ARTS AND CRAFTS OF BIHAR

Registered Geographical Indications (GI) belonging to Bihar are-

MADHUBANI PAINTINGS (Registered G.I. as a Handicraft)

Madhubani painting is also known as Mithila Paintings as it is practiced in the Mithila Region of Bihar. Painting is done with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens, and match-sticks using natural dye and mineral pigments. There are paintings for each occasion and festivals such as birth, marriage, holi, durga puja and other occasions. The painting was traditionally done on freshly plastered mud walls and floors of huts but now they are also done on clothes, handmade paper and canvas. Madhubani paintings mostly depict the people and their association with nature, natural objects like the sun, moon and plants and the scenes and deities from the ancient epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana.

Generally no space is left empty on the canvas and the gaps are filled by paintings of flowers, animals and geometric designs.

APPLIQUE-KHATWA PATCHWORK OF BIHAR (Registered G.I. as a Handicraft)

Khatwa patch work is an appliqué work i.e. it is an ornamental needlework in which pieces of patch work are sewn or struck onto a larger piece to form a picture or pattern.

Khatwa is mainly used to create designer curtains, cushions, table covers, tents, canopies and other products. The designs in khatwa work include trees, flowers, animals, birds and others. In khatwa work, patches are first stitched to the base fabric and then the designs are cut to shape.

SUJINI EMBROIDERY WORK OF BIHAR(Registered G.I. as a Handicraft)

Sujini embroidery started as the distinctive embroideries done by women in Bihar from worn and used clothes. It is very popular and expressive art form now. Sujini is quilt having embroidery made in Bihar by recycling a number of worn out saris and dhotis in a simple running stitch that gives the old cloth a new structure while ornamenting it. Sujini embroidery has eventually taken the form of representing unique narrative elements of storytelling and sharing experiences through embroidery. Women often stitch their sorrows and realities on the sujini, transforming mundane clothes into testimonies of their lives and challenges

SIKKI GRASS WORK OF BIHAR (Registered G.I. as a Handicraft)

The sikki grass article are made by the women of north Bihar. Sikki is obtained from the dried stems of a succulent plant. The plant is abundantly available

PSCNotes free sample: first 5 of 28 pages. Full PDF at pscnotes.com

in Bihar. The upper portion of the stem, which contains flowers, is discarded and the remaining portion cut into small pieces and preserved for making attractive Sikki ware. It is out only once after the rains and the cut pieces are stored for use throughout the year. Sikki grass dried in red, blue, black and gold is imaginatively wrought into a variety of articles such as basket and boxes, human figures, replicas of gods and goddesses, toys, animals, birds and models of chariots and temples.

The other Crafts of Bihar are-

YAMPURI PUPPETRY:

The traditional Rod Puppetry of Bihar is known as Yampuri. Rod puppets are supported and manipulated by rods from below. These puppets are made of wood, are in one piece and have no joints. These puppet require greater dexterity.

Yampuri puppet shows are also known as Baikunth Darshan Shows. The show is conducted in Hindi and Bhojpuri. This puppet show intends to address morality by instilling the knowledge of heaven and hell in the spectators. The show starts with a view of Yampuri (House of Death) with the main characters Yamraj, Yamdoot and Chitragupt. Dead people come one by one and are marched in front of Yamraj They are sent to heaven and hell on the basis of their deeds during their life.

Tikuli Work:

Tikuli is a form of craft made from broken glass. The craftsmen first melt the broken glass and then give it shape and design.

Bangle Making

The best works of bangle making can be seen in the city of Muzaffarpur which is considered to be the center for cottage industries. Bangles are an inseparable part of Indian customs and an integral part of make up kit of Indian women. The raw material is for bangle works is obtained from the forest nearby. The artisans use light fire to craft the delicate glasses into circular shape. The artisans go by the market demand and their imagination to give them the most fashionable and contemporary designs. One can buy them from many stores or directly from the homes of the artisans.

Stone Work

In its peak during the Mauryan period, stone and architecture works became the symbol of the dynasty. One can see the best of that period in cities like Gaya, Nalanda, and Patna. Apart from monasteries and Stupas, magnificent statues of Lord Buddha were created. Today, the most important place for stone works is Patharkatti in Gaya district. It has plenty of blue black pot stone which are cheap and are used for making statues,
images and household articles like the pestle and grinders. It is also among the places in India where architecture works of fountains and tables are done.

Wood Inlay:

One of Bihar's ancient industries wood inlays continues to be done with different materials, metal, ivory and stag-horn. Artists create decorative pieces like wall hangings, table tops, trays, and a number of utility articles

PSCNotes free sample: first 5 of 28 pages. Full PDF at pscnotes.com

with inlay work. One can see beautiful pieces of trays, boxes and other articles for household use are produced using this craft. The designs are colourful and geometrical.

Lacquerware:
In Bihar lac has been used for making beautiful items like boxes and bangles etc since ages. Sindurdan the vermilion container given in marriage is one of such decorative piece made by laheris community. The boxes are beautifully decorated with the motifs of fish, chakra and peacock. Traditionally the bride's parents present her a round conical box, with a nose ring at the marriage with the symbols of fertility and longevity engraved on its red body.

Printed Textiles:
Bihar has made its name in textile printing which is done on cotton, wool and silk.Some districts and towns for example Bhagalpur, Bihar Sharif, Darbhanga, Saran and Patna are well known for this craft. In Gaya, it is common to find the religious textiles with the names or footprints of deities printed all over in ochre or red. The chunris of Bihar deserve special mention. Beautiful designs are printed in these chunris which are traditional as well as floral and animal forms. At Sursand in North Bihar only mica (khari) printing is done with bright colours are used extensively

Other handicrafts:
Bihar also has tradition of leather craft, tikuli making and papier –mache art .These arts are being recognized all over the world and showcased in international and national exhibitions. Beautiful objects are crafted in traditional and floral designs with bright colours.Religious scenes and gods and goddesses are also painted especially on papier-mache articles.

Pottery Works
Pottery is made on clay. Bihar had a rich history of clay pottery work. Since the time of Mauryan and Gupta this art has been in practice in Bihar. The archeological excavations at places like Nalanda and Rajgir had confirmed the existence of this artistic craft in Bihar. Beautiful earthen utensils and tiles are made by potters of Bihar. They have the abilities and skill to do artistic and beautiful paintings on earthen pots. Patna is very famous for such work. Patna is also famous for making earthen statutes of various gods and goddess.

Bamboo Work
Bamboo work has been remained a culture of Bihar throughout the ages and time. Right form the pre-historic time forest dwelling tribes are experts in bamboo and cane work. They used to make many utility items like baskets, household wares, woven mats, furniture and cane products like cane furniture and other decorative objects. By utilizing their skill and techniques they turned these lifeless bamboo and cane into living object which are of great value in every day life.

Fairs and Festivals of Bihar

Sonepur Cattle Fair
Legend apart, the famous Sonepur fair in more of a cattle trading centre where

PSCNotes free sample: first 5 of 28 pages. Full PDF at pscnotes.com

incredible number of birds and cattle are brought from different parts of the country. Besides, the bewildering array of wares are on sale and add to this the numerous folk shows about which the BBC once remarked, "there's nothing like the Sonepur Cabaret." The time to start is very early in the morning when the fog is suddenly pierced by the sun and the huge gathering has just emerged from the holy dip in the cold absolving waters. The mela that lasts upto a fortnight, provides enough time to talk to the parrots, watch the elephants being bathed leisurely, followed by ear splitting trumpets and then the artists working up with colourful designs to decorate the elephants as if the pachyderm has been tatooed all over, see the horses being tested for their speed and stamina, big bulky buffaloes being milked and likewise all other animals demonstrating their skill, strength and productivity.

By midday, it is the cacophony of strong decibels pouring in from all corners as the huge gathering becomes denser with more and more people adding to the sound and sight of the landscae. Ash smeared, saffron clothed holy men blow their conches and bang their gongs. Loudsspeakers, from various folk shows and jugglers rent the air together with the unison from the animals. Much before the sun sets in, flames and fumes of dung fire burning at different places appear to screen the sky in a very amusing way, as if some mediveval army has just camped for the night. and it is time to share a gossip with one of the villagers who may better summarise the stock and sale of the cattles for the day. Zesty snacks together with tea comes in from the open air restaurant.

Nag Panchmi

The rainy month of Sravana when there is danger of death from snake bite, people appease the snake god by offering milk during Nag Panchmi. The prime centre of naga worship is Rajgir and Mahabharata describes this place as the abode of serpents and excavations have revealed numerous objects used in serpent cult. In fact naga worship is wide spread through out India.

Makar Sankranti Mela

Famous Makar Sankranti mela is another festival unique to Rajgir in the month of Paus, corresponding to mid January. Devotees make flower offerings to the deities of the temples at Hot springs and bathe in the holy water. Another historic place associated with fifteen day long Makar Sankranti mela is the Mandar hills in Banka district. Puranic legends accounts for a great deluge which witnessed the creation of a Asura that threatened the gods. Vishnu cut off the Asura's head and piled up the body under the weight of the Mandar hill. The famous panchjanya - the sankh (counch shell) used in the Mahabharat war is believed to have been found here on the hills. Traces, akin to serpent coil can be seen around the hill and it is believed that the snake god offered himself to be used as a rope for churning the ocean to obtain the amrit (nectar).

Gaya-Buddhist Pilgrimage Center

Gaya is another holy dot in Bihar, famous for the International Buddhist Gathering and the rallying point is the Mahabodhi tree and the adjacent temple. The occasions are Buddha

PSCNotes free sample: first 5 of 28 pages. Full PDF at pscnotes.com

Jayanti (Buddha was born on this day, he attained enlightenment on this day and also attained Nirvana on this day) and in the month of Vaisakh (April/May) and the annual session of Dalai Lama in December. Mahavir Jayanti is celebated in April with much fanfare on the Parsvanath hill and also at Vaishali while Deo Deepawali, marking the attainment of Nirvana by Mahavira is celebrated best at Pawapuri, ten days after Deepavali.

Gaya - Pitrapaksha Mela

Arond september the sleepy town of Gaya is agog with people who come here for the famous Pitrapaksha mela or the ancestor worship typified in Sraddha ritual. It is time for the Gayalis (the descendants of Magga Brahmans who were once devotees of Shiva but later converted to Vaishnavism) to be prepared for the vedic Sraddha ceremonies or the pindan - a mandatory Hind rite that is supposed to bring salvation to the departed soul. In the early Dharmasastras, Vishnu provides a list of over 50 tirthas but it proclaims that dead ancestors pray to God for a son who would offer pinda (lymph of rice) to them at Gaya.

The tradition traces its history to the time of Buddha, who is believed to have performed the first pindan here. Turning the pages of earlier history, one comes across the Puranic legend that ascribes Gaya as one of the holiest spots of the world. The Asura, named Gaya become so powerful that the gods felt threatened and thus thought of eliminating him. As a precondition to his death, the Asura demanded that be should be buried in the holiest spot of the world. This place is Gaya.

Vishnupada Temple Mela

The central point of the Hindu pilgrimage in Gaya is the Vishnupada temple built by Rani Ahilyabai of Indore in 1787. The spot on which it stands is associated with the famous mythological event of Vishnu killing Gaya and leaving his footprints on the rock which is the main point of worship in the temple. The Shraddha is customarily performed under a fig tree while the women pilgrim perform it indoors as gayawal women live under strange customs, for instance, they never stir out of the house, married girl continues to get her daily ration from her parents. They can adopt a child or even an adult, who may assist her in their work. The Gayawals are believed to maintain centuries old records of the pindans performed under the supervision of their ancestors and accordingly people prefer the specific family of Gayawals who might have served their ancestors as well.

Other Famous Festivities

Though Bihar is in league with festivals like Holi, Dussehra, Deepavali but chaath puja (6 days after Deepavali) is Bihar's prime festival honouring the sun god. Unlike the zestful Holi or the expensive Deepavali) Chaath is a festival of prayer and propitiation observed with solemnity. It is an expression of thanks giving and seeking the blessings from the forces of nature, prominent among them being the Sun and river. The belief is that a devotee's desire is always fulfilled during Chaath. Simultaneously an element of fear is alive among the devotees who dread the punishment for any misdeed during Chaath. The city remains safe during this time when criminals too prefer to be a part of the good.

PSCNotes free sample: first 5 of 28 pages. Full PDF at pscnotes.com