Future of Nirmal Paintings**

‘As none of the younger generation of Nirmal’s Nakash artisans has taken to painting. The future of famous Nirmal arts, of which paintings form an essential part has become hazy.
Busani Bhaskara Varma is the only painter besides Octogenarian Narsingam to produce shiny frames of Fine Arts at the workshop of the 'Nirmal Toys and Arts Industries Cooperative Society'.

Shunning of this art form by youngsters in the forty 'Nakash' craftsmans families has come at a time, demand for Nirmal Paintings as steadily gone up.

Bhaskar Varma was the last from the Nakash Artist family to undergo proper training in the Nirmal painting style. The painter had returned to the workshop in his home town three years back owing to the increasing demand for these exquisite paintings.

Sri Padmarao Varma came from Hyderabad to Nirmal to restart the Craft of Nirmal Painting. He is very talented, started getting famous in no time. His forefathers used to paint the main doors of the temples, the art of which was instantly reconginised by one and all. One of such doors was on show at American Museum.

Sri Racharla Lambaiah Garu has worked in the local wood toys art center, is a talented person in making idols. At the age of 9 years only, he learned the work of preparing toys from his father. The art is only helping him designing the wood in his daily life. He can make the idols as well as famous persons which were lively in such a way he can mould them.
With the ponnaki wood he used to make idols of King, Queen, Minister, Natraj, Laxmi, Saraswathi, Gopal Krishna, Santhoshi Matha, Gondu Goddess, Dandimaramma, Vaddera Goddess, Sagada Parvathi, Yellamma, Pochamma, Nagaraja etc.

In the period of Nizam Kings, he told that he used to work for four hundred rupees per month. Sri Lambaiah told that for the picture/idol of God Nagadevatha that erstwhile chief Minister Sri Tanguturi Anjayya gave him gift of RS. 516/- and honoured with a shawl. He also made the idols of Garuda, Hanuman, Narayanamurthi, Mahalaxmi, Mangala Haratulu etc. He had experience in Traditional painting also. He also got award from Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister, of India for making Natraj statue. In the year 1990 he got National Master of Craftsmen award from the President Sri Gnani Jail singh.

Until the middle of the last century, Nirmal Paintings were restricted to pencil sketches and water color miniatures like 'Ganjifa' playing -cards, use of deco colors, started around 1950's signifying the great change in the painting style. Corresponding with the change in quality of color, the design of paintings also underwent change. Artists borrowed figures from calendars among other things. The new works titled Indian dancer, Fisher – Women, Lady with Pot, Ekthara and Kamal Dancers, became trade mark products, and the use of 'Deco' paints renders these paintings on Puttied card – boards, washable.'s
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**Reference of Plates:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate No.</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>145. Cover Page</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146. Veena Player</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147. Romance</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148. Vinayaka</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149. Shakuntala</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150. Meghamala</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151. Dolak Player</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152. Abhinaya</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153. Floral Design</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154. Fisher Women</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155. Trumpetteer</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156. Fisher Woman</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157. Bhangima</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158. Artist at the Work</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159. Radha Krishna</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Veena Player
Plate No. 146

Romance
Plate No. 147
Meghamala
Plate No. 150
Dolak Player
Plate No.151
Abhinaya
Plate No. 152
Fisher women
Plate No.154
Trumpeteer
Plate No. 155
Fisher women
Plate No. 156
Bhangima
Plate No.157
Artist at work
Plate No. 158

Radha Krishna
Plate No.159