

## Warli art: Paintings on mud walls

The Warlis are a group of Adivasis, the original inhabitants of India. They are mentioned in the earliest legends and stories over 4,500 years ago.

Although nature in the form of tropical forests is bountiful, the Warlis use their products sparingly. They extract just enough for their sustenance, apparently aware that over-exploitation can only result in their own destruction. Their homes are simple structures of mud,

sticks and thatches, using recyclable materials only, appropriate to the climate. Their cattle are housed in the same space and the hut is always spotlessly clean.

Though they are often on the borderline of subsistence, they have a remarkable attitude of not worrying about tomorrow. Their enjoyment is expressed in song and dance, with the *tarpa*, made from a dried gourd, a favorite musical instru-

ment.

An important tradition of the Warlis is the painting on the mud walls of their huts of the Goddess Palghat. The painting, known as the *chawk*, is done with rice flour and plays an important part in their marriage ceremony. The Goddess is depicted with Panchshiriya, her consort, and is surrounded with an ornamental frame and other objects. It is from this tradition that their art has developed.



**Life as art.** Ploughing and sowing, harvesting and threshing, collecting firewood and cooking, drawing water from a well, basket, pottery and their implements, tigers, monkeys, birds of the forest, down to the smallest creatures.