



Sujeet Bhurkud
Beneficiary TEDP
Tribal Artist
Warli painting

Warli art can reach places with the help of digital technology, says artist Sujeet Bhurkud

Sujeet Bhurkud, 40, is a teacher by profession and an artist by passion. He makes Warli paintings to keep the tribal culture alive. Warli paintings are made by tribals of northwestern Maharashtra with natural earthy colours like white (rice paste), black (manganese), ochre, etc. Artists like him have an opportunity to convert their passion into a flourishing business with the help of the Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Programme (TEDP).

Based in Patlipada village of Talasari in Maharashtra, the artist, who is married and has a 14-year-old son, belongs to the Warli tribe. Talking about his Warli paintings, he says, "These paintings depict the lives of tribals, gods, and goddesses we worship. This is how we pass on our tradition to our youngsters."



It was Sujeet's *aaji* (paternal grandmother) who introduced him to the tribal art form. She would make these *lagnachauks* (one of the central motifs in Warli painting), which are in demand during tribal marriage ceremonies. *Chauks* are elaborate drawings of the bride and groom's family goddess. They are made to invoke blessings and protection of the goddess on the soon-to-be-married couple. "I would assist my *aaji* to make these *chauks* and was slowly drawn to the art," he says.

Though Sujeet loved to paint, his family condition forced him to become financially independent as soon as possible. "My father was a farmer and I had seven siblings – six brothers and a sister, so I

wanted to find a job and start earning immediately,” he says. Hence, after Class X, he did a diploma in education (DEd) and became a teacher. Today, he teaches class IV and VII students in a local school.

However, his love for art is eternal and he engages in his passion whenever he finds time. “I paint either in the morning or evening, whenever I am free,” he says, adding that he paints on canvas, cloth, pots, greeting cards, and wooden items.

Sujeet’s friends give him work. “There is a group of artists who take orders from across India. They pass some of that work to me,” he



says, adding that the work is not regular and fetches him around Rs 22,000. He wants to explore a bigger market with the use of technology now. “I had heard of people getting online orders and wanted to try the same,” he shares.

For artists like him there is TEDP, which is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM). It’s a programme that trains artists to better their skills as well as give digital marketing training to help them sell their products online. “I know that with the help of digital technology we can reach places. I would like to get in-depth knowledge about it and open

my business page,” concludes Sujeet.