

Speech by the Ambassador

[Maithili Painting Exhibition-SVCC, 8 August]

Namaskar, Subh Sandhya and good evening.

Honourable Chief Guest, Dr. Michel Aswin Adhin Ji, Speaker of Suriname National Assembly, Minister of Justice and Police, fellow Excellencies diplomats, Senior Government official, esteemed journalists, respected members of the Indian diaspora, and dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this lively exhibition of Maithili paintings, a kind of art that is indigenous to my birthplace and has developed over centuries of tradition. It is not just ornamental; it is profoundly spiritual and symbolic. This art form is thought to have originated in the Ramayana, when people adorned walls to greet guests at the wedding of Ram and Sita. We come together today to experience the spirit of Mithila, an area of India whose cultural heritage inspires and transcends boundaries, rather than merely to look at brushstrokes and pigments.

Maithili painting, commonly referred to as Madhubani art was evolved in Bihar that historically been done by women on the walls of their homes, feature scenes from everyday life, nature, and mythology. What makes Maithili art extraordinary is its continuity. Passed down through generations, it has evolved from mud walls to canvas, from ritual to recognition. Today, Maithili artists are celebrated globally, and their work graces galleries, and fashion.

It is characterized by its vibrant, bright, and bold use of colors, traditionally extracted from plants, minerals, and other natural sources. [Red extracted from red clay, burnt brick powder, beetroot juice, and flamboyant flowers; yellow from turmeric, marigold petals, and yellow clay; blue from indigo dye and blue flowers; green from plant leaves and green clay; white from rice powder, chalk, limestone, and shells; and black from charcoal.] Each colour signifies its inherent meaning. Red is a symbol of love and vitality. And, yellow for joy and auspiciousness; green for nature and fertility; blue for calm and divinity; and white for peace and purity. Nowadays, for cost cutting and comfort, artists sometimes incorporate synthetic dyes for brighter tones for commercial purposes.

Intricate geometric patterns and designs are a prominent feature of the art form. Each has its own aesthetic and cultural role. Zigzags, spirals, and checkerboards frame the central image, and empty spaces are often filled with vines, leaves, and flowers. Figures are generally outlined in black or

deep red so that it stands out, and dots, circles, and waves are repeated to create rhythm harmony and cohesiveness. Especially in the Katchni style, artists use delicate monochrome lines to create texture and depth.

Each motif symbolizes its distinct meaning, such as fish for fertility, good luck, and abundance; peacock for beauty, love, and prosperity; parrot and birds for love and communications; lotus for purity and spiritual growth; bamboo for resilience and growth; elephant for strength and wisdom; sun and moon for cosmic balance; deities for storytelling and blessings; etc. These symbols help to convey stories from mythology, folklore, and daily life.

This exhibition is more than an artistic showcase—it is a bridge between India and Suriname. Our two nations share a profound historical bond, rooted in migration. We share same values of five D's Diversity, Democracy, De-colonization, Development and Diaspora. The Indian diaspora in Suriname, many of whom trace their ancestry to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, carry within them the echoes of Maithili songs, stories, and sensibilities. By bringing Maithili art to Paramaribo, we honour that heritage. We also reaffirm our commitment to cultural exchanges—where art becomes a language of peace, understanding, and unity.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our Chief Guest, Shri Aswin Adhin ji, whose leadership and vision have always championed cultural preservation and Indo-Surinamese ties. Your presence here tonight adds immense value to this occasion.

I would like to extent my sincere gratitude to all the unknow artists whose work adorns these walls of the Swami Vivekanand Culture Centre. To the journalists and diplomats present, your engagement ensures that this story reaches far and wide. And to the Indian community in Suriname—your pride in your roots is what keeps traditions like Maithili painting alive and thriving.

Let this exhibition be a reminder: that art knows no borders, and culture is our shared inheritance. As you walk through these paintings, may you feel the rhythm of Mithila, the warmth of tradition, and the promise of continued friendship between India and Suriname.

Dhanyavaad. Thank you.
