

Intangible Heritage Transformations- *Patachitra* of Bengal exploring Modern New Media

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Abstract: *A traditional performative art from eastern India- the patachitra tradition is an integral part of intangible heritage and is an important essence of folk and traditional media. Through centuries- the patachitra has been a platform where several methods of communication has converged- including visual messages, oral traditions and music- all of which helped to amalgamate, involve and portray nature, society and culture co-existing through a lucid dialogue. Thus, these paintings- on one hand portrayed society and its ideations like simple photographs down the ages. On the other hand, they also helped to preserve valuable information about social transformations, stories of migrations and details of socio-political and religious reflections as well- all of which helps to form the framework of an important section of the history of the masses- which often goes uncharted. Thus, patachitra forms an important and integral part of traditional and folk media from India- especially represented through the Indian states of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand. This paper especially ocuses on the patachitra traditions from Bengal and is based on extensive fieldwork through various seasons in the region from 2004- through 2012 (especially in the districts of Bankura, Purulia, West Mednipur and Birbhum of West Bengal).*

As times changed over the years- especially moulding mass media and communication to adapt to global technological transformations over the last hundred years, folk and traditional media got influenced as well. This was also reflected in India- especially over the last 15years as the worldwide- web explored a common platform for all forms and types of existing media and communication. The transformations within the intangible sector of folk and traditional media got reflected in various ways. Animation media picked up stories from oral traditions to make popular television shows, folk music was explored extensively to blend with popular music for mainstream films from various regions in India- thus, patachitra tradition too found a new voice. With intervention of mainstream global media, the performative art gradually got transformed into a descriptive medium- reducing much of the participation of the artists, his/her music, rhythm as well as the impromptu methods of storytelling. In spite of several times being severely criticised by social scientists for these drastic changeover as the medium of expression changed from being a performative art to a mere demonstrative art, the transformation also bred new methods of marketing 'ethnic clothing and accessories'. This also spelled a new breather for the survival of this dying art. Thus, as patachitra from Bengal got to be displayed within New Media- especially through the personal websites of various folk artists as well as patua villages- a transformation evolved within the paradigms of local modes of entertainment- it found a voice within the global platform. With changing market demands and increasing reach through New Media-patachitra traditions have also recreated artistic vision for the new generation of painters as they experience to mould their traditional profession to the demands of the modern consumerist global market. With several ethical issues questioning the survival, sustainability and continuity of the folk tradition of patachitra from Bengal and changing social roles, reflected in specific gender participations, this paper explores the various transformations which occurred within the representation of the old tradition in modern New Media and the issues involved therein.

Keywords: *Bengal patachitra, intangible culture, transformations, cultural survival, folk-urban continuum.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In an article titled- *My Pictures*¹, Rabindranath Tagore once explained his own paintings- influenced variously by folk paintings from Bengal as- "*The world of sound is a tiny bubble in the silence of the infinite. The Universe has its only language of gesture, it talks in the voice of pictures and dance. Every object in this world proclaims in the dumb signal of lines and colours, the fact that it is not a mere logical abstraction or a mere thing of use, but it is unique in itself, it carries the miracle of its existence. In a picture the artist creates the language of undoubted reality, and we are satisfied that we see. It may not be the representation of a beautiful woman but that of a common place donkey or*

of something that has no external credential of truth in nature but only in its own inner artistic significance” As often being asked to define the meaning of his paintings taking up after folk art from Bengal- Tagore further elaborated- “*People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent even as my pictures are. It is for them to express and not to explain.*”- one of the richest forms of visual communication- paintings thus, have a language of common understanding of their own. Cutting across verbal and non-verbal communications- man’s innate need to communicate and convey a significant essence of socio-cultural ethos- visuals has been an important part of human communication for ages. They have also borne testimony to an important form of mass media-e.g. the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bhimbetka cave paintings (Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal district)- dating to around 30,000 years BCE²- like many international counterparts, reflect the same essence. As the history of man evolved around complex socio-cultural organisations down the course of history, visual communication got reflected in man’s surroundings- harnessing various natural themes from nature into everyday life. Thus developed a habit of the portrayal of images and visuals across walls and roofs and boundary fences in villages across the world- which continue till modern ages. With time, as gradually man understood the portrayal of the same essence through the use of cloth and paper- folk painting took centre-stage and reached out as an important part of cultural communication of the masses. Handed down from generation to generation as oral practices and traditions- these paintings have helped to preserve and also pass down important threads of history all over the world. The *patachitra* form of performative art is a typical representation of such a folk and traditional medium of mass communication- especially from eastern India.

Through centuries- the *patachitra* has been a platform where several methods of communication has converged- including visual messages, oral traditions and music- all of which helped to amalgamate, involve and portray nature, society and culture co-existing through a lucid dialogue. Thus, these paintings- on one hand portrayed society and its ideations like simple photographs down the ages. On the other hand, they also helped to preserve valuable information about social transformations, stories of migrations and details of socio-political and religious reflections as well- all of which helps to form the framework of an important section of the history of the masses- which often goes uncharted. Thus, *patachitra* forms an important and integral part of traditional and folk media from India- especially represented through the Indian states of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand. This paper especially is based on a study of the *patachitra* traditions from Bengal and is based on extensive fieldwork through various seasons in the region from 2004- through 2012 (especially in the districts of Bankura, Purulia, West Mednipur and Birbhum of West Bengal).The research article attempts to also look into the changing formats of visual representation in Bengal *patachitra* as it moved from the paradigms of being a performative art into the realm of New Media- reaching out to a global audience. Thus, an important essence of intangible heritage found a voice amidst a larger audience- often recreating the traditional art form as it spoke to a larger target audience- often uninitiated to the folk art forms from Bengal.

2. PATACHITRA TRADITION OF BENGAL (PURULIA, BANKURA, WEST MEDNIPUR AND BIRBHUM)

The *patuas* or the painters of the *patachitras* were primarily wandering artists- who would travel from place to place with painted scrolls of various deities. Though their exact date of origin as a profession is not known, yet from various oral lores and oral traditions- they can be estimated to have begun as a profession from around 10th-11th century AD in Bengal. As professional artists- who would frequent the homes of especially rich people (mostly zamindars and landlords, feudal lords, administrative and police heads, etc.), the *patuas* would display the scrolls at various households and narrate the different stories of the deities and in return would then be rewarded with cash or kind or both in the form of grains, food and clothes. Often at the households of the rich and the wealthy, they would be invited on special occasions, e.g. during *pujas* or religious festivals to narrate the stories pertaining to that specific deity whose *puja* or worship is being performed, and they would then be rewarded accordingly. This performance was also considered sacrosanct by the spectators and they would be sitting humble silence to listen to the *patua*’s narration in a manner as they would sit in front of a deity during worship or a *puja*. The narration would include stories from local lore and local Purana (especially reflected through the three *Mangal Kavyas*- the *Manasa Mangal Kavya*, *Chandi Mangal Kavya* and *Dharma Mangal Kavya*) to the most popular story from Indian mythology- *The Ramayana* (*The Mahabharata* has been depicted very less). Originally, there used to be specific deities whose

stories used to be narrated by the *patuas*. The displaying of the painting or the scroll or the *pat* would be referred to as *pat khelano* (playing with the *pata*) and the songs were referred to as *pater gaan* (the song of the *pata*).³

2.1. The Colours Used in Bengal Patachitra

The colours used within the scroll paintings were always and are still mostly made from various elements from nature- e.g. tree barks, lamp soot, gum, etc. Originally, apart from paper and cloth, sometimes palm-leaf manuscripts were made to paint the scrolls, however, in recent years, this has been substituted completely by the use of paper, dexterously stuck on cloth to give it more stability and then used as a canvas for drawing. The brushes are still made from the whiskers of the tail of squirrels and mongoose, which are tied with thin strips of bamboo to give the shape of a paint-brush. The colours are mixed in empty shells of broken coconuts (which serve as a palette) with the help of water and home-made glue. The following are the most important natural colours used by the *patuas*-

Yellow is made from turmeric or soil,

Green is made from leaves of hyacinth bean plant or the leaves of wood apple,

Purple is from black plum or blackberry,

Conch-shell powder or white mud gives the white colour,

Brown colour is obtained from limestone mixed with black catechu,

Red is made from vermilion, *alta* (a reddish or scarlet ink or dye solution used for coloring feet), or terracotta soil,

Grey is obtained from the soot from earthen ovens,

Blue is obtained from blue seeds- locally known as *nil bori*,

Black is obtained from scrapping the soot off from the outside bottoms of clay pots or even burning rice and pounding it to a powder to which is added home-made glue for required consistency or by burning the roots of the velvet apple trees.

To make the colours steadfast, each is mixed within the broken shells of coconut with gum made from grinding the seeds of the wood-apple tree and mixing with required quantities of water. Sometimes, the seeds of wood-apple are substituted with the seeds of tamarind, sap from the margossa tree or egg-yolk. However, in recent times, just as the canvas has taken the shape of papers bought easily from the market many a times, the natural colours are also substituted with easily bought acrylic and fabric paints from the market. This is particularly prominent amidst the *patachitra* scrolls which are taken out of the villages for displaying in various art exhibitions across the globe.⁴

The three original formats of painting a *patachitra* from Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum and West Mednipur are-

- *Jadano pat* or the scroll- showing episode sequences in a vertically placed manner- all illuminated along the picture frame one above the other- with commonly ten to fifteen frames in all.
- The *Arelatai pat*- here the picture frames are horizontal in nature- bound in two ends by two wooden sticks to enable the *patua* to unroll the *pat* as he gradually displayed it in front of an audience. This contained primarily six to eight frames.
- Finally, the *Choukosh pat* or the square *pat* is a single sheet of rectangular paper which commonly used to eulogise a deity or an incident.

2.2. The final stage- the pater gaan or the song

Finally, after the drawing is complete, the songs are 'created' to suit the visuals. Each song has primarily three stages-

- 1) The *kahini* or the story
- 2) The *mahatmya* or the glory
- 3) The *bhanita* or the self-introduction.

The *patua* finishes each performance with a personalisation-touch- by mentioning his name, the name of his village and sometimes the name of the police station under which the village is located. Thus, the songs are a signature tune to the entire creation of a *pat*. The songs follow a trend and a pattern referred to as “*tripad*” or three beats in Indian classical music. Primarily, this only included vocals, but later on simple instruments like percussion, e.g. the *dugdugi* or wind instruments like the flute or even the harmonium were added.⁵

2.3. The Primary/Basic Themes of the *Patachitra*

Of the primary stories that found a place of expression amidst the *patachitra* there were specific plots derived from not only various religious and mythological texts of India, but also concerning different historical incidents. Later on, the subject matter of the *patachitra* also started to include various social themes which tried to focus on different socio-cultural, religious and political evils of the present society.

While narrating, the body language and intonation is an important part of the activity of *pat khelano* or displaying. The *patua* often represents the characters- both good and bad through hand and palm gestures, eye movements and intonations. Facial expressions are however very limited in nature, but nevertheless helps to convey a message to the audience. Thus, if the *patua* is performing as Krishna and while speaking of his lady-love Radha, he would try to emulate a feminine voice. Thus, the characters are brought to life. “When representing dialogue, different modulations of the voice are distinctly observed. This specific feature has made them performers in the true sense.” (Islam:46).

Based on the primary subject matters, the *patachitra* can be divided into the following categories, which is even relevant in present times-

1. Stories from various Indian religious texts (e.g. Ramayana, Bhagvat Gita and Mahabharata).
2. Stories from Indian mythologies (e.g. Indian Puranas- Manasamangal Kavya, Chandimangal Kavya).
3. Stories from local folktales, including Oral Traditions of communities (e.g. local lore famous in both cities and villages, tales from oral traditions of local communities, e.g. Santhals of India, stories concerning death that is described variously in tribal customs- referred to as *Yama* or *Jam pat*)
4. Stories of various Hindu and Muslim saints who were locally famous (e.g. Chaitanya, Gaji, Masnad-i-ala, SatyaPir, etc.)
5. Different historical incidents of local significance (e.g. death sentence of various revolutionaries under British India, a famous case from Calcutta High Court of a scandal involving the murder of a head priest of Tarakeshwar pilgrim centre, etc)
6. Different socio-cultural and religious incidents of social significance from around the locality (e.g. various accidents, flood and famine at various parts of West Bengal, etc.). Over the last few decades, especially after the independence of India in 1947 (from being a British colony to being an independent nation), few more specific ideas have been added. These variously include the following-
7. Different historical incidents of national and international significance (e.g. The bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution, horrors of the nuclear war, global war against terrorism, etc.)

Different socio-cultural and religious incidents of social significance from across the nation as well as various parts of the world (e.g. September 9/11 attacks in USA, global-warming, deforestation, AIDS and HIV, etc).⁶

3. TRANSFORMATIONS- PATACHITRA AND NEW MEDIA-

Various NGO’s governmental agencies and bodies as well as individual blog posts mention or refer to the *patachitra* traditions. Below are listed some of the oft repeated websites- whose popularity are also repeated time and again through citations and across research references and pages from media.

With the click of button as the worldwide web opens a platform of interaction, traditional and folk media from Bengal does not seem to be far away from the influence. As the webpage of an NGO Daricha (from Bengal) (<http://www.daricha.org/>)-working in the realm of folk art- greets one with a colourful visual of a *patachitra*- the introduction makes it lucid enough for a global audience to comprehend the meaning of a local history and thereby- its significance in modern days. The

introduction also includes citations from reputed books from the discipline (E.G. Frank J. Korom's *Village of Painters*) and elaborates various arguments and counter-arguments about the origin of the painters.

The webpage of another organisation- working for the survival, upliftment and spreading a noble message about their art- is [banglanatak.com](http://www.banglanatak.com/) (<http://www.banglanatak.com/>). With dedicated service for more than a decade, the organisation has successfully helped to create a bench-mark of recognition to help various foreign teachers and artists reach out to the *patuas*- to further help to spread the message of the *patachitra* globally.

Similar in essence is the website- eloquently titled- *Pot Maya*

(<http://www.midnapore.in/festival/potmaya/pot-maya-naya-pingla.html>)- also established with the benevolent help of [banglanatak.com](http://www.banglanatak.com/)- which has a comprehensive list of all the *patuas* of West Mednipur, along with their cell phone numbers and also gives details of their songs, music, essence of lyrics and also glimpses into some of their visual treats.

The website- Crafts and Artisans of India (<http://www.craftandartisans.com/pata-chitra-scroll-painting-of-west-bengal.html>) also introduces the *patuas* as a specially talented group of people whose folk art traditions are explained along with a short history and a list of other folk arts from various corners of India.

As various NGO's and guilds make use of the folkart, governmental efforts also aid the process and sometimes even get benefitted in the process. Thus the Tourism Department section of West Bengal government

(<http://www.westbengaltourism.gov.in/web/guest/medinipur-potmaya>) mentions the districts of residence of the *patuas* as important tourist destinations- from where one can aesthetically be enriched by an important colour of Bengal- highlighting the three-day long Pot Maya festival- especially held in the district of West Mednipur (Naya, Pingla village of West Medinipur- especially for "*artists, aficionados and novices to interact with the artists and learn more about the unique tradition of making natural colours from vegetables, fruits and flowers and even painting Patachitra through workshops*". Started in 2010, Pot Maya receives a footfall of approximately 5,000 each year and is open to all.⁷

Reaching out to a global audience through the worldwide web, the *patuas* also has found an unique method of expression on international websites. One such important example is that of Indigo Art Gallery, Philadelphia, USA

(http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_asianart_indiptg2a.html). The page not only introduces the art to a global audience, but also is a witness to various global interpretations. Different international incidents from the pages of world history are thus marked through the *patachitra* depictions in the website, including- The French Revolution, the nuclear bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the Attack on the World Trade Centre (visibly depicting Osama Bin Laden escaping the scene unharmed), Osama Bin Laden at Tora Bora, Former US President George Bush involved with his senate over a meeting, the tragedy of the Titanic, the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, December, etc. The details of the scrolls also elaborate the length and breadth of the paintings for prospective customers.

Emphasising an important association of Rabindranath Tagore to folkart is the webpage of Muktohdhara- muktodhara.org- which is a recent creation (2012) and aims to portray a short history of all the *patachitra* forms from Bengal (<http://muktodhara.org/?p=395>)- most of which also gathers at the venue of *Paushmela* or fair in January 15 on the grounds of VishwaBharati University. Thus, the fair is an important ground for prospective customers. The website aids the choices, by making people aware about the varieties available and finally deciding no specific items.

Even the section of [gettyimages.in](http://www.gettyimages.in/) records a small section pertaining to *patachitra*- that attempts to portray not only the visuals- but also bits and pieces of socio-cultural essence from the region of Bengal. (<http://www.gettyimages.in/detail/photo/patachitra-or-traditional-cloth-painting-of-bengal-royalty-free-image/486701665>)

A government of India website- which helps to provide valuable information about the various types of *patachitra* traditions from Bengal

(http://sb.bsf.gov.in/index_files/ctb_files/Schools%20of%20Art.pdf). The website also highlights specific important religious aspects of the same. Finally- it also provides important information about

the Bengal School of Art- under which all forms of folk and mainstream mediums of visual art flourished.

Apart from these examples, as others also surface upon the internet from time to time, the transformations on part of *patachitra* traditions has also been a part of extensive display of folk art over animation, especially for children. Many of these animation movies are available over different children's channels and some are also available over various social networking sites, including audio-visual platforms, like YouTube. A good example about the same is the 'Making of the Tsunami' video over YouTube- which is available online at-

<http://www.tarabooks.com/2009/09/08/tsunami/>

It is also important to add- as the medium gradually changed from a descriptive to a mere display art, a very specific form of gender-roles transformation has also taken place over the last 10 years. Traditionally, the *patachitra* used to be mostly demonstrated by male artists- who were accompanied by younger male members of the family. The women of the house used to mostly participate by organising for the trips or later on, by drawing and preparing the canvasses. However, as New Media and global reach of the *patachitra* increased, the active participation of the women came up into the forefront and also as an important source to reckon with. During fieldwork for this specific research paper, the author also encountered several men, who knew little or none of the songs which were traditionally used to describe the drawings. Not only do the women in recent times help in drawing the *patachitra*, but, they also help with selling the items at the stalls, markets, village as well as cities. Several of the women artists are also listed in the websites and help to sell their products over the net. Many are also important and distinguished in their careers as they have been awarded variously by the local as well as the Central government of India. Thus, as the art transforms, a critical issue yet grips the medium- that of ethics and specific issues questioning the survival, sustainability and continuity of the folk tradition of *patachitra*.

4. CONCLUSION

According to an ancient African proverb - "When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground."- the words also found a significant mention in the UNESCO website for intangible heritage- reminding of a very important aspect i.e. the unseen and mostly neglected areas of intangible heritage in our lives. Oral traditions have always formed a significant part of human existence, probably from the time man started scribbling, doodling, printing and drawing on the walls of caves several thousand years ago. For many centuries, they were the only sources of education in many cultures. The cultures without having any script effectively communicated with the help of oral traditions. Though different in many ways from these specific examples, our regular folk and urban connections involve a lot of communication that has remarkably developed in the modern age of globalisation.⁸ The *patachitra* form of folk art from Bengal is a typical representation of oral tradition- which has been alive through generations and also conveys important threads of history of the region.

With time, as several websites helped the *patuas* to reach out across their geographical limitations to places afar- it also resulted in changes which remoulded the very essence of the performative art of the *patachitra*. The participation of the artist, the impromptu singing, notations, lyrics and the simple formulae of storytelling- all became obsolete- as the *patuas* took to selling *patachitra* through websites. Sometimes, in some of the websites, a short description accompanies the paintings- which sum up the entire concept of the visualisation in a single sentence. At many others- this is absent. At times like these- the paintings are merely reduced to visual depictions of nature and man- representing a folk tradition from Bengal- especially for customers who are not well-acquainted with the region. Websites also opens up another vital critical question- especially for the *patachitra* tradition- that of the demands of the market shaping the product. As the global consumerist market guides the demands of the websites and New Media- *patachitra* saw the inclusion of newer topics of painting- especially the September 9/11 bombing of World Trade Centre in US, Osama Bin Laden as a 'global villain', 2004 Asian tsunami- resulting in the loss of thousands of lives, etc. As the original folktales take a back-seat and global topics occupy a front stage- *patachitra* changes further to new formats. These paintings mostly are sold without any accompanying lyrics or explanations as they are thought to be self-explanatory.

As the art form changed, losing much part of the vitality of the original ethos, one important aspect seems to highlight a positive trend. The changes and the somewhat rising demands in the markets of the visual appeal of *patachitra* sometimes inspires the next generation to return back to painting

including the males of the family- where many used to earlier refuse to take to the family tradition because of lack of financial strength. The rising demands across various platforms of New Media- especially because of the help of several NGO's- like Daricha, banglanatok.com, etc.- helps to spread a good word about the folk tradition. This also aids in popularising the websites and help to sell the paintings to global audiences. In 2013 a similar kind of effort was created by the corporate giant- Apeejay Group in Kolkata- the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF)- which began with a focus on reviving the dying artform and building a digital archive for a global audience. Highlighting the effort, the Business Line of the leading Indian English daily from India- The Hindu reported- "*Reflecting a new language, the painting records the changes in lifestyles, values, and sets a new visual vocabulary which caters to the transient, urban populace.*" The report also went onto quote Apeejay Surrender Group Vice-President RenuKakkar mentioning- "*We gave clear guidelines to our team of digital artists that the 'Patachitra' created with modern graphic techniques on a computer must follow the seemingly effortless strokes of a 'Chitrakaar' (painter) who draws the 'Patachitra' in real life.*" Thus- the digitisation effort included- bold, bright and intense colours- with the first part of the attractive painting highlighting some of Kolkata's heritage landmarks – River Hooghly, Shaheed Minar, Dakshineswar and Victoria Memorial. The other aspects of *patachitra* visual depiction of the life in and around the metropolitan city of Kolkata- which were also placed under digitisation included- the occasional ambassador car amidst the traffic, a typical Kolkata street where a policeman is dressed in white uniform- amidst others.²

However- one form of critical appraisal also needs to be addressed as the paper concludes- the significant aspect of ethical concern which concerns the art. With time, as the form has transformed and in modern times, only survives o cater to the demands of the consumerist market- the paper propose, it is at times imperative to restrict the mention of the term *patachitra* from the arena and only state it as being influenced after that specific form of artwork from Bengal. Thus, all artistic representations of the same through the sale of *patachitra* single-page pictures or the elaborate portrayal of the use of the same art for various other popular culture artifacts (various decorative items for everyday use at home, including hand-held fans, bookmarks, pen-stands, dining table napkin-holders, etc.) should also be specific in mention as being 'influenced' by the art, instead of being the art in itself. This does not only bring an essence of clarity, but also of ethical representation of this age-old art form.

As the survival of the dying art of *patachitra* faces a challenge like most other folk art forms from around the globe, the intervention and inclusion of New Media is an aid in the process. However, the ground is created to expand the platform to include several urban traditions from around the world and reach beyond the mere limitations of Bengal. Thus, visual depictions, stories and traditions expand to include a global consumerist demand. On the other hand- a moment should be spared to understand whether the art- which is created therein- should be referred to as *patachitra* at all. A new form, new format of storytelling, new role-playing in modern society with changing socio-cultural and economic circumstances- the essence seems to have evolved into a new avatar. On the other hand, it would be too hasty and unjust to add a nomenclature to this new existence- which can be mentioned to be "influenced and inspired" by the *patachitra* form of folk panting and "evolved by borrowing essences" from the folk tradition. A ground to explore for a global audience- the *patachitra* has gradually rediscovered its new voice to continue new formats of dialogue with the society. However, how the repertoire of the dialogue builds up through new momentum and typology remains to be seen, as it stands as an important thread of historical continuity for generations to come.

FIGURES



Figure1. (courtesy- from author's personal collection. Photograph by- Anuradha Pandey)-*Patachitra* in its original feature- *choukosh pat* or the square/rectangle pat (left)- depicting a theme of '*machher biye*' or the wedding of the fish. The pat is canvass was traditionally handmade with paper- whose backside is plastered with a thin layer of cloth to make it sturdy (right)

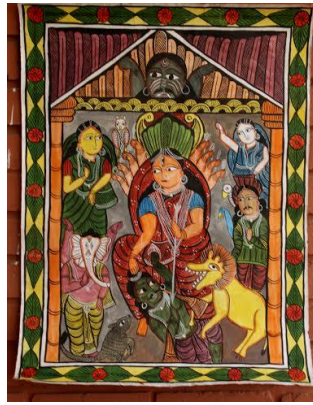


Figure2.(courtesy- from author's personal collection. Photograph by- Anuradha Pandey)-Patachitra in its original feature- choukosh pat or the square/rectangle pat- depicting a theme of Mahishashurmardini or goddess Durga- accompanied by her children as mentioned in mythology- Saraswati, Ganेशha, Lakshmi and Kartikeya. She is also shown here to slay the demon king Mahishashur. At the top of the canvas, the image of god Shiva also traditionally appears to impart a sense of blessing to the family as the portryal of the victory of good over evil which is mentioned in mythology.



Figure3.(courtesy- from author's personal collection. Photograph by- Intaj Ali)-Patuas from Bengal at a recently held popular culture exhibit in Pune in November, 2014



Figure4. Desktop penstands/ dining-table napkin holders



Figure5. Desktop decorative art (left) and Bookmark (right)



Figure6. Hand-held fans made from dried palm leaves

Figure4-6. (courtesy- from author's personal collection. Photograph by- Anuradha Pandey)-Some items from popular culture which has been extensively used in recent times as canvas for patachitra

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Dr. LOPAMUDRA MAITRA BAJPAI is an Assistant Professor and a Visual Anthropologist. Her main areas of research include folk and urban culture and communication, history and visual communication. She has published papers on anthropology, culture and media in various national as well as international journals and has attended international seminars on similar topics of interdisciplinary subjects. Also a journalist, she has worked with The Indian Express and has been a freelancer for various leading Indian English, national as well as regional dailies, including The Times of India, The Statesman, Sakal and Citadel magazine where she has written extensively on history, culture, anthropology and media. She has also taught as a visiting faculty in mass communication and culture studies and journalism at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels (with English as the medium) at various media institutes in Pune (Maharashtra) and in Kolkata (West Bengal), including The University of Pune- Department of Communication (Culture, Media and Society), Wigan and Leigh

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Endnotes

¹From- Prasad, Amar Nath & Samiran Kumar Paul 2006 *Recritiquing Rabindranath Tagore* Sarup & Sons, New Delhi -*My Pictures*- by Rabindranath Tagore- dated- May 28, 1930- appeared in the catalogue of Tagore's exhibition of paintings at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham. The second article of the same series is a lecture delivered on July 2, 1930 in London. My Pictures III appeared in the catalogue for Tagore's exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1930)- with an introduction by A.K. Coomaraswamy.

² UNESCO declared Bhimbetka a World Heritage site in 2003. The rock-shelter site of Bhimbetka is named after the brave and powerful hero- Bhim- from the Indian epic mythological story- *The Mahabharat*. The name is also referred to have been derived from the word- *Bhimbaithka*- translated into English- it means- "the sitting place of Bhim". The location of Bhimbetka is in the Raichur district of Madhya Pradesh- 45 kms south of Bhopal- at the southern edge of the Vindhya hills. South of these set of rock-shelters- are the successive ranges of the Satpura hills. Some of the archaeological evidences from Bhimbetka suggest that the site was inhabited by *Homo erectus*- as early as 100,000 years ago. Some of the paintings from the rock-shelters suggests a date of 30,000 BCE (Before Christian Era).

³There are various local lore about the origin of the *patuas*. They are often seen to be both Muslim and Hindu at the same time. Though, they originally were amongst the nine-caste craftsmen of India or the *Nabasakhas*, namely- Chitrakars, Malakars, Kangsakars, Karmakars, Sankhakars, Tantubaya, Kumbhakars, Sutradhars and Swarnakars, in recent years, they feature OBC (Other Backward Classes) category of the West Bengal Government.

⁴Maitra Bajpai 2012

⁵*Ibid*

⁶*Ibid*

⁷<http://www.westbengaltourism.gov.in/web/guest/medinipur-potmaya>

⁸Maitra Bajpai 2013

⁹<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/features/dying-folk-art-of-patachitra-gets-digitalised/article4286520.ece>