

Sabita Munda



Be the change you want to see

When Sabita Munda made *Sohrai* murals as a kid at her maternal home, she did not know she would be an instrument of change. Today Sabita is training four women of her Munda tribe in the *Sohrai* art. Together they hope to achieve financial freedom with their paintings.

Sabita, 24 married Naresh Munda six years backs and stays with her in-laws in Piri village in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district. She is a mother to a nine-month-old son Sumeet Toppa and practices *Sohrai* in her free time. She learned to make these murals from her mother. "The day after Diwali was celebrated as a harvest festival in our village. And my mother would wake up early and make these lovely *Sohrai* paintings on our hut wall," she says.

In the month of May last year, the *Sohrai* artform has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry. This **tag** is a sign used on products that have a specific **geographical** origin and possess origin-based qualities and reputation in the region.

Tribal women make these paintings during harvest festivals using *datun* (Neem sticks), broken combs, and fingers. They make these paintings depicting nature, hills, jungles, animals, etc. And use natural colors like white (kaolin), black (manganese), yellow ochre, and red ochre.

Sabita found solace in these paintings and enjoyed making them during festivals. She painted her own Khovar mural during her marriage. Her art was noticed by the *Sohrai* Kala Mahila Vikas Udyog Samiti Limited. And for the first time, she participated in a tribal art camp organized by the Lalit Kala Academy in Bhopal in 2016. "It is in the camp that I learned to paint on paper. It was difficult in the beginning as paintbrush strokes on paper are thinner. While we make thicker strokes on walls," she adds.

But she practiced it relentlessly and attended another art camp organized by Lalit Kala academy in 2018 in Ranchi. Though she does not paint professionally, Sabita is considered a seasoned artist in her village.

Due to her competence, she has been chosen as a trainer to train other tribal women in her village in the art. The training workshop is organized as a part of the Tribal Entrepreneur Development Program (TEDP) by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) along with the national industry body, ASSOCHAM.

"Today I guide women like me who never used a paintbrush in life. They experienced the same difficulties as me. But now have come through," she says. "It is difficult for women like us to practice *Sohrai* as we hardly get time from our household chores. So, we paint at night," she adds.

She hopes that this program will enable women like her to earn a living. “My husband is a rickshaw driver with a meager income. If these paintings help me earn money, I would be able to contribute to the family,” she concludes.