

# ANOTHER MASTER: RAM SINGH URVETI

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WORKS FROM 1992 TO 2023



24 JANUARY—10 MARCH, 2024

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# OJAS ART

In this exhibition we present rare examples of early works by Ram Singh Urveti who started his artistic practice in 1991. The works presented were mostly created in the 1990s to early 2000s and span three decades of his practice. The early works exemplify the inventiveness which is unique to the beginning of an artist's journey and as the work evolves one can see him find new ground.

The consequent positioning of such artists as 'non-metropolitan contemporary artists' has ensured the circulation of their art in a particular global circuit; this is also how they have become aware of the struggles and contributions of their counterparts in other countries, such as Australia, as we have already observed. The work of these [indigenous] artists and many other artists in their circle, may be regarded as the living legacy of the Bharat.

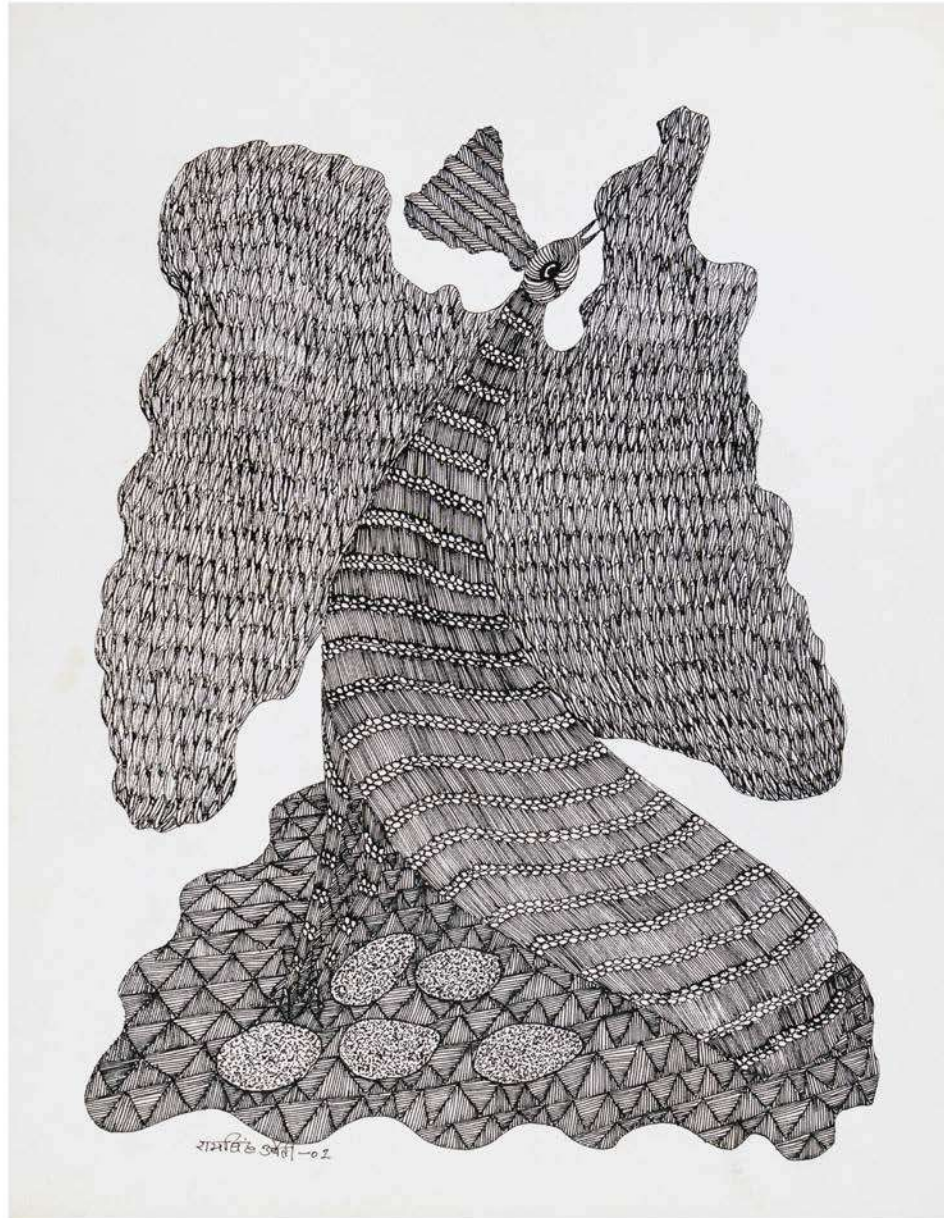
— Ranjit Hoskote, *Now that the trees have spoken* by Pundole's (2009)



*Untitled (Six armed Ganesha), 1998*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



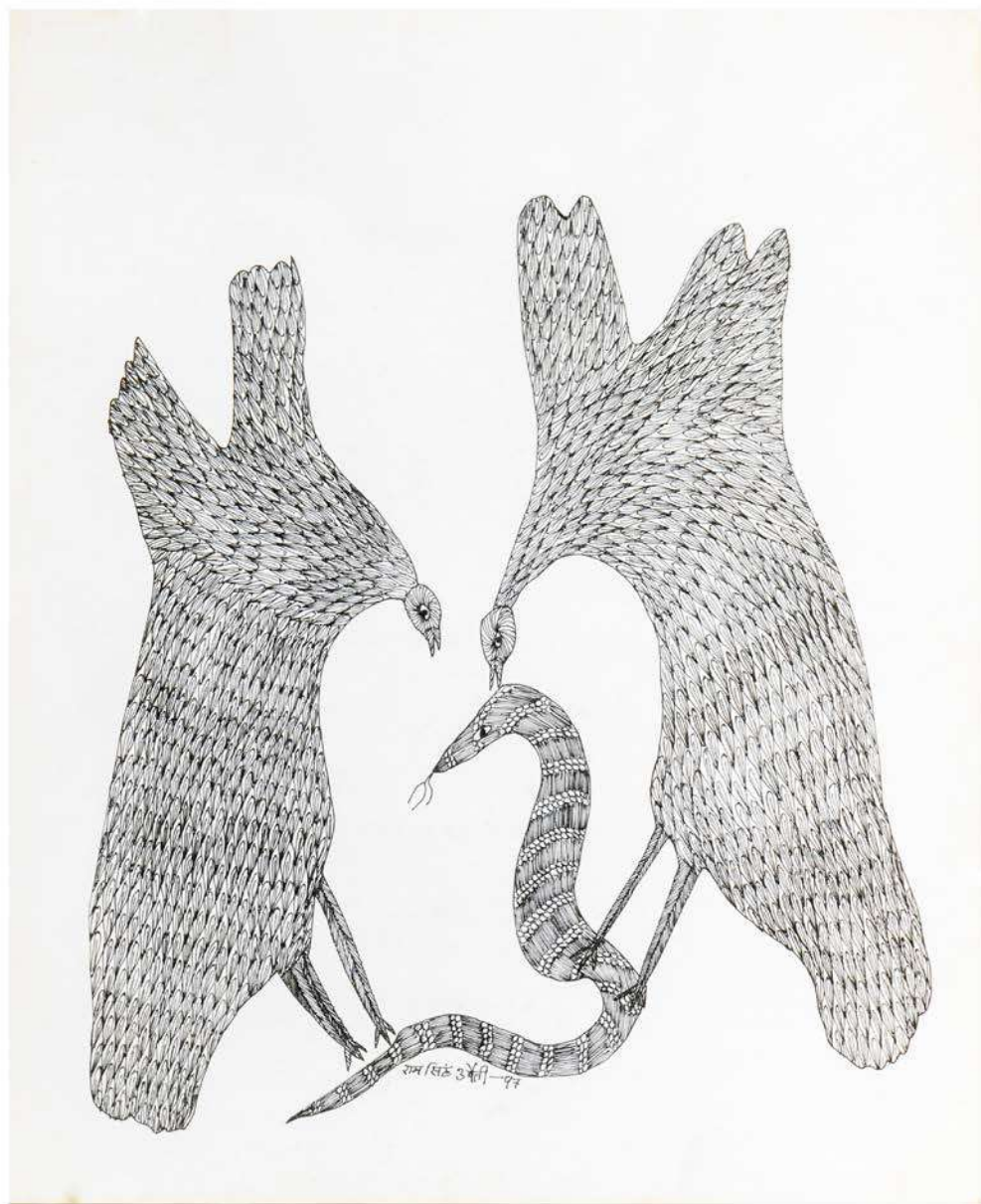
*Untitled (Devta), 2003*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



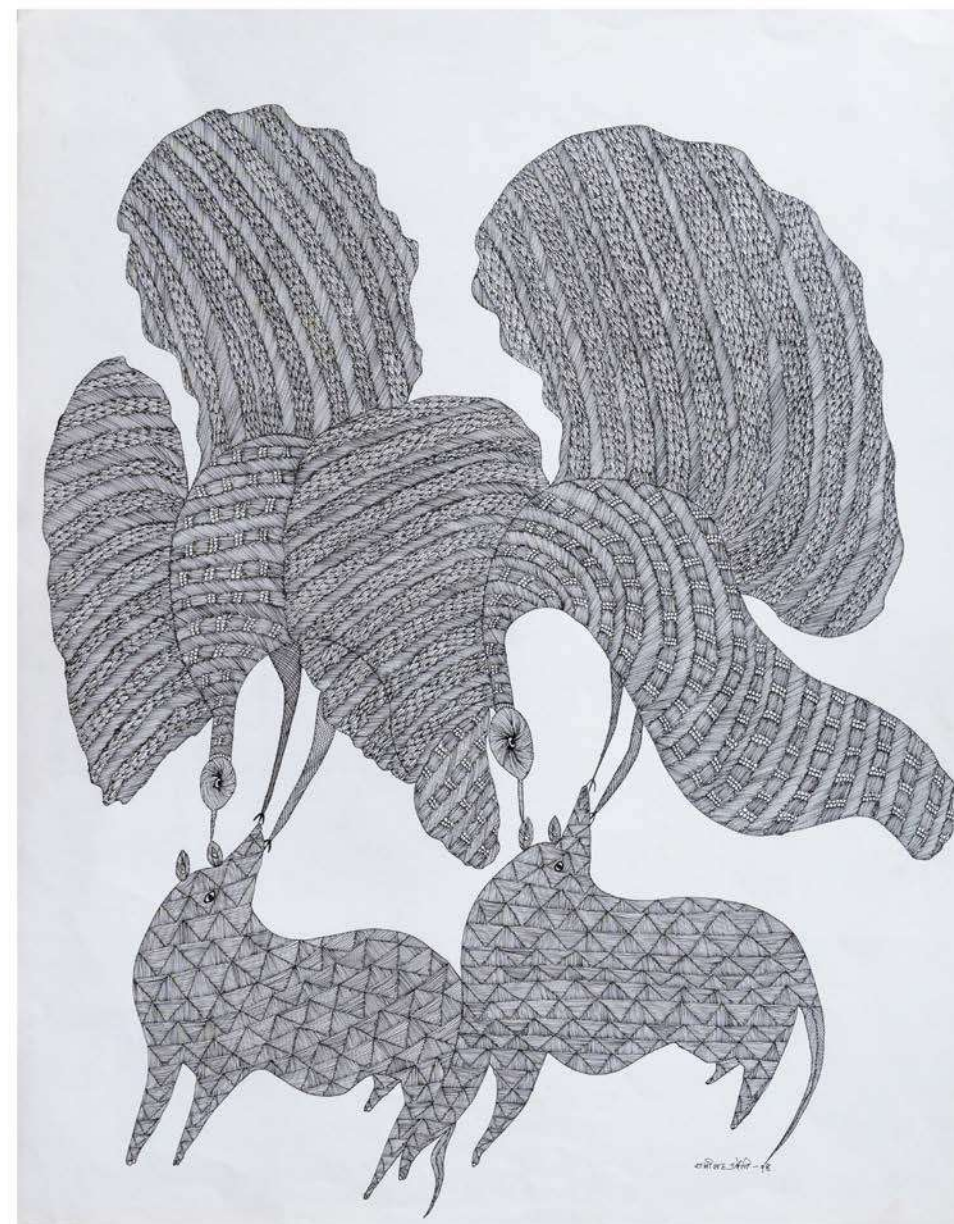
*Untitled (Bird with her eggs), 2001*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



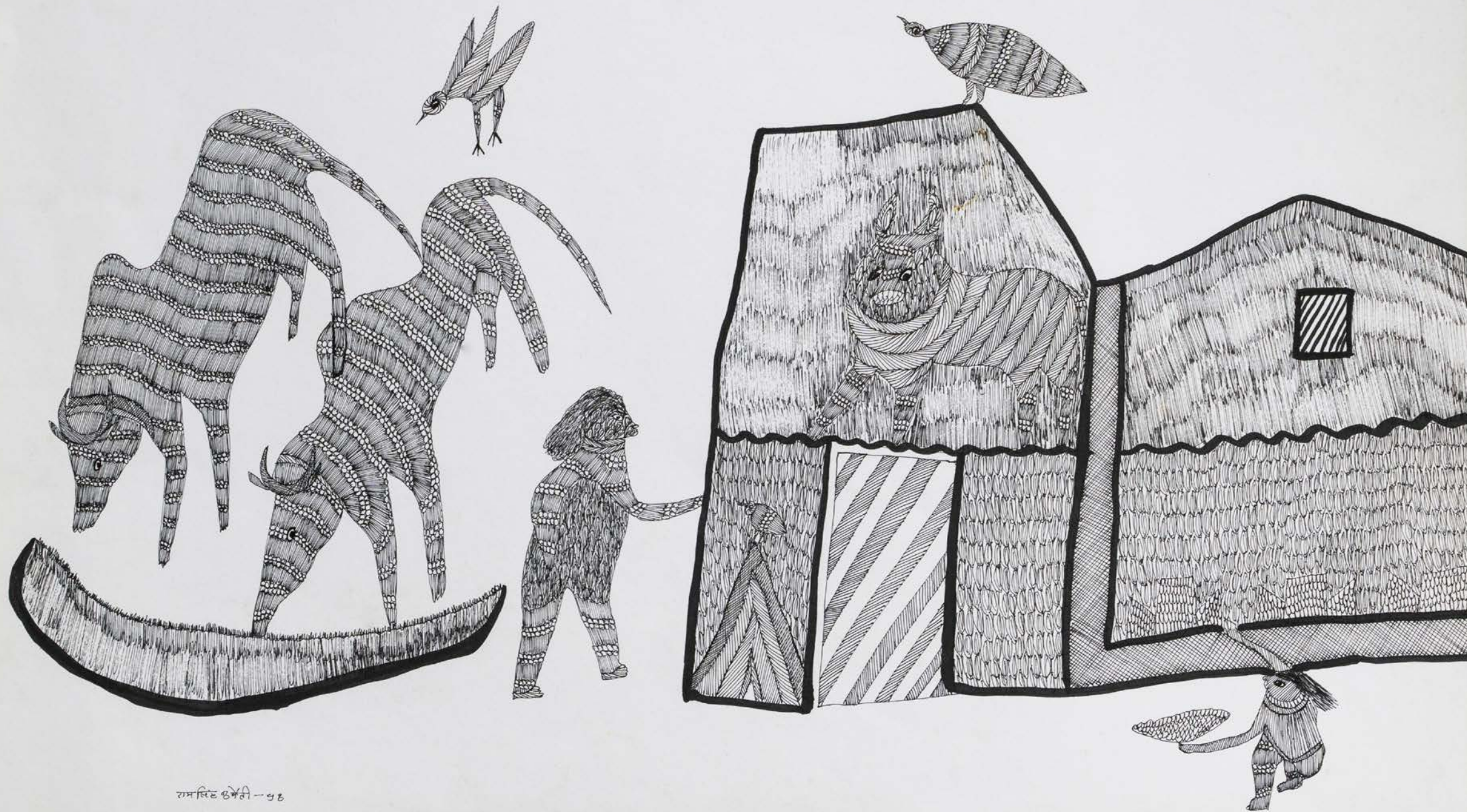
*Pardhavnin (Vivaah), 1999*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



*Untitled (Two Birds with a snake), 1997*  
Ink on paper  
13 x 11 inch



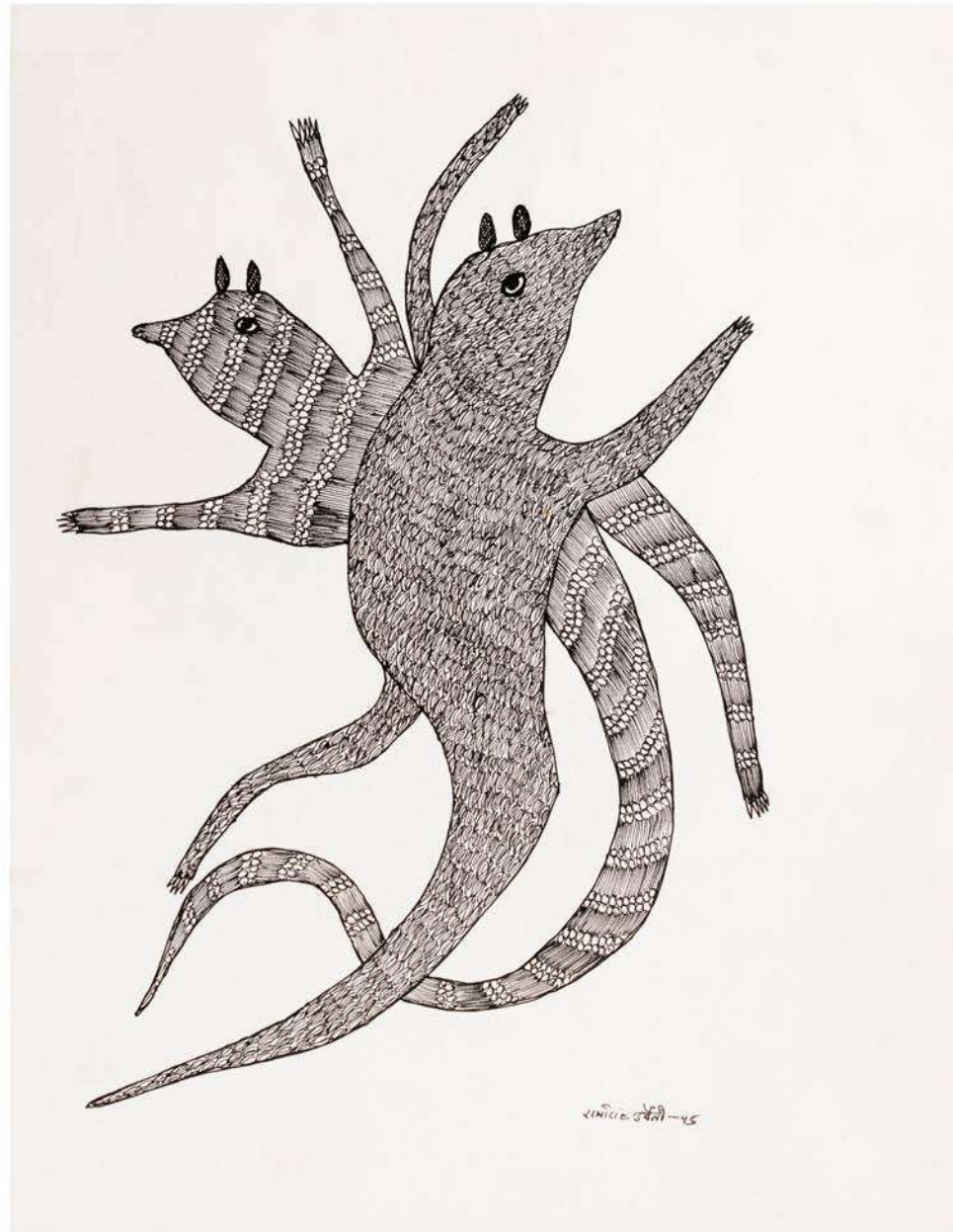
*Untitled (Birds & Boars), 1998*  
Ink on paper  
25 x 20 inch



Ghar evam  
Katna, 1998  
Ink on paper  
25 x 20 inch

रामसिंह खट्वा - १९९८

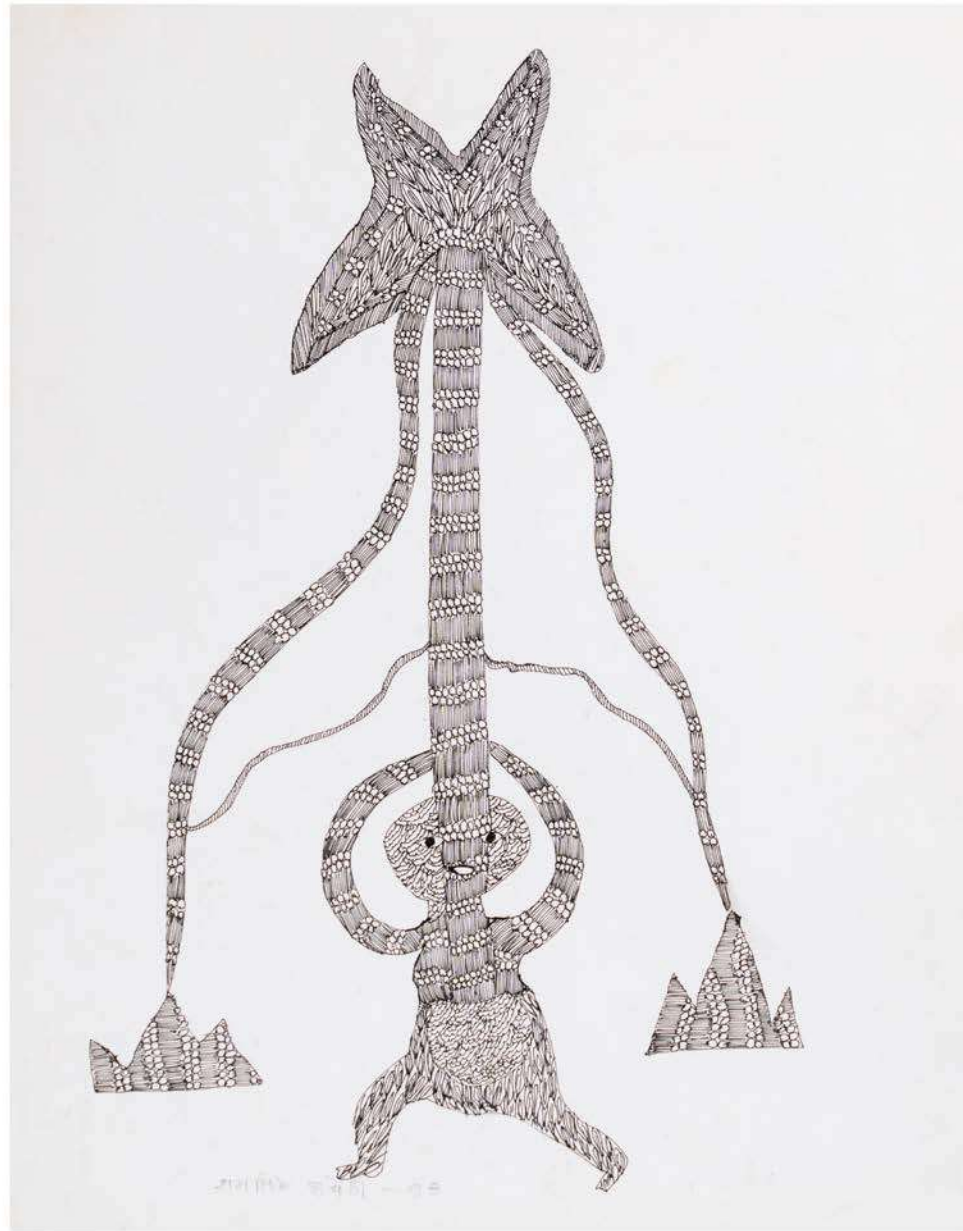
घर एवम कटना



*Untitled (Lizards), 1995*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



*Untitled (Lion & Boar), 2007*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



*Untitled*, 1998  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch

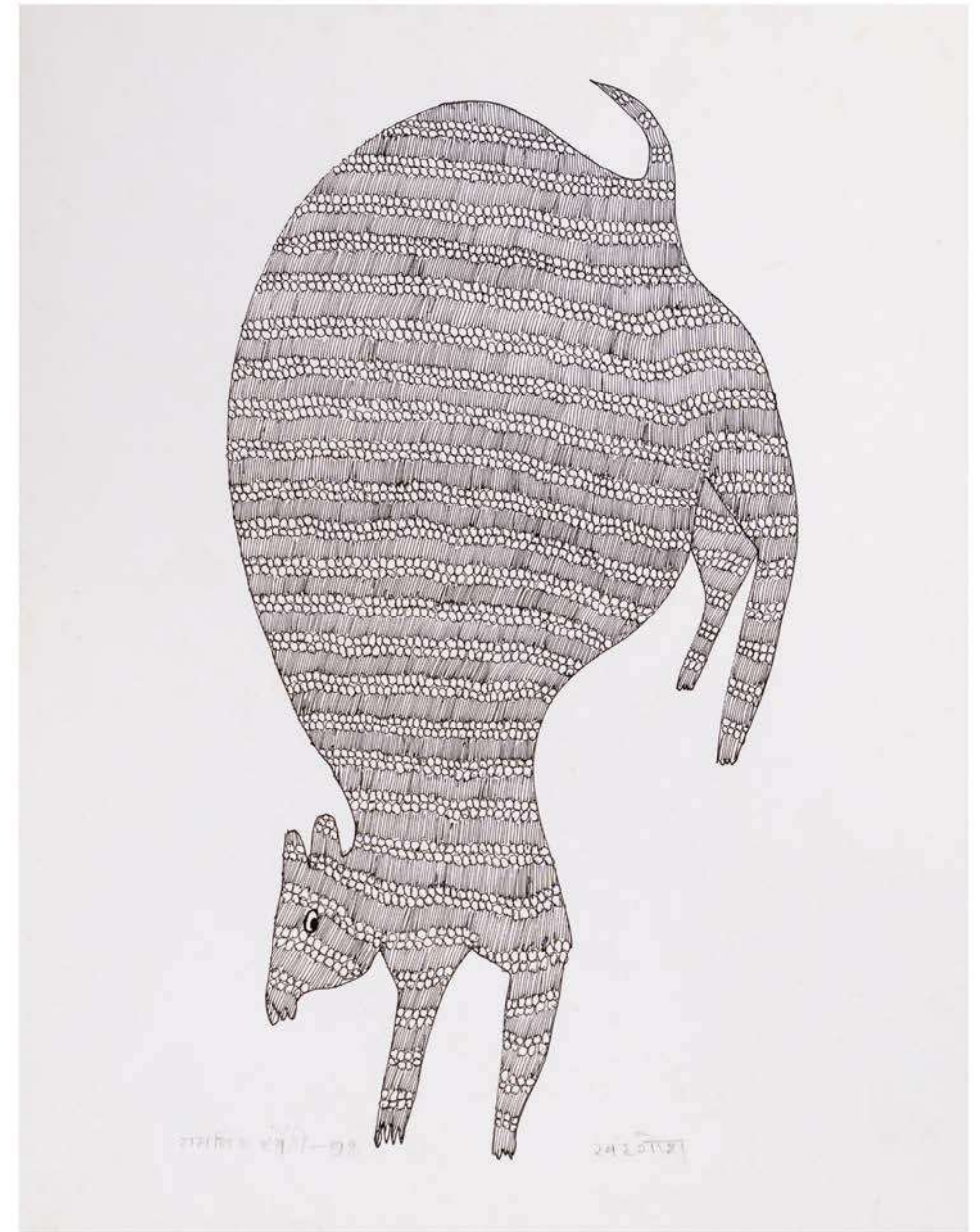


*Devi Mahima*, 1999  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch

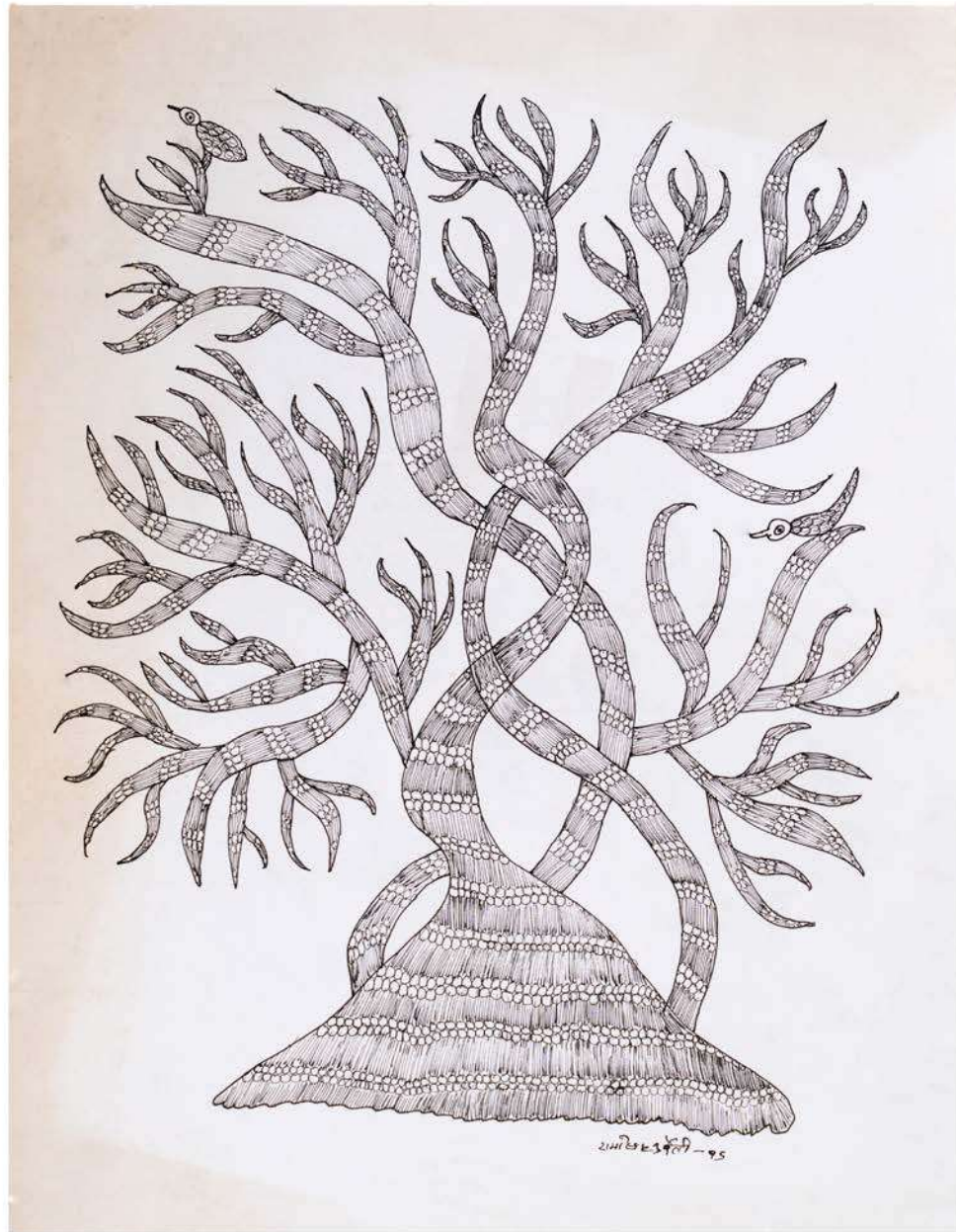




*Untitled (Peacock), 2003*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



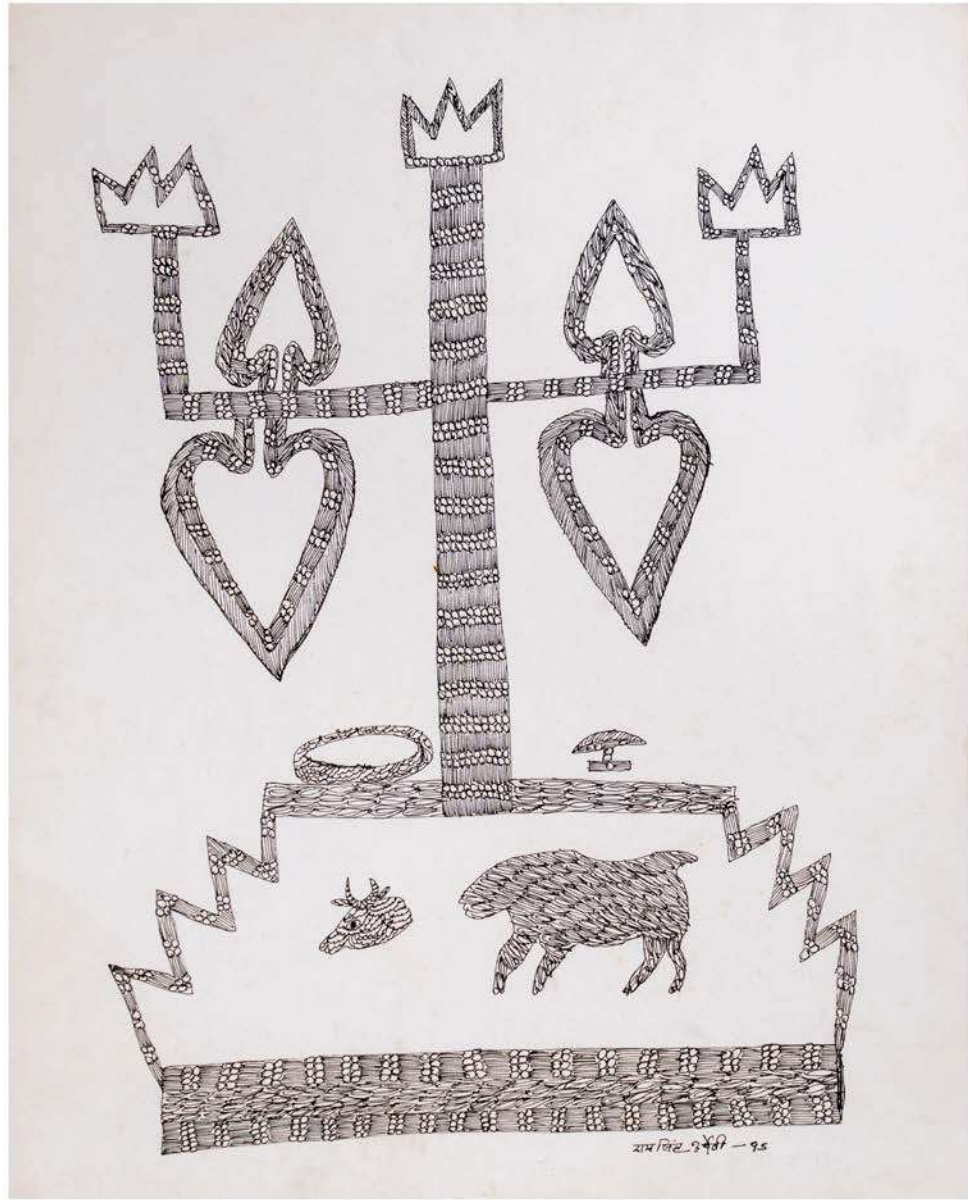
*Khargosh, 1998*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



Untitled (Tree), 1995  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



Khero Mai, 1999  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



*Untitled, 1995*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch

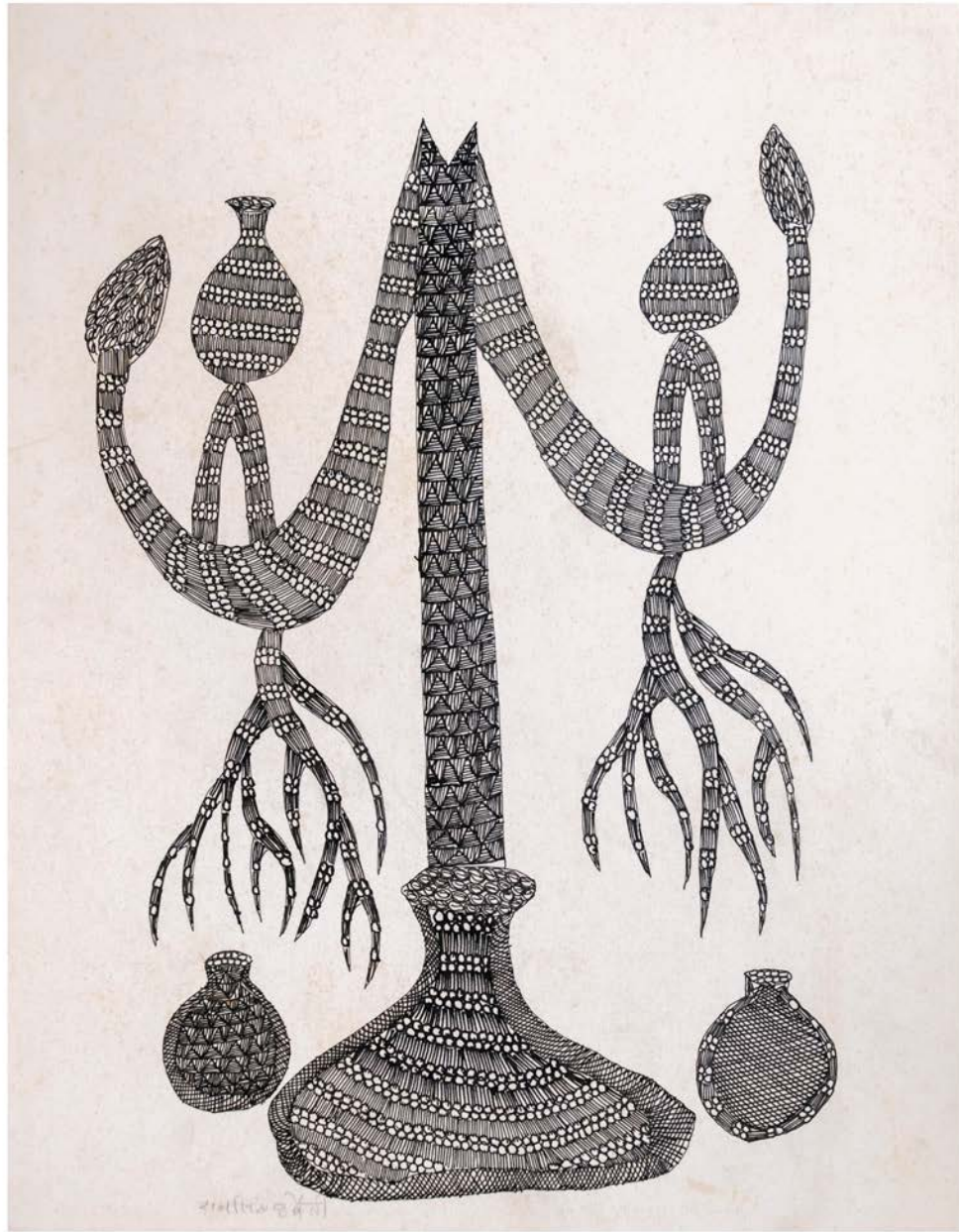


*Untitled (Man holding cycle), 1992*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch

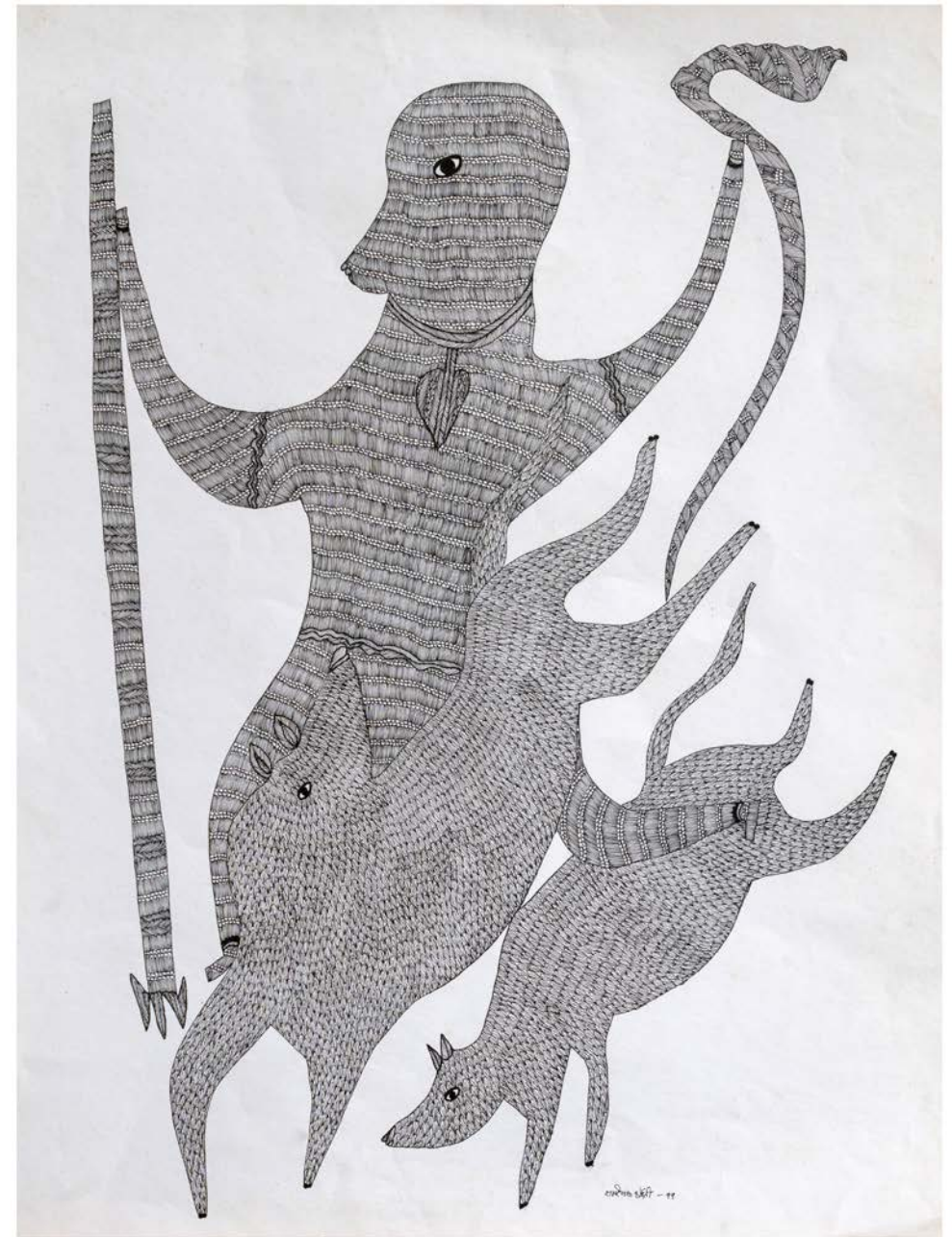


Untitled  
(Shepherd with  
his cows), 2005  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch

रामलिनका 05

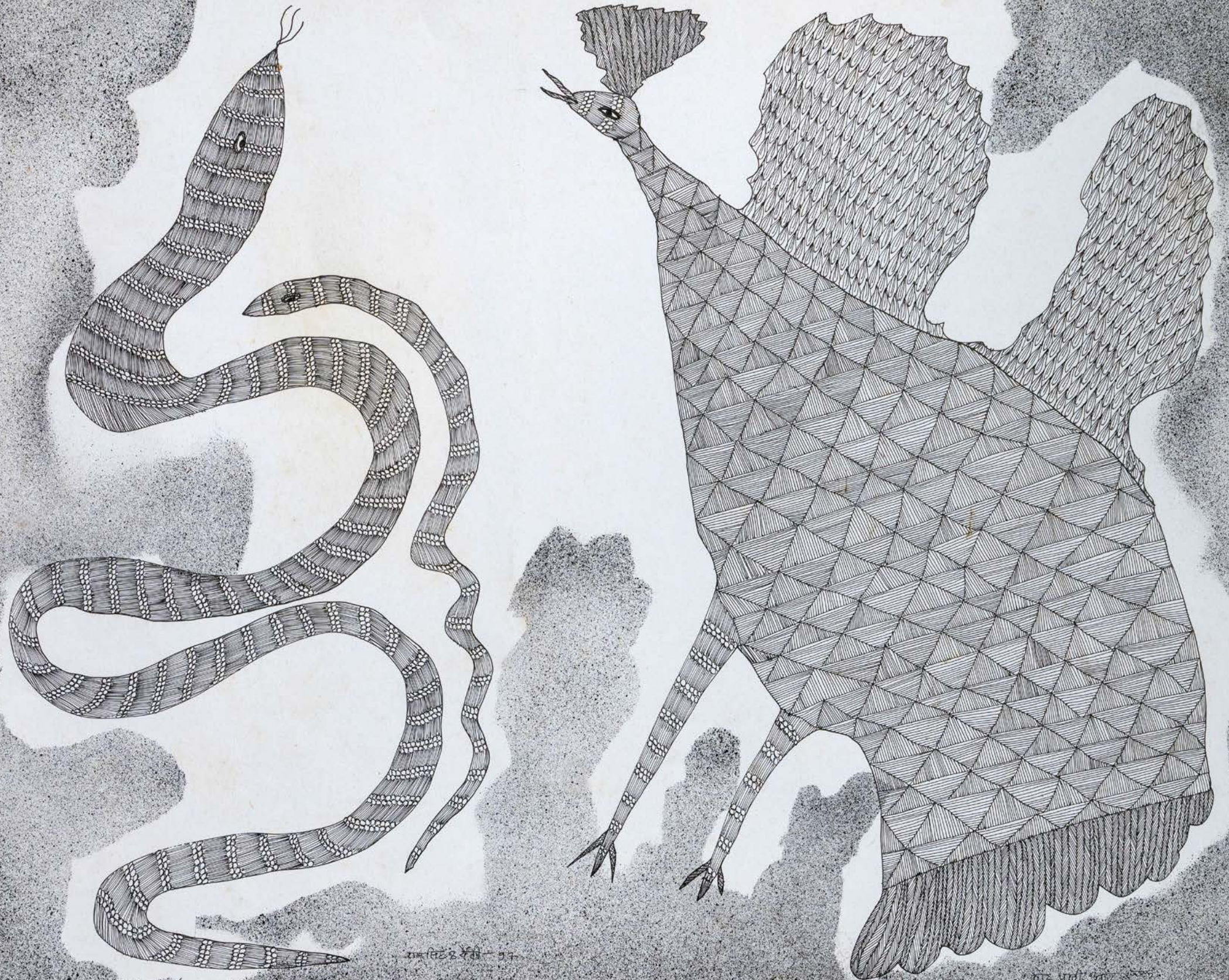


*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
14 x 11 inch



*Untitled, (Dev), 1999*  
Ink on paper  
26 x 20 inch

*Mor, Pakshi  
aur Saap,*  
1997  
Ink on paper  
26 x 20 inch

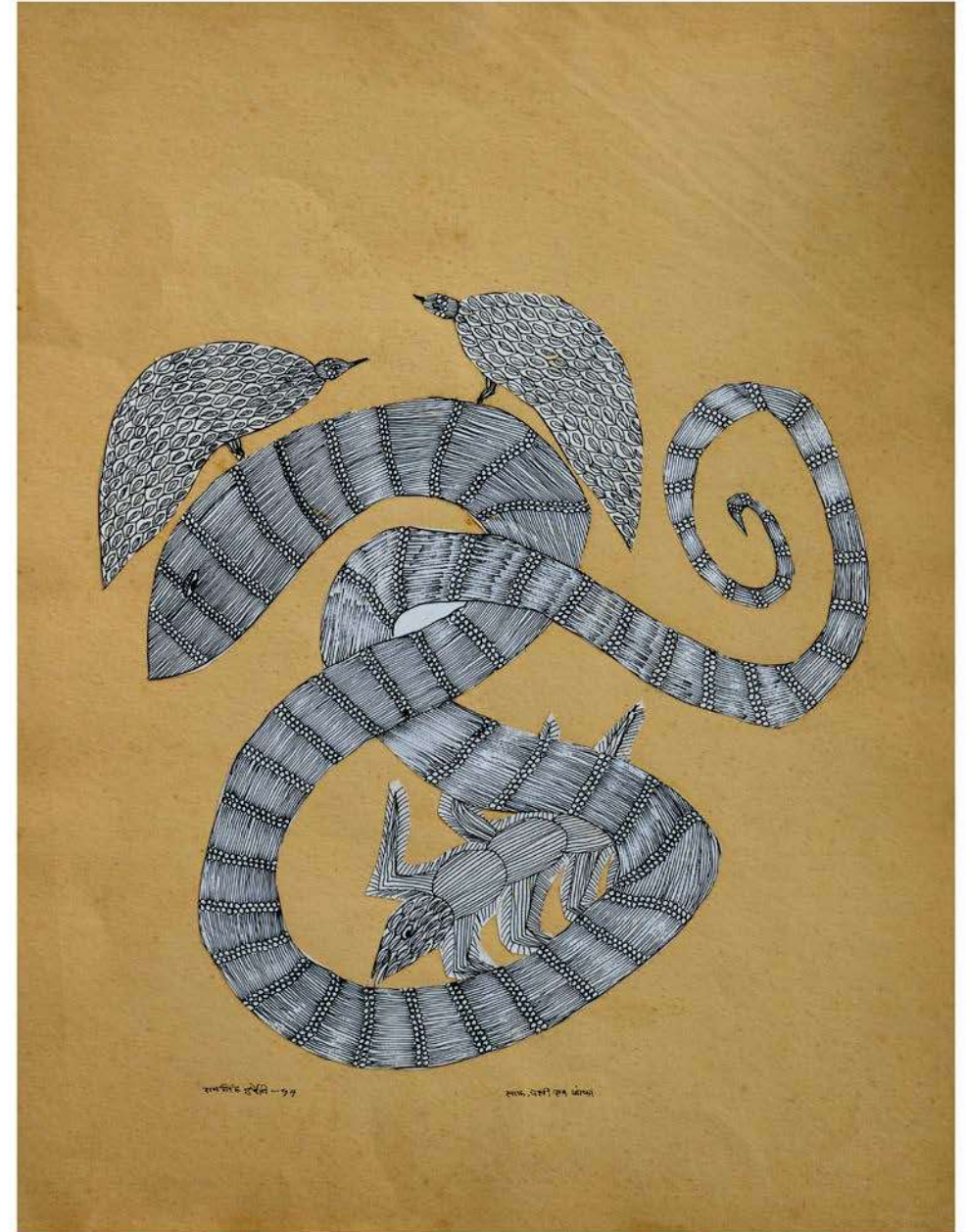


समसिद्धि १९९७

समसिद्धि १९९७



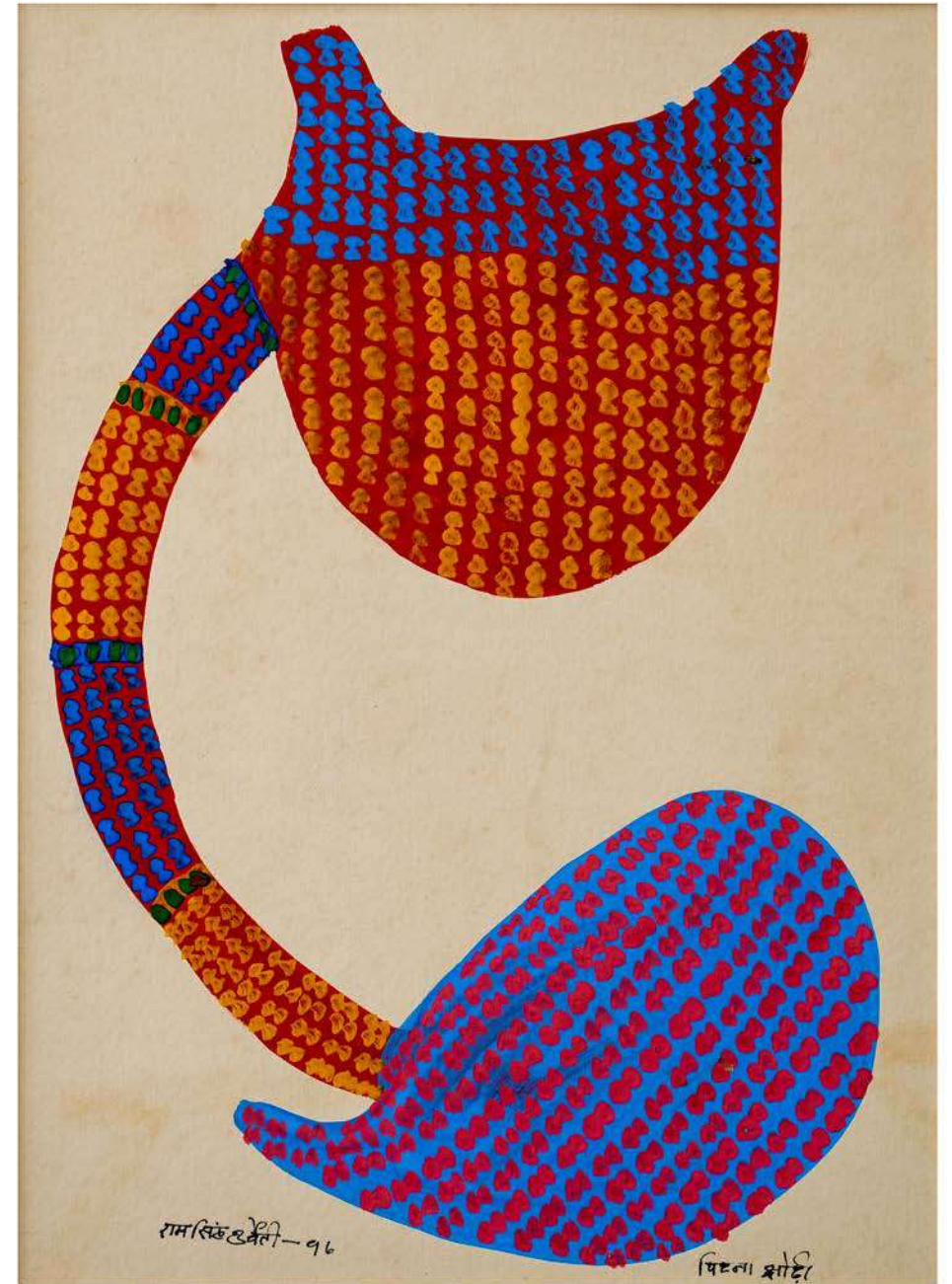
Sheshnaag Dev, 1997  
Ink on paper (Collage)  
27 x 21 inch



Saap, Pakshi evam Fanfa, 1997  
Ink on paper (Collage)  
27 x 21 inch



Untitled, 2002  
Water based colour on paper  
14 x 11 inch



Pitna Jhodi, 1996  
Water based colour on paper  
13 x 10 inch

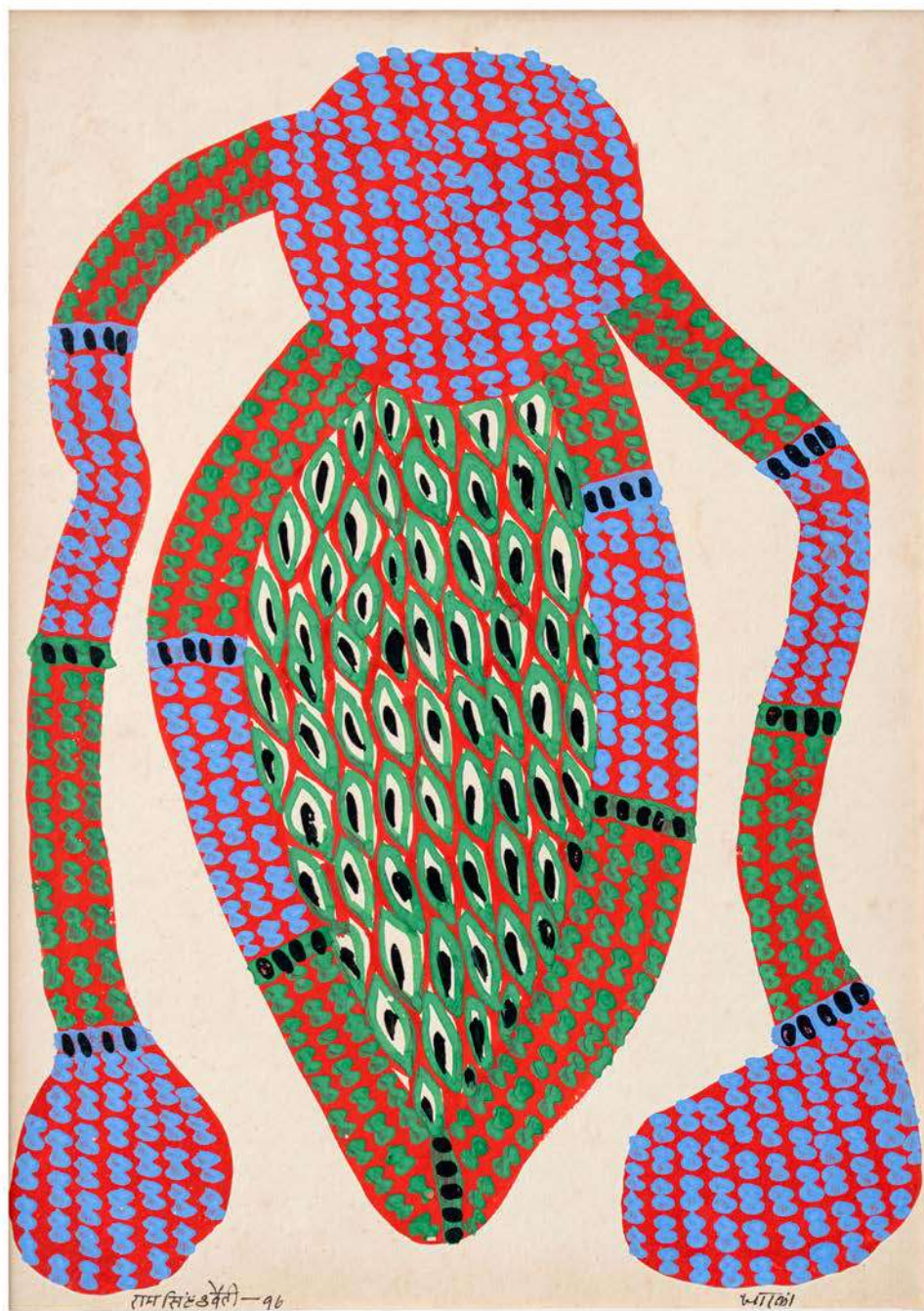




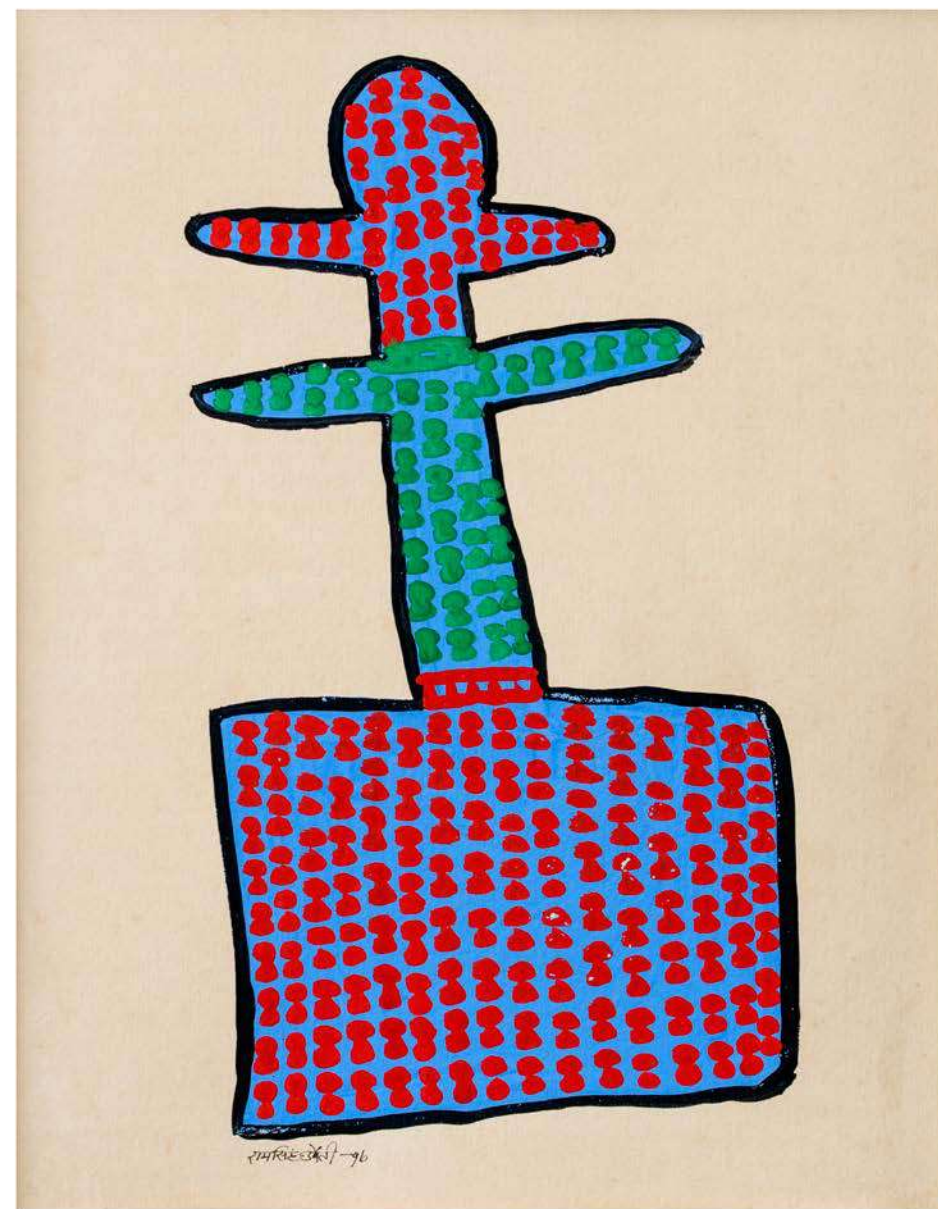
Untitled (Child on swing), 2002  
 Water based colour on paper  
 14 x 11 inch



Untitled, 1998  
 Water based colour on paper  
 14 x 11 inch



Jaarka, 1996  
Water based colour on paper  
13 x 10 inch



Untitled, 1996  
Water based colour on paper  
13 x 10 inch



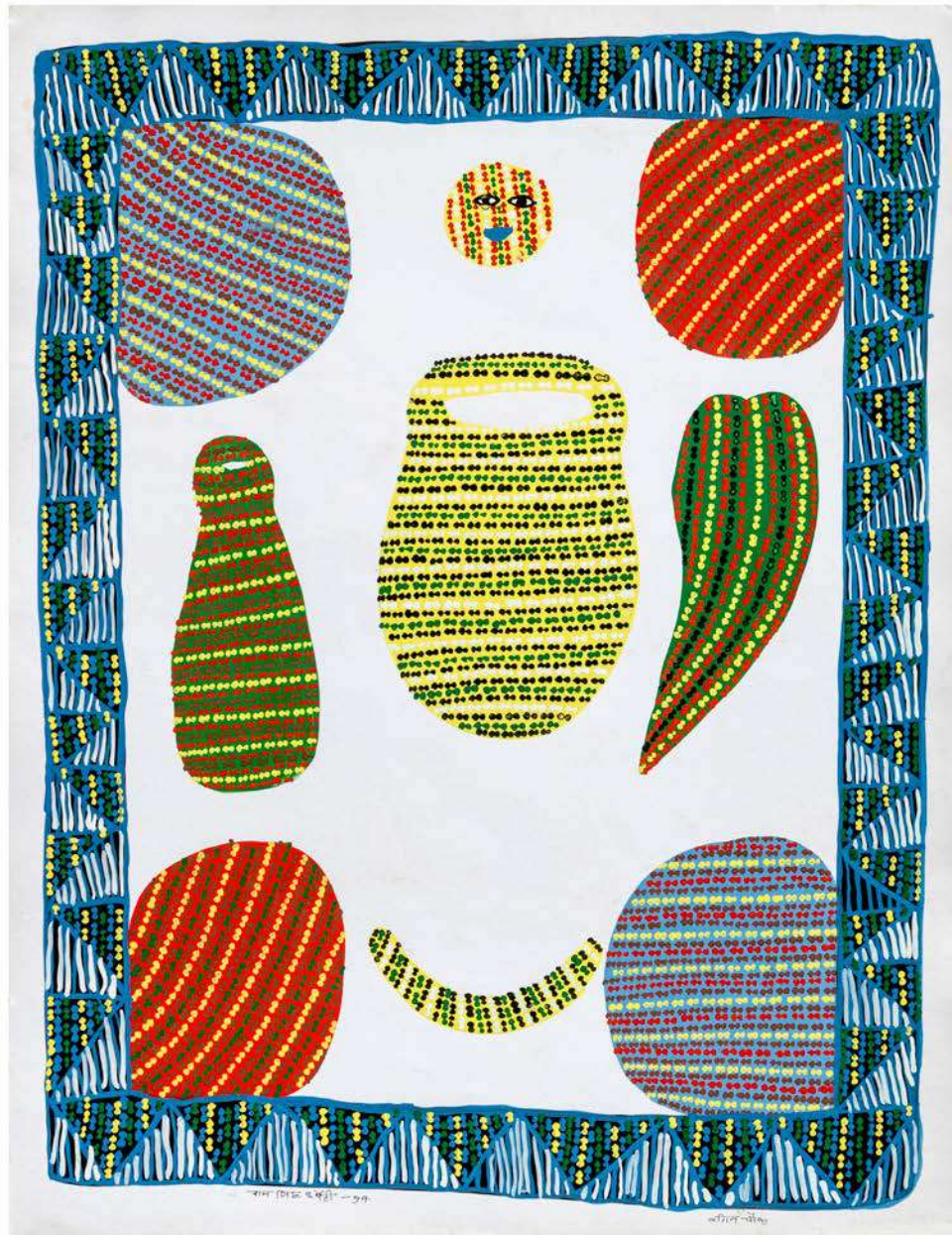
*Untitled, 1998*  
Water based colour on paper  
14 x 11 inch



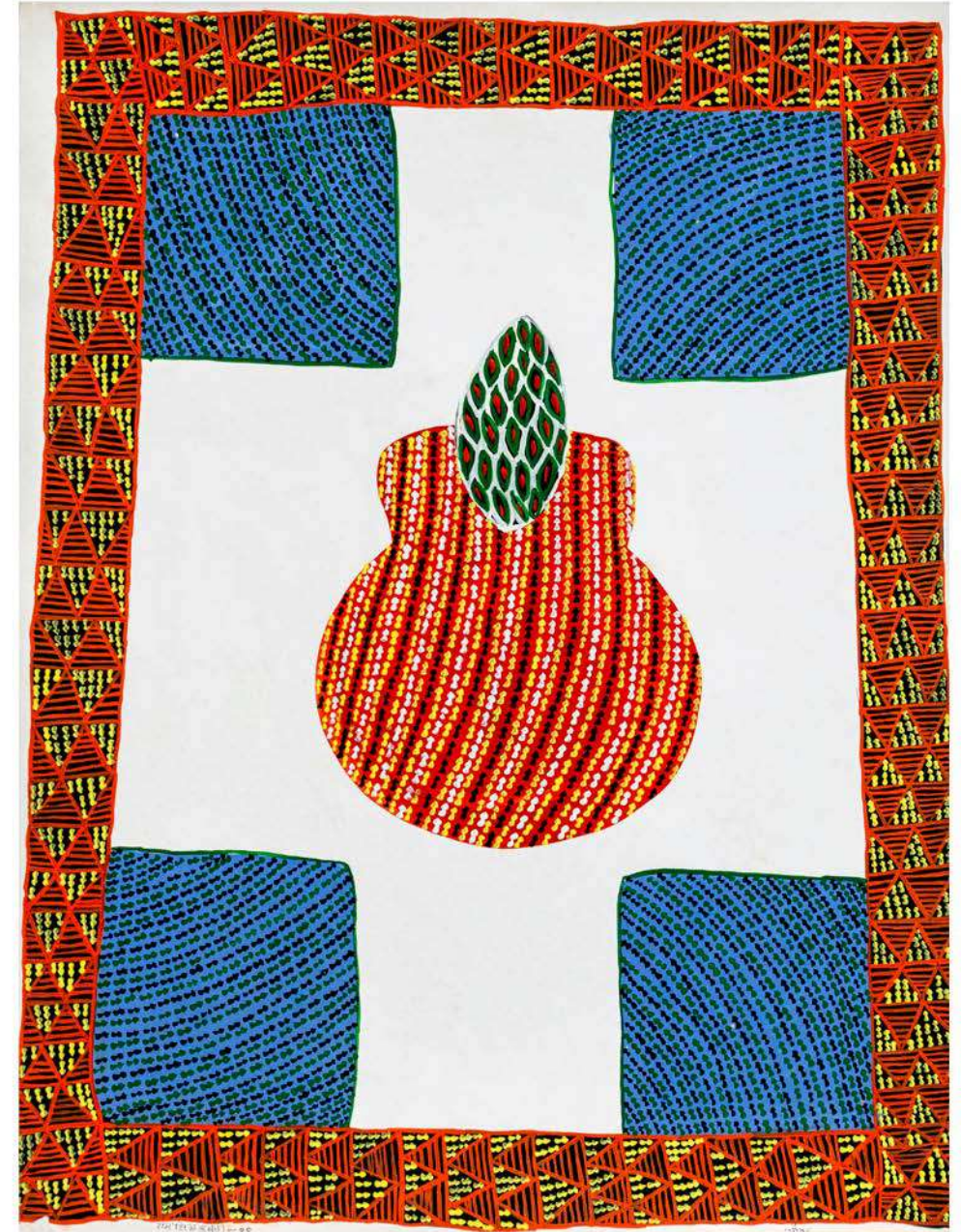
*Untitled, 2002*  
Water based colour on paper  
14 x 11 inch



*Untitled, 2002*  
Water based colour on paper  
14 x 11 inch



Lagin Chowk, 1997  
Water based colour on paper  
25 x 20 inch



Chowk, 1999  
Water based colour on paper  
25 x 20 inch

## *Sur Aur Taal ki Kahani/The Story of Divine Music*

Through this 12 folio-set created in 2007-08, Ram Singh Urveti narrates an age old Gond tale.

A king had two queens, the elder had four sons, and the younger had one. While the elder queen's sons were all married, the younger queen's son was yet to be wed. The kingdom prospered under their rule.

One night, the king dreamt of heavenly angels dancing, a fingerless man playing a magical instrument and a parrot reading the Ramayana.

Upon waking, the king was determined to discover the secret of this music and instructed all his sons to find and bring musicians capable of producing such divine music. The four elder princes set out first in search, each on their path, while the youngest prince, departed last.

The four elder brothers got sidetracked from their mission and fell into the deceitful schemes of a woman. Meanwhile, the youngest brother found a meditating saint and served him faithfully.

When the sage's penance concluded, the prince explained his father's request in detail. Pleased with the prince's sincerity, the saint guided him on the path to find the desired tune.

The saint explained that the desired tune and music resided with Lord Indra's angels who also visited the Earth every morning to bathe and he would need to approach them directly to inquire about the details of his father's dream.

Following the advice, he saw the bathing angels and stole their clothes and darted to the ashram, with the angles following frantically. They prayed for their clothes back. The prince agreed, on the condition that they will take him to heaven and help him learn the secret behind the divine music.

As dreamt by the king, in heaven, the prince saw beautiful angels dancing, a fingerless musician playing a magical string tabla and a parrot reciting the Ramayana. The musician halted music and swiftly handed over the tabla to the prince. Much to everyone's surprise, the prince played the magical string tabla melodiously and captivated all the angels with his own musical skills.

After a few days the angels revealed the secret of the magical strings to the prince, explaining its various powers and said, "Pulling the first string illuminates the lamp; the second string collects an audience; the third string invites the kings and emperors to the concert; the fourth string invites the angels; the fifth string activates the musical instruments; the sixth string initiates the parrot to recite the Ramayana and the final seventh string commences the singing and dancing across the universe."



Brimming with this knowledge, the prince returned to earth. On his return he met two sages. The first sage was impressed with the magical musical instrument and bequeathed the prince with a magical stick that had the power to kill on order.

The second sage gave the prince a set of magical cooking utensils with the ability to prepare food instantly.

Armed with a magical musical instrument, stick and cooking utensils the prince felt invincible and proceeded to the city where he had heard about the charlatan girl who had captivated his older brothers using black magic.

He reached the girl's home and on seeing him she felt there maybe a new victim and ordered her magical cat to sit next to him. The prince ordered the magical stick to help release his brothers and headed back home with them and the girl in captivity.

On their return home, the youngest prince revealed the secret of the divine music -- impressed by his fortitude, the king decided to bequeath his kingdom to his youngest son.

The king set off on a pilgrimage with the magical musical instrument, opting for a life of renunciation and immersed himself in divine music. The king let go of worldly attachments and reached heaven with the musical instrument uniting with the angels who had bestowed the prince with this magical instrument in the first place.

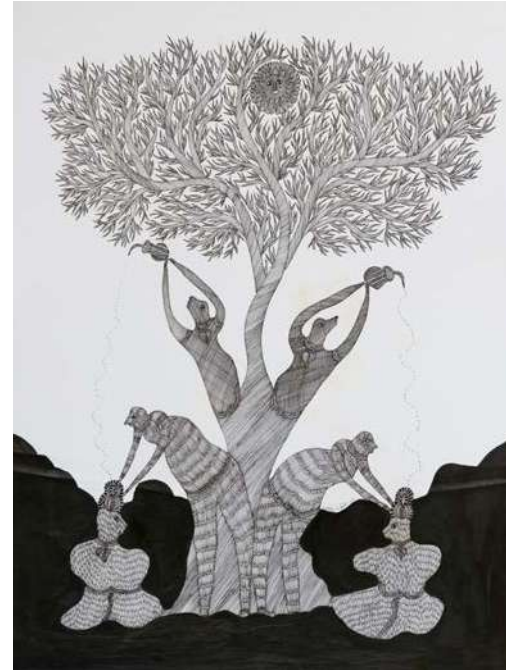
RAM SINGH URVETI



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki I*



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki II*

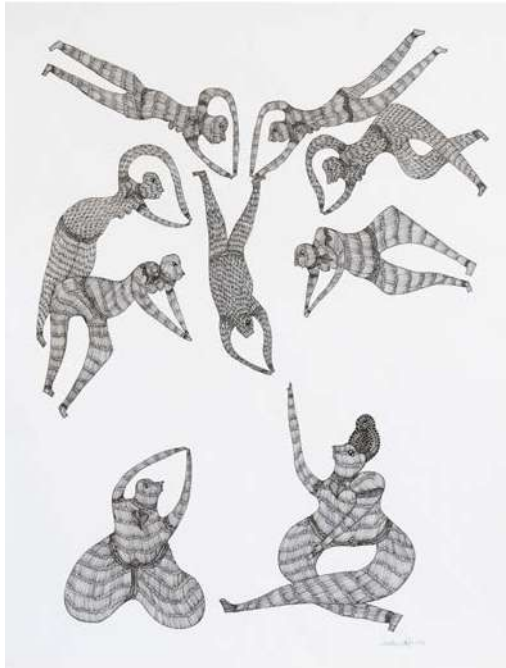


*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki III*

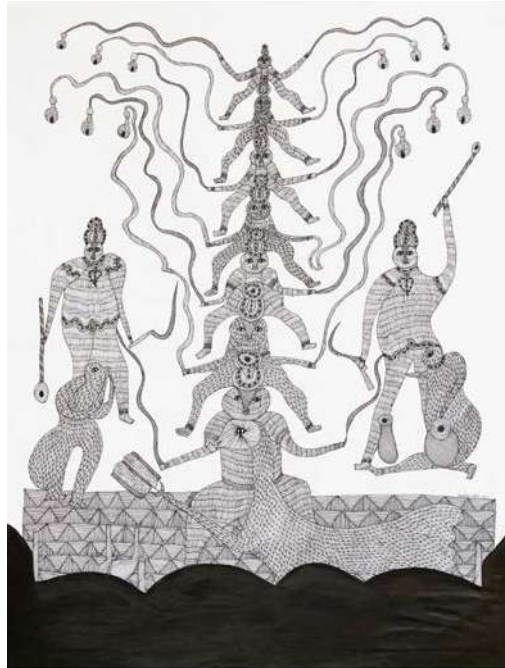


*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki IV*

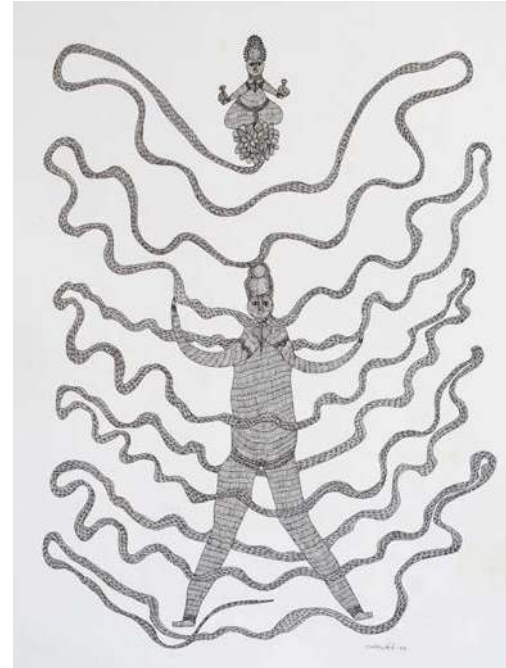
A set of 12 folios, 2007-2008  
Acrylic & Ink on canvas measuring 22 x 28 inch each



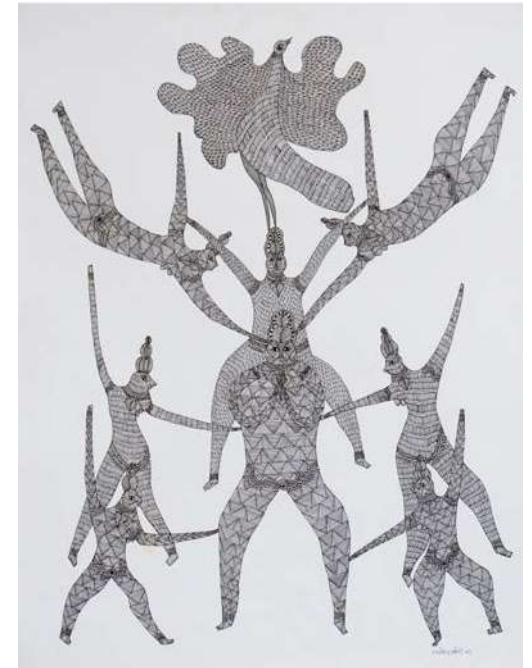
*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki V*



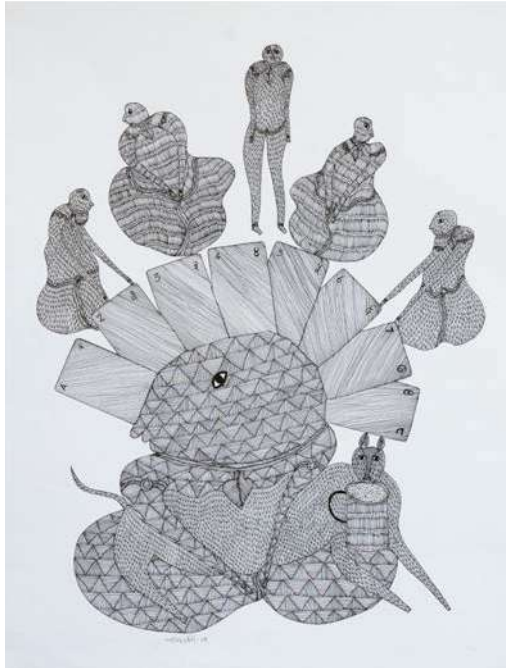
*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki VI*



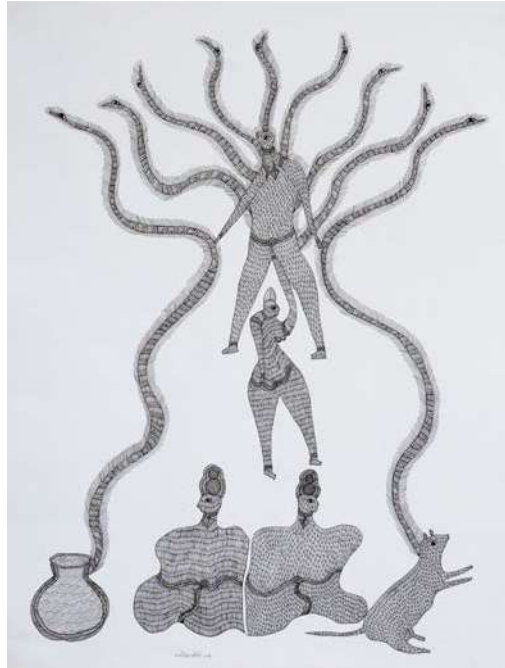
*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki VII*



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki VIII*



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki IX*



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki X*



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki XI*



*Kahani Sur aur Taal Ki XII*

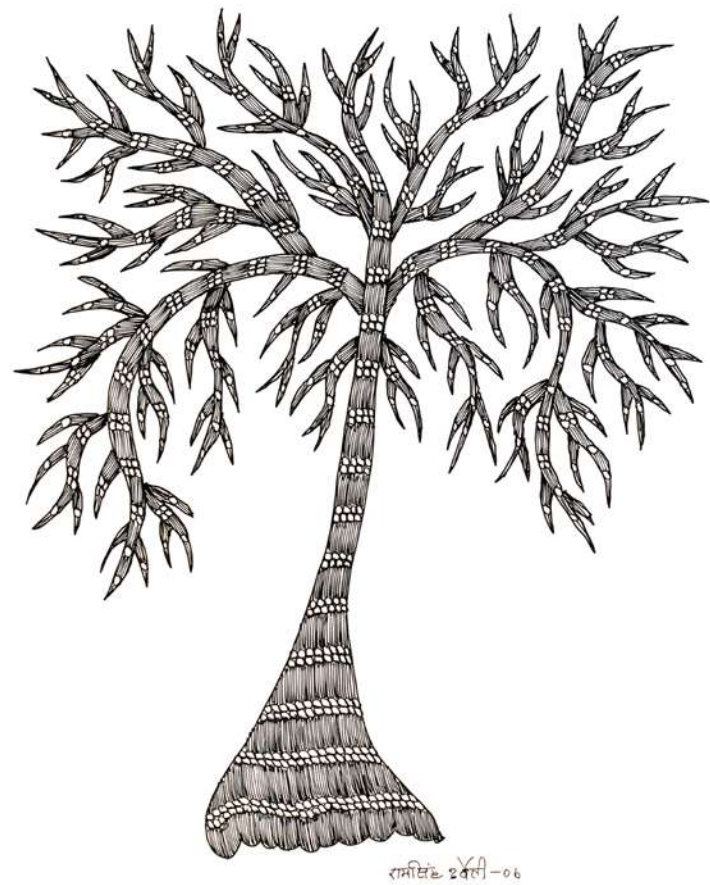




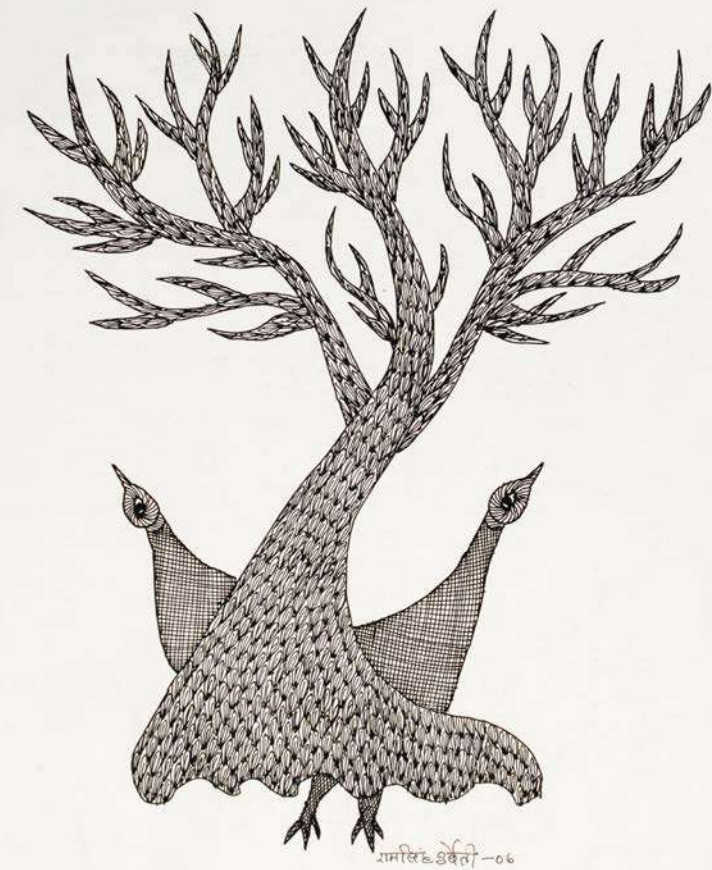
*Untitled (Swamp Deer), 2006*  
Ink on paper  
12 x 10 inch



*Untitled (Tiger & Tree), 2006*  
Ink on paper  
12 x 10 inch



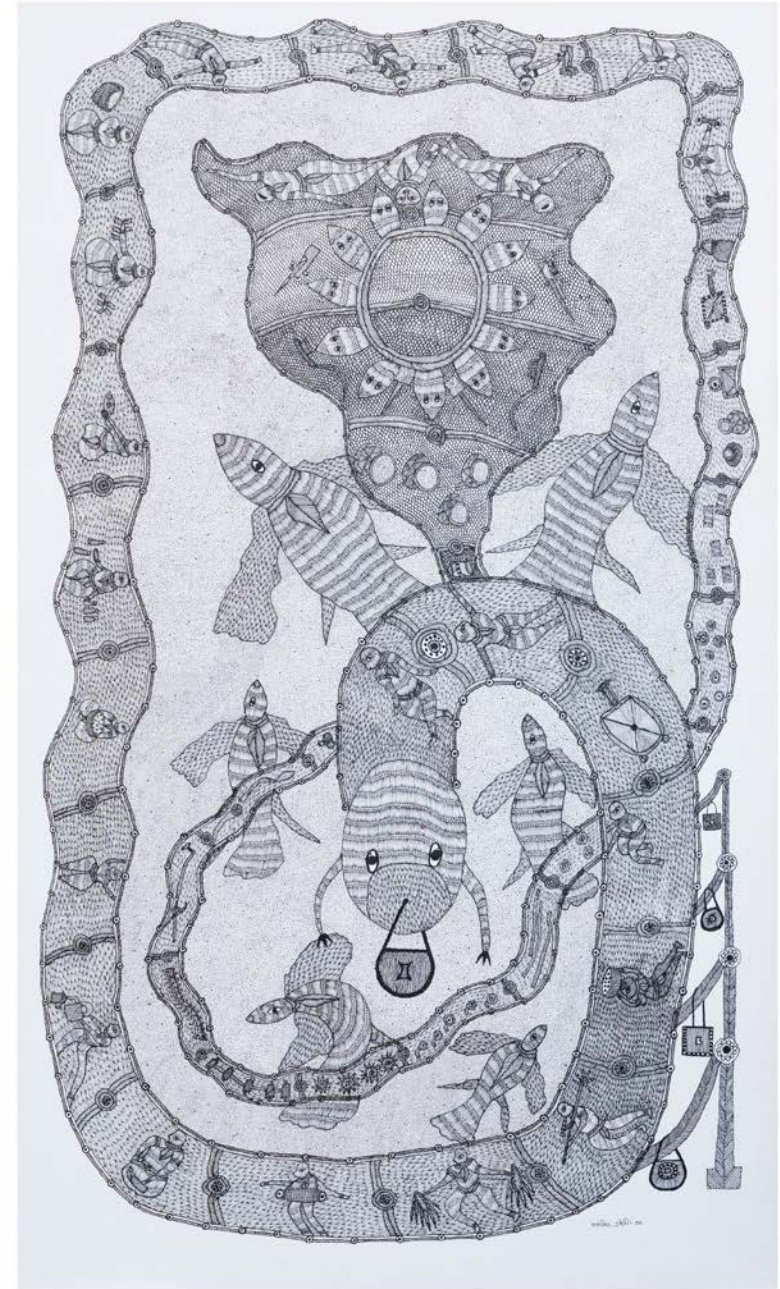
*Untitled (Tree)*, 2006  
Ink on paper  
12 x 10 inch



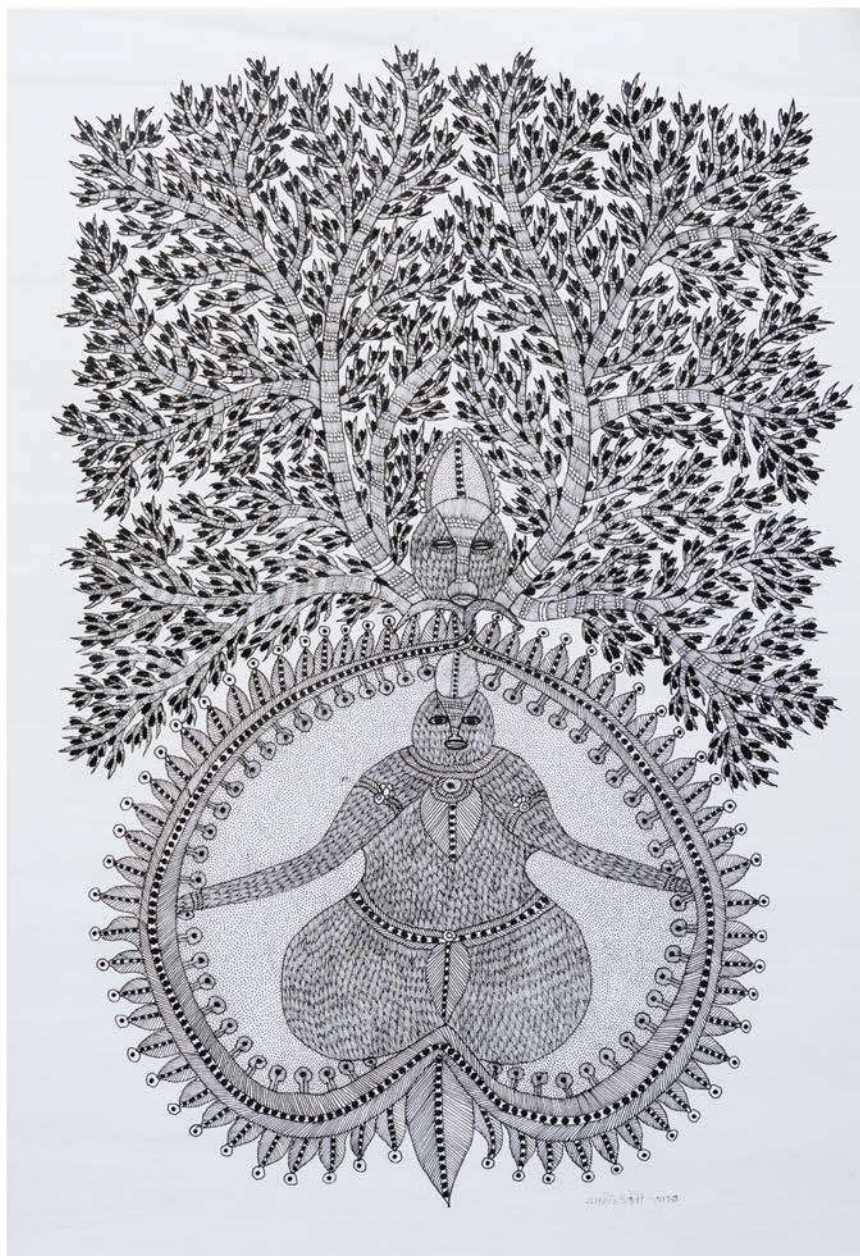
*Untitled (Birds & Tree)*, 2006  
Ink on paper  
12 x 10 inch



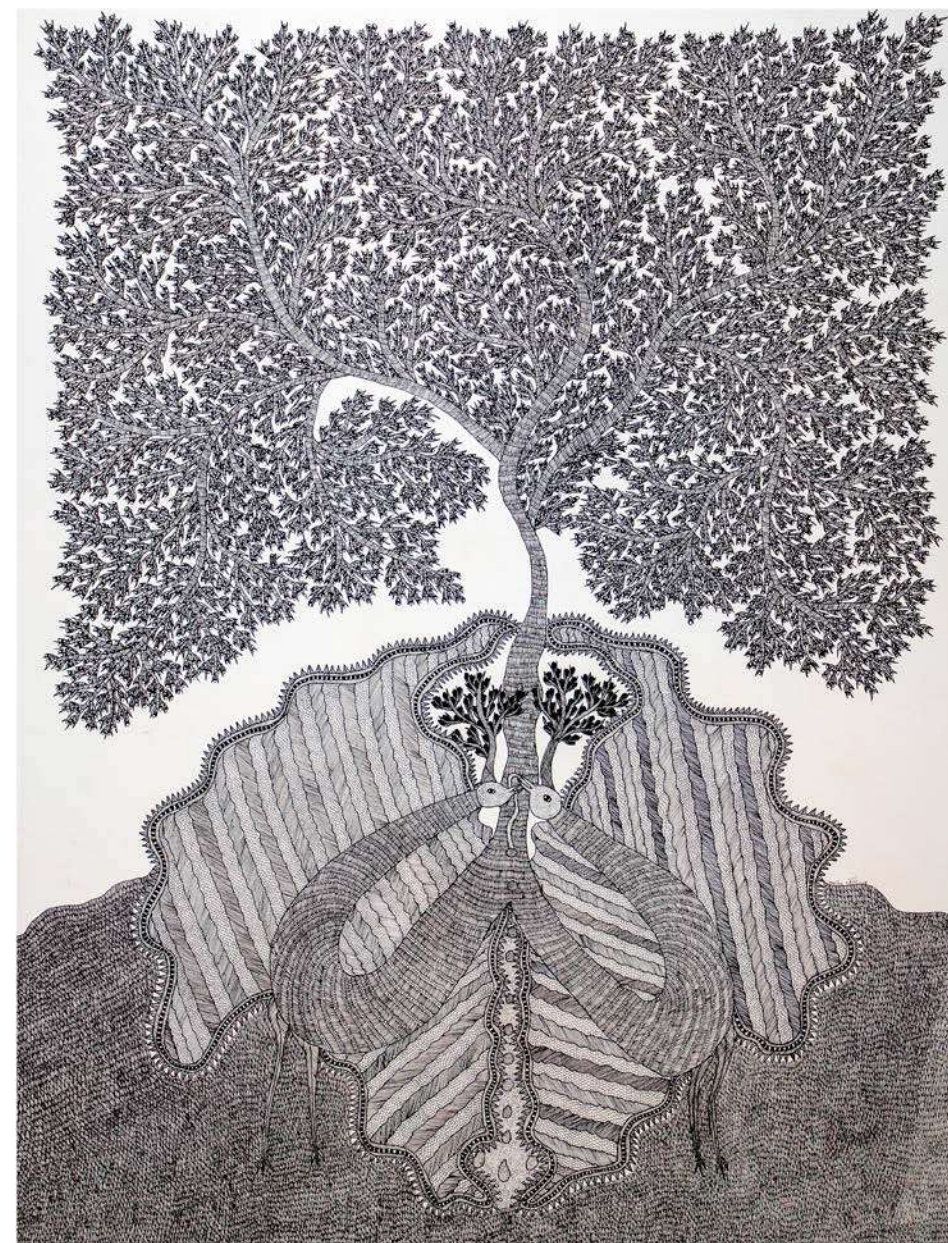
*Hanuman*, 2023  
Ink on canvas  
83 x 59 inch



*Corona*, 2020  
Ink on canvas  
56 x 33 inch



*Untitled (Devi)*, 2020  
Ink on canvas  
20 x 29 inch



*Vanapati II*, 2019  
Acrylic and Ink on Canvas  
56 x 43 inch

## Poetic ingenuity of popular arts

With Jangarh Singh Shyam, Ram Singh Urveti is one of the most important figures in contemporary Indian tribal art. Encouraged by Jagdish Swaminathan, he was one of the first to make the transition from ephemeral art to painting on canvas in the early 1990s.

As seen in the art of many tribal artists, trees are omnipresent in Ram Singh's paintings. His interest is concentrated on the trunk of the tree, an evocation of serene power and a concentration of energy that, like a mountain, seems indestructible. Thus his spirits often take the same stocky, thickset form of this part of the tree. They occupy, structure, and organize an important position on the canvas. The motifs and their arrangement have the same simplicity and effectiveness as flags. These spontaneous erections—in the same way that termite mounds are referred to as spontaneous *linga*—of dressed stone or tree trunks imbue his canvases with the heraldic aspect of animist standards. The visual naïveté reinforced by the rounded forms is also evocative of another current form of art, graffiti. In the art of both tribes, the one on the streets of New York and the other in the forests of Madhya Pradesh, the poetic ingenuity of the popular arts can be found.

— Herve Pedriolle, *Indian Contemporary Art* (2019)

Ram Singh Urveti owes the start of his international as well as Indian artistic career to Jangarh; a selection of his artwork was exhibited along with Jangarh's in the 1998 Musée des Arts Decoratifs exhibition entitled "Expeditions Indiennes". Yet over recent years he has developed a variety of new artistic opportunities, and together with younger Gond artists has become widely recognized through exhibitions and commissions in India and abroad.

— John Bowles, *Painted Songs and Stories* (2009)



*Gilehri ka sapna*  
2011  
Ink on canvas  
42 x 18 inch



*Mor, Pakshi aur  
Bada Dev, 2018*  
Acrylic on canvas  
56 x 76 inch

*Adivasi Karma Geet*, 2021  
Acrylic & Ink on canvas  
83 x 59 inch





*Phadki Pakshi*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
56 x 80 inch



*Shikaari*, 2020  
Acrylic on canvas  
56 x 80 inch





*Untitled*, 2011  
Acrylic on canvas  
42 x 31 inch



*Sheshnaag*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
79 x 55 inch

RAM SINGH URVETI was one of the earliest artists from the Pradhan Gond community to develop a unique artistic practice and has practiced for over three decades. His works are based on Gond myths and stories creating a world of fantasy and metamorphosis, coming alive with finely detailed organic forms.

Urveti had a seminal solo show at Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal in 2018 and at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai in 2001. He has authored, *I saw a Peacock with a Fiery Tail* and co-authored *Nightlife of Trees*, both with Tara Books, Chennai.

His artworks feature in important institutional collections, namely, Bharat Bhavan, IGRMS and Tribal Museum in Bhopal; Lalit Kala Akademi and IGNCA, Delhi; Sarmaya Arts Foundation, Mumbai; IIT, Bhilai, Chattisgarh; Dakshinachitra Museum, Chennai; Museum of Art & Photography, Bengaluru and Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.

Some of his noteworthy participations are : India Art Architecture and Design Biennale, Delhi, 2023; Recap (Illustration Biennale), The Netherlands, 2023; Tribal Contours, India Habitat Centre, 2011; Non-metropolitan, Five Contemporary Artists from India by Rob Dean Art at EW Gallery, Pasadena, 2010; The Trees Have Spoken curated by Ranjit Hoskote, at Pundole's Art Gallery, Mumbai, 2009; Inde at Ville de Martigny, Switzerland, 2008 and Expeditions Indiennes at Museum of Decorative Arts, Paris, 1998.

Urveti has received numerous accolades in his three decade long career, including the Noma Concours Award by UNESCO, Tokyo in 2000, the prestigious Bologna Ragazzi award for his book and the National Art Exhibition Award by Lalit Kala Akademi in 1998.

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