



# Painted Prayers: Women's Art in Village India

*Stephen P. Huyler*

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For hundreds of years, Indian women have passed on to their daughters the art of ritual wall paintings, ground paintings and decorations that function as messages to the Gods. It is the women who are responsible for communication with the deities on behalf of their families. Some ground paintings are daily rituals, made every morning at dawn, while wall paintings and bas reliefs are often created for special festivals, to honour the Gods as well as to attract their benevolent attentions. Stephen P. Huyler, an art historian, ethnologist, writer and photographer who has spent his life studying India's folk art, presents this richly illustrated account of the centuries-old artistic traditions of women in village India, presented in 170 full-colour photographs that evoke both the women's rich artistic heritage, and the pride and pleasure with which they regard their creative responsibilities. The informative text details the traditions, rituals and beliefs behind this little-known art form and places the works in the context of contemporary Indian women's lives and the social realities of India today. This book is a gallery of Indian art and a pictorial tour of the India travellers rarely see. Designs vary between the representational and the purely graphic: painted and sculpted images are drawn from local iconography such as mounds of rice, or symbols of the deities elephants, peacocks and lotus blooms. Brilliant colours - reds, blues, yellows, greens and whites - make the paintings stand out from the mud-covered walls and dusty streets, in a vibrant testament to centuries of Indian women's artistic voices.

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