

Layers in Creative Thinking 1: Arupa – The Implicate Order of ‘Myth’

Tawalai Wolfs to Cave Paintings and Pithora Baba

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Abstract

This article explores how myth—rooted in embodied, multi-sensory experience—forms the earliest substrate of creative imagination, using the Tawalai wolf drawings, tribal Pithora paintings, and prehistoric cave art as case studies. These examples reveal how creativity emerges from a deep reservoir of emotional memory and collective symbolism, capable of producing profound cultural expressions. Drawing on frameworks from anthropology, phenomenology, and design pedagogy, the paper situates myth-based creativity within the **Arupa** model, where it arises in the Biological Life Order (BLO) and early Human Thought Order (HTO-1). As one moves toward higher cognitive orders—particularly through **Active Silence** of spiritual nature (CO-AS) *—creativity shifts from metaphor-driven narratives to insight-based acts of presence. The integrated section on *Implications for Design & Education* connects these ideas to ‘New-age foundation programmes’, highlighting AI, multisensory inputs, and inner-order practices as catalysts for reflective, transformative learning. This paper is the first in a planned series, leading toward holistic concerns involving Inner Order, Working Orders, and a holographic paradigm for Education in the AI era.

* *CO-AS* stands for **Active Silence in Cosmic Order**—a state of attention in which creative insight arises without reliance on memory or motive. In the Arupa framework, Active Silence of spiritual kind aligns with **Cosmic Order**, enabling creativity that is choiceless, impersonal, and integrative.

1.0 Introduction:

Way back in 80s, I had a wonderful opportunity to conduct a workshop in a remote village along with Prof. Kirti Trivedi (Kirti), my younger colleague (now well known), late MSG Rajan, IDC workshop in-charge and Late Sudeep Mistry, a M-des student. It was greatly facilitated by Kirti as his elder brother was a Head master of the school. The unique experience led to an article, ‘Tawalai Wolf’, in my website. (1). My current reflections on this in the context AI, led to examination of cave paintings as well as Pithora baba paintings. My personal association with late Haku Shah, well known for Art and Cultural studies, at NID and later during his visits to IDC, had exposed me to his significant work on ‘Pithora baba – painting’ ritual (2) which used to happen in Chota Udaipur in Gujarat. His son, Parthiv Shah, shared the pictures and connected documents readily. Reflections on these three topics:

- Tawalai Wolfs
- Cave paintings
- Pithora baba Paintings

led to the present article to reveal different ‘Shapes or Rupas’ of ‘Myth’ with its presence in every creative Act. Its implications for Individual and Collective creative

acts are further discussed, extending its bearings into 'Arupa Framework for New Age Foundation.

2.0 Encountering the 'Wolf'

In the Tawalai workshop, something unexpected happened when the children were asked to draw, a local narrative of a 'Wolf', which had terrorized the villagers. None of the children had seen a wolf, nor an image of one. Kirti got a bright idea of using 'wolves- the pictures drawn by children' on 'Abhikalpa' (an idc magazine which he was editing) cover page as seen below. I will examine the 'output', in 'Arupa' framework further, to reveal 'Layers of creative Thinking'.



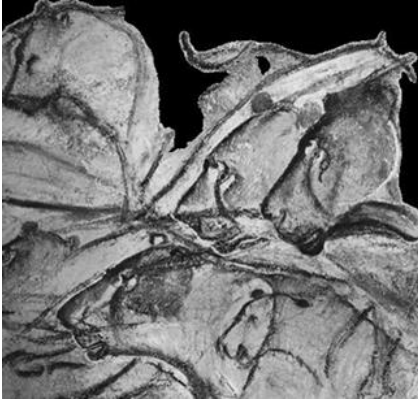
Courtesy: prof. Kirti Trivedi

3.0 A Peep into the Past: Cave Paintings

One can look at Cave painting as earliest attempts of humans to represent outer world.

Entoptic patterns (dots, spirals, zigzags) in cave art resemble visual effects from trance or hallucinogenic states. Based on such studies, researchers like David Lewis-Williams (3) suggest that Upper Paleolithic cave art may reflect visions induced by altered states.

↓



Cave Paintings



↑The above line drawings, are adapted from actual Paleolithic cave paintings. They are presented here in monochrome to foreground the gestural essence and metaphorical tension within these ancient marks

4.0 Pithora Baba: A Living Ritual in Painting tradition

Insights of Haku Shah from Pithora Baba-Ritual Painting offer us a living, vibrant example to examine in the frame work of 'Arupa the Implicate order' to move towards our overall objective. As he puts it:

'Pithora Baba is not a god in the usual sense, but a presence—a guardian spirit deeply woven into the daily life of tribal communities like the Rathwas and Bhilalas in central India. His image emerges not in temples or statues, but on the walls of people's homes, through elaborate ritual paintings known as Pithora.'

Haku Shah with his team made an extensive study, recoding first hand evidence from several persons, like Ramabhai.

'Devni sawari,' "*the deity's procession mounted on horseback.*" says Ramabhai, "Baddhu kaam kare,"—*he will do all your work, he fulfils your wishes.* "Hachu rakhe,"—*he keeps the truth. Grain failing, cattle disappearing, a woman unable to bear children—(when) Pithora Bavji is invoked.*"

The ritual doesn't begin with the painting—it begins with a whisper, a question, a consultation. The person in distress brings a small bundle of maize, lentils, and a five-paisa coin to the village Badwa (shaman-priest), who examines it on a wooden bench and divines the cause. Once the god is appeased and healing begins, a promise must be fulfilled: Pithora must be painted.

The ritual unfolds over days—with feasting, drumming, chanting, and sacred protocols. The painting grows organically, guided by tradition and trance, filled with horses, tigers, ancestors, sun, moon, and village deities. Sometimes, painters deliberately leave something out, and the priest, in trance before the painting, cries out:



The priest in trance

"Atlu kem maru baki meheli chhe?"

"Why has something of mine been left out?" asks the priest.

It is a test of presence—His presence.

At the heart of the ritual is Indra, whose tree branch (kalam) is planted in the ground, upright and unwavering. A lemon is tied to it. The sacred song sung at this moment evokes a blend of myth, courtly ritual, and earthy joy:

Indiraj nu daal wadhao re, bolo Indirajo re.
May Indra be greeted, call on Lord Indra
Indiraj mandal ma tran kodia chhe...
In the ritual court of Lord Indra, there are three lamps.

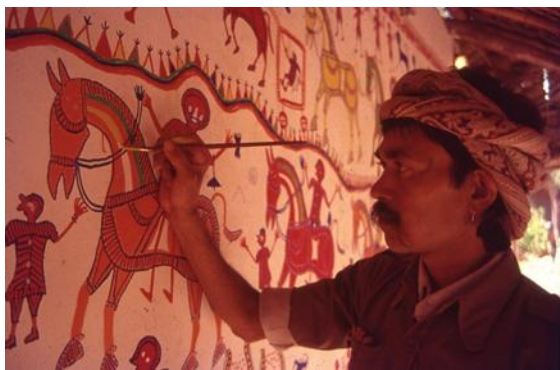
Three lamps, three goats, three cocks...

For Haku Shah, this wasn't "tribal art," but a living grammar of being. He saw in it not art to be looked at, but a sacred act to be lived. Each stroke, song, and offering were part of an ancient dialogue between the seen and unseen.

To meet Pithora Baba is to meet ritual as form, trance as language, and painting as prayer.



1



2



3

1 to 3, photographs by Haku Shah, Courtesy: Parthiv Shah (4)

5.0 Looking at 'Myth' across the three scenarios

A closer look at each of these cases, reveals the 'Arupa- the implicate order' of 'Myth', in its varied shades and intensities.

5.1. Myth in Tawalai wolf

In Tawalai workshop framework, there were no conventional rituals, neither music nor movements to trigger the images.

- The common stimulus was the fear of a “wolf,” as told by elders, tied to the killing of a local villager.
- None of the children had ever seen a wolf, nor even a picture of one.
- Each drawing was suggesting the operation of the individual psyche—*I-psyc*—in full play.
 - ❖ The imagined wolf was based on local animals and birds like pig, rat, cock, goat, etc, which each child had encountered earlier.
 - ❖ Drawings/sketches were done in a friendly, secure zone.
 - ❖ Conducive eco-system for free expression was present.

These drawings can be seen as *pre-metaphoric transformations*— figures born not from visual reference but from multi-sensory memories, encoded in the body without conscious recall. The wolf story, coloured by the elders’ account of a killing, tapped into a deeper **mythic background** built from many other tales heard over time.

Here, *the significant leap was not from observation but from emotional metaphor—activated by inner sensation. An Inner Order, operating in Active Silence, allowed an innate tactile sense and the skill of drawing to manifest into a visual form.*

5.2 Myth in cave Paintings

How might we see the *Arupa* of cave paintings?

Though direct evidence of “mythical origins” is scarce, signs of ritual grounding—and of collective thinking—are present.

Consider the broader context:

- Caves offered a secure shelter for humans.
- Fire, a newly mastered power, enabled entry into deep recesses of darkness with command.
- Cooked food had already contributed to brain developed.
- Spoken language was in place, enabling shared stories and coordinated action.

Given these conditions, it is reasonable to imagine that many cave paintings emerged from *collective rituals*—possibly involving fermented drinks or hallucinogenic plants, accompanied by drumbeats, chanting, or rhythmic dance. Such states could have opened the way for altered perception, in which etching or painting became not an individual “artistic” act but a communal expression embedded in shared presence.

One striking anomaly remains: *the near-absence of collective hunting scenes*—despite hunting’s central role in survival.

To sense what the group experience of painting might have been, I recall my own participation in a tribal dance in Madhya Pradesh:

Tribal Dance in Madhya Pradesh, 1970s

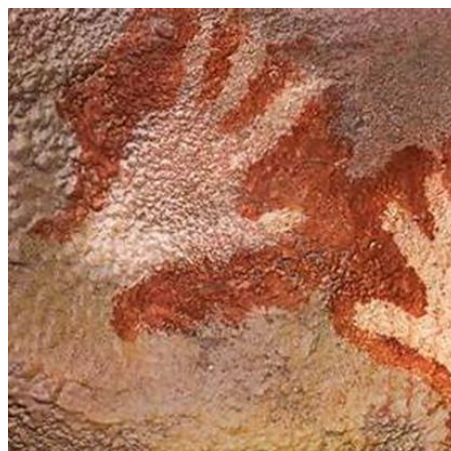
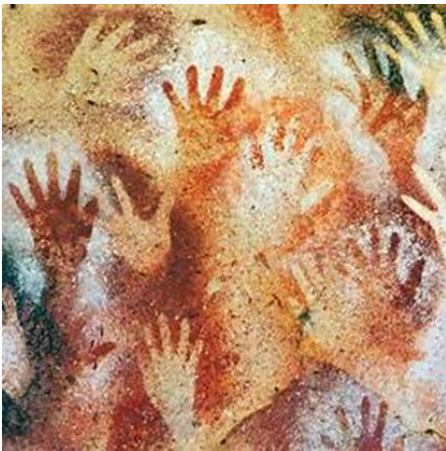
In the 1970s, along with a few friends, I joined a group of tribals in Madhya Pradesh for their post-dinner dance — an event that welcomed newcomers with open arms. The dance began after a shared drink of rice wine. It was easy to blend with the group.

You simply follow the steps of the person next to you, and you are soon part of whole with rhythm binding . A single drummer kept up a steady beat, sometimes accompanied by singing, but often the dance continued with only the drum as its heartbeat.

After a long stretch, there would be a pause — another round of rice wine — and then a new dance would start. An unspoken competition existed between the drummer and the dancers: who would get tired and stop first? Often, the rivalry lasted the entire night, going right into the morning.

As the hours passed, the body settled into a kind of trance. Personal thoughts dissolved. The dancing became a form of a *group active silence* — a collective meditation — both deeply relaxing and profoundly energizing. Such experiences leave a lasting mark, subtly shaping one’s *Inner Order*.

Perhaps Cave painters had such *group experience* which fueled their ‘Imagination’ not as mere mental image-making but as a *capacity to generate that which is not present—visually,sonically, spatially, emotionally*. The process could be further deduced as a kind of ritual with pictures of imprinted hands on the cave walls.



↑Deep cave hand stencil – negative imprint created by blowing pigment around the hand.

Scholars like P. Dobrez frame these as “**proprio-performative**” marks (5): visible traces that communicate immediate self-presence, and serve as a bridge between the individual and the environment.

5.3 Myth in Pithora Paintings

With the help of insights of Haku Shah, we can see its characteristics.

- Participants had a deep faith in the presence of Pithora Baba. Rama Bhai recalls how the priest, in a state of possession, becomes the character himself—knife in hand—pointing out flaws in the painting. Sometimes, the painter deliberately plants a “fault” to test the priest’s exalted awareness, almost like a scientific verification.
- Presence of ritual procedures with physical elements like grains, sacrificed heads of goats acquire a ‘meaning’.
- Singing of songs with drum beats to invoke Pithora baba.
- Story, which perhaps people will be listening from their childhood.
- Pictures of horses, deities, animals, ancestors, and village scenes—each symbol carrying layers of communal meaning.
- Absence of any mention of smell. A box is added below to take a deeper dip into the aspect of smell ↓

The Unsmelled Ritual – A Note on Embodied Selectivity

In Haku Shah’s vivid documentation of the Pithora ritual, *one sense stays silent: smell*. Amidst rhythmic chants, vibrant wall-paintings, animal offerings, and trance states, there is no mention of incense, blood, fermented grains, or the pungent blend of ritual life.

This *absence is not absence*, but a trace of the observer’s *embodied selectivity*. As a Gandhian, vegetarian ethnographer, Haku Shah’s lens—deeply empathetic—may have gently *filtered* certain sensory zones, especially those dissonant with his cultural palate.

Tribal cultures live within a full sensorium—smell, blood, dung, ghee, decay, and bloom co-exist. For *mainland observers*, these enter only partially. The *unlearning of one’s olfactory boundaries* is often the last door to *shared experience*.

In the *Arupa lens*, this silence becomes a clue: that every act of seeing, describing, or recording carries the *scent of the recorder*. And what is unsmelled... is often what awaits a deeper form of entry

6.0 Arupa of 'myth' as Active Silence for Design Education

We can infer how myth as Active Silence can play a part in Design Education in different ways

6.1 Pre-metaphoric transformations in each individual

In the Arupa model, myth-based creativity emerges from the BLO (Biological Life Order) and HTO-1 — metaphorical, figural mode of thinking. It is deeply personal, emotionally rich and often story-based. In case of Tawalai wolfs . myth acted as **active field** shaping perception and creative expression.

Each drawing was a *pre-metaphoric transformation*—inner sensation turning into a rupa (shape)—nurtured by a secure, charged ecosystem

Similar event can occur in a studio mode learning of Design (6)

In one foundation exercise in IDC, Metaphor based Perfume bottles', it became evident in a student's recall after several years:

'VM: When we were asked to choose an inspiration, I went into my childhood memories where we had a Parijat tree in the courtyard of our ancestral home at my town. Every morning, I used to collect these flowers for offering. At times I used to make a dense garland of it. My fingers would get coloured by touching the flower stems. My challenge was to convert that delicate form to a voluminous form. I was struggling with it a motif and created an easy to make body of the bottle.' (7)



Bottle designed by VM (Vinay Mundada)

6.2 Active Silence as a shared Ritual

'Active Silence' is not the absence of sound, but a *field of attentive presence*. When shared by a group, it can take a ritual form—even if each participant engages differently.

We can see this in Pithora and other tribal events:

- The drummer does not dance.
- The dancer may not chant.
- Someone may simply sit, holding space.

Yet all remain within the same field—their energies aligned not by uniform action, but by intentional co-presence.

Design education can harness this by creating **scores** rather than scripts—a loose framework where improvisation thrives. Students might sketch, model, or observe in silence, occasionally breaking into conversation, making, or movement—each mode feeding into the others. Like in a tribal gathering, the value lies not only in the final artifact but in the *quality of engagement* that emerges from this collective rhythm

Architectural and Design schools have been practicing ‘Studio mode’ as studied by Donald Schon, giving scope for creation of such charged atmospheres.

In my own experience this depends on values of the school management and Inner Order of Instructors.

- A sketching class happening in the open space of design circle at IDC under a tree’
- Synectic session conducted on the banks of Powai Lake in IITB compass

are examples of such emerging rituals

6.3 Implications of ‘Myth’ for Design & Education

The capacity to hold such a shared field of attention is not just a cultural trait—it can be cultivated in design education.

In the *Arupa* framework, myth is not a cultural leftover but a **shaping field**—moulding perception, learning, and expression. Active Silence can turn this field into fertile ground for design pedagogy.

When learners step into a **shared field of attention**—in a studio, workshop, or outdoor setting—tacit knowledge, intuition, and imagination surface naturally. The facilitator’s role shifts from delivering content to **holding the space**—as in a jazz ensemble or a tribal dance—where connections form without force.

Such a field is inclusive by nature: participants contribute at different levels and in different modes, yet remain part of the same coherent whole. This mirrors how multidisciplinary teams in design operate—different specializations, shared vision.

6.4 Myth in Implicate Universal order

When we look at the 3case studies and draw inferences on operation of ‘myth’ beyond HTO, (Human Thought Order)some fundamental questions surface in Arupa framework. (8)

- Is myth fragmentary, or part of a larger whole?
- Is it local, or universal?
- How does it shape our Inner Order?

J. Krishnamurti (9) challenges the centrality of the psychological self in human consciousness. He proposes that true insight arises only when this self—shaped by ‘myth’ in memory, and identity—is dissolved. He points out that the conditioning of Cultural and Religious symbols which act on Individual, I-psych(I-psychological) often taken as noble traits, is a serious limitation.

And yet, human creativity draws from these embedded, emotional memories. Myth, in its positive dimension, becomes a *creative bank*.

For design education in an AI-driven, fast-changing world, this means going beyond technical skills. We must cultivate the ability to *sense, reflect, and respond*. The *Arupa framework* offers this: *grounding creativity in shared presence, mythic resonance, and the clarifying force of Active Silence*

Future explorations will move into **HTO-2** and **CO-AS**—where creativity shifts from metaphor to insight, from narrative to pure presence. At this level, the inner order is addressed so deeply it could reshape even the brain’s patterns

Conclusion

From the imagined wolves of Tawalai to the hand stencils of Paleolithic caves and the living Pithora rituals, this exploration shows that myth is not a relic of the past but a vital, embodied force in human creativity. Rooted in multi-sensory experience and collective presence, myth operates beneath the surface as an Arupa—an implicate order—shaping both personal imagination and shared cultural acts. Recognizing this deeper layer helps us to see creativity not just as the production of forms, but as participation in a resonant field where body, memory, and meaning converge. In this light, the future of design education—and even AI-augmented creativity—lies in engaging with this living substrate, where Active Silence and shared attentiveness become the ground from which new orders can emerge.

Looking Ahead

This article is the first in a series. Future explorations will turn to how myth forms the early substrate of the psychological self—a self that can inspire profound creativity yet also bind it within inherited patterns. In the Arupa framework, this journey moves from myth-based metaphor toward Active Silence touching Cosmic Order (CO-AS), where creativity is no longer driven by memory or motive, but by insight and presence. This progression links to broader concerns in the Arupa model: the relationship between Inner Order and Working Orders, a holographic (universal) paradigm, and the shaping of a new-age foundation for design education enriched by AI and multisensory inputs.



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