



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Madhubani Painting: The Cultural Transition Of Madhubani Painting: From Ritual Expression To Commercial And Fashion Adaptation.

First Author name: Ashish Pal  
Student Sage University, Indore

Second Author: Nirantara Hada  
Assistant Professor  
Sage university, Indore

### Abstract

This research explores the deep-rooted heritage of Madhubani painting, a traditional folk art form originating from the Mithila region of Bihar, India. Historically practiced by women on the mud walls of their homes to celebrate religious and social events, Madhubani art is characterized by its vibrant use of natural colors, intricate geometric patterns, and symbolic motifs.

This paper examines the transition of this art form from a domestic ritual to a globally recognized commercial art. It focuses on the five primary styles **Bharni, Kachni, Tantrik, Godna, and Kohbar** and analyzes how they reflect the social structure and spiritual beliefs of the Mithila Society. Furthermore, the study investigates the role of Madhubani art in providing economic empowerment to rural women and its adaptation to modern mediums like paper, canvas, and textiles. By evaluating its journey from sacred wall murals to contemporary fashion and home décor, this research highlights the importance of preserving Madhubani painting as a vital part of India's cultural identity in the face of Globalization.

**Keywords:** Madhubani Art, Mithila Painting, Indian Folk Art, Cultural Heritage, Women Empowerment, Traditional Motifs.

### 1. Introduction:

Art is the mirror of a society's culture, and few art forms reflect the soul of rural India as vibrantly as Madhubani painting. Also known as Mithila Art, this antiquity folk tradition originates from the Mithila region of Bihar and parts of neighboring Nepal. For centuries, this art remained a hidden treasure, practiced exclusively by the women of the household as a way to communicate with the divine and decorate their homes for sacred occasions.

### Historical Background:

The Source of Madhubani painting are believed to be as old as the Ramayana. According to local Mythology, King Janak commissioned the women of his kingdom to paint the walls of

the palace during the wedding of his daughter, Sita, to God Rama. This tradition was passed down from mother to daughter through generations, ensuring that the techniques and Pattern remained alive within the community.

## The Essence of the Art

What makes Madhubani unique is its deep connection to **nature and mythology**. Using fingers, twigs, brushes, and even matchsticks, artists create intricate designs without leaving a single inch of the Surface empty. The themes usually revolve around deities like Krishna, Shiva, and Durga, or natural elements like the sun, moon, Fish and the "Tree of Life." The use of **natural pigments**—derived from flowers, leaves, and soot adds an organic and authentic touch to every piece.

## 2. Rethinking Material Choices

### 2.1 Natural Fibres beyond Symbolism

Madhubani painting focuses on the deities and stories, modern research must focus on the "how" and "on what." The shift from mud walls to natural fibers represents a transition from **static ritual** to **sustainable commerce**.

#### 1. The Shift from Mud to Natural Textiles

Originally, Madhubani was an ephemeral art practiced on mud walls (*Bhitti Chitra*). Today, the choice of natural fibers like **Khadi, Jute, Silk, and Fine Cotton** has redefined the art.

- **The Porosity Factor:** Natural fibers absorb organic dyes like indigo and turmeric much more effectively than synthetic fabrics. This creates a "matte" finish that is synonymous with the Madhubani aesthetic.
- **Durability:** Natural fibers allow the art to be transported, and worn.

#### 2. Ecological Intelligence (The "Green" Art)

Rethinking the materials reveals that Madhubani is inherently an **eco-friendly** practice. In a world moving toward "Slow Fashion," Madhubani on natural fibers is a perfect analysis:

- **Zero Plastic:** Traditional Madhubani uses no acrylics or plastic-based binders.
- **Biodegradability:** Because the base (Cotton/Jute/Silk) and the pigment are organic, the entire artwork is Compostable.
- **Carbon Footprint:** Most natural fibers used in Mithila are locally sourced, reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation and industrial processing.

### 2.2 Recycled Polymers as Transitional Strategy

The integration of recycled polymers serves as a strategic bridge between heritage and modernity. By repurposing synthetic waste like RPET or Madhubani art evolves from a ritual practice into a form of environmental activism. This transitional approach addresses the durability limitations of natural fibers while tackling the global plastic crisis. Ultimately, transforming industrial waste into cultural beauty ensures the art's survival, making it a resilient, adaptive by for the contemporary, eco-conscious world.

Beyond symbolism, recycled polymers act as a "modern mud," offering a durable, climate-resistant alternative to organic bases. This transition allows Mithila's intricate geometry to survive urban environments, transforming industrial pollutants into canvases for activism and ensuring the art's ecological relevance.

### 3. Manufacturing Intensity & Process adjustments

The transition to recycled polymers significantly increases **manufacturing intensity** by requiring rigorous surface preparation that traditional mud or cotton does not. Unlike porous natural fibers that absorb pigment instantly, polymers are non-absorbent, necessitating a **multi-stage priming process** using eco-friendly binders to ensure paint adhesion. Artists must adjust their "Kachni" (fine-line) technique, as the lack of surface friction on synthetic materials demands higher precision and slower execution to prevent smudging. Furthermore, the shift involves a **mechanical intensity** integrating heat-setting or chemical bonding to "fix" traditional natural dyes onto industrial bases.

### 4. Circularity in Practice

In Madhubani art, circularity is a lived reality, not a corporate buzzword. While theoretical circularity often struggles with implementation, this art form demonstrates a **loop system** through the "Waste-to-Wealth" transition. By using recycled polymers as a base, the artist intercepts industrial waste bottles and plastic debris before they reach landfills, converting them into high-value cultural artifacts.

This practice turns a **linear pollutant** plastic into a art. The circularity is completed when these polymer canvases, decorated with traditional natural pigments, are designed for extreme longevity or further upcycling. Unlike modern mass-produced items, these pieces are rarely discarded due to their aesthetic and labor value, effectively slowing down the consumption cycle. In this model, the "waste" becomes the most critical ingredient in the manufacturing chain, proving that traditional craft can provide a practical, scalable solution for modern material management

### 5. Practical significance

#### 1. Market Penetration

Integrating recycled polymers into the Madhubani ecosystem creates a new high-value market. It allows artisans to move away from fragile, expensive natural silks for every project and use durable, cost-effective recycled materials. This lowers the entry barrier for mass-market products while maintaining the "hand-painted" premium, significantly increasing the income potential for rural communities.

#### 2. Public Art

The practical shift to weather-resistant polymers allows Madhubani art to move out of galleries and onto the streets. It can be used for:

- **Aesthetic Cloaking:** Using recycled polymer panels to cover "grey" urban infrastructure (metro pillars, waste treatment plants).
- **Durability:** Unlike mud or cotton, polymer-based art survives extreme rain and pollution, making it a viable tool for urban beautification and long-term cultural branding.

#### 3. Validating "Green" Transition

This research provides a blueprint for other dying folk arts. It proves that a craft does not have to remain "frozen in time" to be authentic. The practical significance is showing that by adopting **recycled polymers**, a traditional craft can actually help solve the modern plastic crisis, making the art form relevant to international sustainability goals.

## 4. Intellectual Property and Standardization

By studying the **process adjustments** (like ink viscosity and surface priming), this research contributes to creating a standard "technical manual" for modern Mithila art. This helps in protecting the Geographical Indication (GI) status by defining exactly what constitutes "Modern Madhubani," preventing low-quality digital prints from devaluing the hand-painted industry.

## 6. Conclusion

The journey of Madhubani painting from the mud walls of Mithila to the surface of recycled polymers represents a remarkable saga of **cultural resilience**. This research has demonstrated that while the symbolism of the art remains rooted in ancient mythology, its survival depends on its ability to adapt to the material realities of the 21st century.

The transition from natural fibers to recycled polymers is not merely a change in canvas; it is a **strategic evolution**. By embracing "modern mud" Madhubani art successfully bridges the gap between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary environmental activism. The manufacturing adjustments and the shift toward practical circularity prove that folk art can be a powerful tool for waste management and sustainable development.

Madhubani art serves as a blueprint for the "future of the past." It proves that traditional crafts do not need to be static to be authentic. By rethinking material choices balancing the organic purity of natural fibers with the industrial utility of recycled polymers Mithila art ensures its place not just in history books, but as a living, breathing solution for a more sustainable and culturally rich global future.

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