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PATACHITRA - A CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WEST BENGAL AND ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

Each and every state of India carries its own fashion of cultural heritage through its folk song, folk dance and distinguishable painting style. Both West Bengal and Odisha are situated in Eastern India. Among these two states, modes and forms of cultural aspects are very much interrelated, and even similar in some cases. Most famous and common cultural aspect among these two states is Patachitra. Patachitra is a unique art-form, which is based on mythological folktales and started from immemorial time. Not only in West Bengal and Odisha, but it is prevalent also in the other parts of India, as well as outside of the country. To identify the similarities and dissimilarities between Bengal pata and Odisha pata, and also the differences of the lifestyle of patuas or chitrakar, two famous Patua villages have been selected as the study area, which are Naya from West Bengal and Raghurajpur from Odisha. Culture is a combination of art, music, literature, behaviour, belief, rituals etc of a specific area. Cultural heritage refers to the tangible and intangible attributes of a group of people belonging to a specific place, followed by generation to generation. To recognize how the components and forms of patachitra differ with the different physical and social attributes, a household survey was conducted in both the areas of interest. Some indicators have been selected to identify the similarities and dissimilarities between these two areas on different aspects of Patachitra. It can be concluded that, though after evaluation the locational, physical, social, cultural differences are there, but the essence of Patachitra has created a cultural bonding between these two areas.

Introduction

Cultural Heritage refers to a connection between past and future tangible and intangible assets. According to Dr. Manas Kumar Das "Cultural heritage includes all those aspects or values of culture transmitted to human beings by their ancestors from generation to generation. They are cherished, protected and maintained by them with unbroken continuity and they feel proud of it". The location of each

country determines the sociocultural, economic and political lifestyle of its inhabitants. Each country has its own cultural heritage which may be tangible or intangible. India is very rich in cultural heritage. Taj mahal, River Ganges, National Parks of India, Ajanta, Ellora caves, Kumbh Mela are some examples of tangible cultural heritage of India. Maharashtra's 'Warli', Bihar's 'Madhubani', Madhya Pradesh's 'Gond', Andhrapradesh's 'Kalamkari', Kerala's 'Murals', Tamilnadu's 'Tanjore painting', Rajasthan's 'Phad', 'Cheriyal scrolls' of

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Telengana, and 'Pattachitra' or 'Patachitra' of West Bengal and Odisha, 'Alpana' and 'Naksikantha' of West Bengal are some examples of intangible cultural heritage of India. Among these, 'Cheriyal scroll', 'Phad' and 'Patachitra' come under the class of scroll painting. The term 'Patachitra' is generated from Pata or Patta which means a part of cloth. According to the shape of cloth 'Patachitra' may be of two main types - one is scroll painting (Jorano pat), and another is square (Chouka) Pat. From the ancient time, the very base level of Patachitra, mainly cloth is used. But the use of palm leaves is also very common in this respect (mainly in Odisha). This art form - 'Patachitra', is a bridge which connects Bengal and Odisha's art-form. Some basic characteristic differences may be found between the artforms practised by Bengal and Odisha, but grammatically both are same. In the name of Patachitra, both West Bengal and Odisha are equally highlighted. Before 1936, at the time of King Siraj Uddoula, Odisha was a part of Bengal. After separation from Bengal, it became a state with the capital of Cuttack. This might be a significant reason for similarities in cultural heritage amongst West Bengal and Odisha. To show the attachment of Bengal and Odisha 'Pat', a comparative study is done between two famous patua villages of Bengal and Odisha. Naya - "The village of Painters" from West Bengal and Raghurajpur - "Heritage art village" of Odisha have been selected for the comparison. Amongst most of the prior research work done, it has been found that individually either Naya or Raghurajpur patachitra was the subject matter for the discussion, but a comparative study and analysis of both the patachitra haven't been covered upto that extent. The main objective of this study is to establish the connection within West Bengal and Odisha through 'Patachitra' - as a cultural heritage.

Materials and Methodologies

Objectives

To identify the similarities and dissimilarities amongst Naya 'Patachitra' of West Bengal and Raghurajpur 'Pattachitra' of Odisha through field research.

Study Area

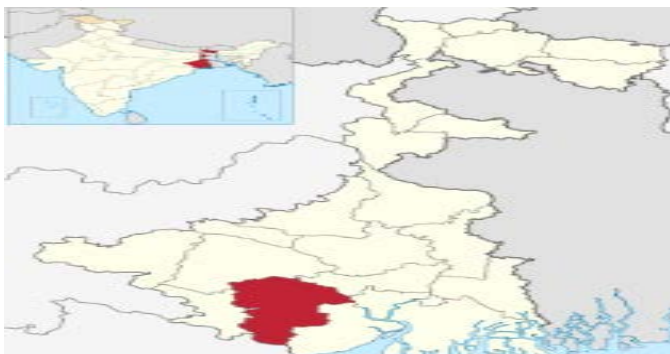


Fig 1: Naya

Latitude – 22° 16' 59.3292" N,

Longitude – 87° 35' 11.5404" E

Nearest railway station – Radhamohanpur (9.7 km)

Distance from major cities- 48.3 km from Kharagpur

Average household size- 4

Major caste of residents Chitrakar



Fig 2: Raghurajpur

Latitude 19° 32'13.20" N

Longitude 85° 29'36.96" E

Location- 2 km from Chandanpur on NH-203 connecting Puri and Bhubaneswar.

Distance from major cities- 50 km from Bhubaneswar and 14 km from Puri

Average household size- 3

Sample Design

Sample Techniques - Purposive Random Sampling

Target respondent - Male and female patuas of Naya and Raghurajpur

Sample size - 200 (100 from Naya and remaining 100 from Raghurajpur)

Medium of Data Collection

Household Survey

Personal Interview

Research Design

Patachitra is a generic term which carries a signature of our ancient Indian Cultural Heritage. West Bengal and

Odisha - both these states are known for their Patachitra painting. There are similarities and dissimilarities in case of social, cultural and economic aspects between Naya and Raghurajpur. But as this is a cultural heritage, therefore, to identify the similarities and dissimilarities in case of the entire journey of this artform (starting from creation till selling out to the wider world) , some key features are selected, which are discussed below-

- a) Canvas of Patachitra
- b) Theme of Patachitra
- c) Style and formatting of Patachitra
- d) Colour making
- e) Paradigm shift of the products
- f) Market survey
- g) Changing pattern in work participation

Results and Discussions

The results obtained from the performed survey shows proper descriptive statistics like pie and bar graphs, and according to the results, the similarities and dissimilarities can be measured and discussed below.

For the growth of fashion of tradition, some attributes are important like physiography, climate, society, culture , demography , population structure , economic condition. But in this paper , the discussion belongs to our intangible cultural heritage patachitra , which is an “integral part of the traditional and folk media from india” (Dr. Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai, 2015). For this purpose, here , some indicators are selected which are important for Preparing and carrying out the traditional cultural heritage - ‘Patachitra’.

Canvas

Canvas means the surface of painting. The word ‘patta’ , or ‘pat’ means a piece of cloth. Generally for preparing the canvas for patachitra or patachitra painting, cotton cloth is first preference , but it can be made of silk also. In case of cotton canvas, the usable materials are old cotton cloth, chalk powder and glue. For silk based patachitra, the usable materials are Tassar silk, hard board , chalk powder and glue. In Naya, traditionally, for the canvas for patachitra, old cotton cloth has been used. But nowadays, they preferably use paper as canvas, and to strengthen the paper base, they add piece of cloth at the back side of the Pata. In recent era, to maintain modern fashion, they paint on saree, T-shirt dupatta and various home decor. In Raghurajpur, to prepare the canvas, chitrakars use silk cloth besides the cotton cloth. Palm leaves and cow dung are also used for this purpose.

Theme

The tradition of patachitra carries out from the memorial time. Mainly various religious stories and depicted scenes from the hindu mythology have been used as the primary theme of patachitra. The chitrakars of Naya have used the stories of depict from purana. According to late Dukhushyam chitrakar they preferred the stories of mangal kavya (Manasa Mangal, Chandi Mangal, Dharma Mangal). But apart from that, they deal with tribal stories, social issues and awareness , environment issues and awareness. The chitrakar’s of Raghurajpur also printed the stories related to mythological stories , mainly about lord Jagannath and the indian epic Mahabharata, Ramayana. Sri Krishna leela is the most common theme in their painting. Besides this, tribal stories and a least amount of social and environment related work are also found in their Pata. They make some special patachitra related to the dance form gotipua of odisha. Painting patachitra on them is a special feature here. “ A famous peacock style of gotipua dance can we found in odishi pat” (Sumana Dutta Chattopadhyay, 2010). Nowadays, the Patuas of Naya are carrying out painting using the social matters such as tree plantation , bribery and female feticide deaths. But the patuas of Raghurajpur have stucked to mythological subject matters. The boldness is much more in the pata of Naya , whereas the accuracy is much more in the pata of Raghurajpur. One of the main characteristics of Odisha pat is, they prepare black colour by using Bhusha Kali, or by burning rice. This becomes the canvas for their part. In naya , no such mechanism is used to prepare the base color.



Pic 1 : Tribal concept (Naya Patachitra)



Pic 2 : Mythological concept (Raghurajpur Patachitra)

Style and formatting

After the completion of patachitra painting, artisans draw a floral border with vibrant colors. The border of patachitra is very manifesting. Both chitrakars of Naya and Raghurajpur follow this method. According to Monalisa Das - 2023, "Pattachitra painting finishes with decorative border design. Though natural colours and workmanship process are involved, this painting is very much expensive and valuable. They follow a preserving method to protect the paintings from damage and destruction, ensuring that the artworks last for many years and future generation can enjoy them." But the Raghurajpur pat border is more vibrant and fine. "The pat border of Raghurajpur is more excellent than the same for the other districts of West Bengal in comparison to splendid beauties of colour and ornamentation." (Sumana Dutta Chattopadhyay, 2010).

Colour making

The main and most important part of patachitra is preparation of colour for pat. They use natural colours for pattachitra and the chitrakars prepare their color on their own. They prepare some basic colors and then mix and match to prepare 100-120 shades of colour.

White - Sea shell powder

Black - Bhusakali or burnt coconut shell powder

Yellow - Raw turmeric or Haritala stone

Green - Leaf extracts or Hingula stone

Blue - Aparajita flower or Khanda Neela stone

To increase the lasting and brightness of the colors, they add the glue extract from wood apple. Though the Chitrakars of both the places prepare colours by using natural materials, but a small difference has been found between the two places. The use of various types of soil, stone and shell are more common in Raghurajpur, whereas herbal elements are more common in Naya patachitra.

Paradigm shift of products

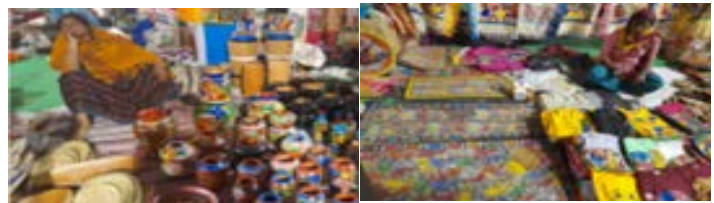
In traditional patachitra, the subject matter is mainly the mythological stories and the canvas is used for the patta or piece of cloth. But nowadays with the modern trend of the market, they have changed their product material which can be said as paradigm shifting of material production.

Scroll painting and Chouko Pat are the traditional products and besides them, other varieties of products can also be found from Naya Patua. Each year, mainly in the month of November and December, a fair for consecutive 3 days is conducted by the villagers of Naya, named as 'Pata Maya'. At the time of the fair, Naya dresses as a new bride. Besides scroll and Chouko Pat, many other things can be found there, like Pat painting on many textile products (Saree, T-shirt, Kurti, Panjabi, dress materials etc.) home decor (table lampsheds,

servicing tray, flower vase, Lantern, Cup set, Kettle, Coaster etc.), bags, jewellery, face mask etc. Putul Chiktrar shows a large copper/brass plate which was decorated with Maa Durga Pat. She also told that it was made for supplying an order. At the time of the fair, the Patuas did not only prepare the selling goods, but also they use to paint home (internal/external), balcony threshold with various Patachitra. This shifting is due to the lack of interest in traditional Pat and also the price of traditional Pat. To rejuvenate the dieing artform, they took the decision and this truly showed its effects as well. The same wave can be found in Raghurajpur Patachitra village. The costing of a proper Patachitra is much more (Rs. 2000/- for a 30 cm x 45 cm Pat) which is out of reach for middle class families. But the variety of products can be made and sold at a very minimal rate which becomes achievable for common middle class families. Besides traditional 'Patachitra', Raghurajpur is also known for paper masks, cowdung toys, coconut shell painting, wood carvings, palm-leaf engraving, stone carving, bamboo mat painting etc. Apart from these varieties of products, nowadays, they also paint pata on T-shirts, jackets etc. To maintain the recent trends, and to create a bridge with today's world with respect to tradition and culture.



Pic 3: Varieties of products (Raghurajpur)



Pic 4: Varieties of products (Naya)

Market Survey

Patachitra holds an immense cultural traditional value, not only for their ancientness, but also their content which consists of religious and methodological folktales, and also the magnificent eye catching themes of 'Patachitra'. A survey was conducted to know the demand of the products in both the markets, and surroundings of Naya and Raghurajpur. The customers are divided into three categories - upper class, middle class and lower class. After the results, it was clear that upper class population are more interested in buying more, where middle class of people buy only a couple of products

as a souvenir to decorate the home, but in case of lower class people, the range of traditional Patachitra is next to out of reach. So they don't show any interest on these products. May be this is also a hidden reason for the product diversification. Because, after that pata painted dress, tray, cup set etc. has become within the achievable limits of middle class as well as lower middle class families.

Changing patterns in work participation

Patua' are an artisan community who not only paint patachitra on the cloth but also creates a story related to the Pata, and sing the story on their own composition and voice. For that, they are also known as story teller. They move from one place to another to showcase their Patas, and this is their occupation. They earn money with the help of this. But nowadays, after development of Media, computer, mobile phones, the demand is lacking. Now, that is not a foot-loose artform. They are settled at a place and create and sell their products from their home or at fair. At the first place, when this was a foot-loose artform, the type of work participation was like - women are devoted to prepare colours and canvas, and men are the painters, story writers, as well as story teller, and they also sell products. But in wider area, the demand is reduced so that the glory of Patachitra also loses their traditional weightage, and the Patachitra art industry is at a 'going to die' condition. Male are now involved in another different type of work for earning more. But women of the families get more attached to this artform.

Naya village is very popular for Swarna Chitrakar, Rani Chitrakar, Putul Chitrakar. Not only for the absence of male counterparts, but also they create their own place and position in front of the whole world. Putul Chitrakar shows her own created 'Pata' with confidence where her husband encourages her. She went to Italy to showcase her artforms. Women seem to be more confident now, and much more adept in Pata making, story telling, as well as Pata sellings. But a minor difference can be found in Raghurajpur. Abhimany Bariki is a famous young Patua of Raghurajpur. According to him, "to prepare the whole Pata, the steps are - i) preparation of the colours, ii) Collection of a cotton or Tassar Silk old cloth and prepare canvas by pasting hard board on the back of the cloth, and chalk powder and glue. Then rub the same with the help of a stone. This work is done mostly by females, iii) then male patuas sketch the Pata, and female patuas fill up the colour in the Pata, and lastly the finishing part is done by the men. So, men and women both participate in Pata making". After that, the selling part of the Pata is completely done by the male. So, women remain at the backfront in Patachitra business. Somehow, in some places, women patuas are more in the forefront in Naya than Raghurajpur.



Pic 5: Patua (Rajnikant Mahapatra) of Raghurajpur



Pic 6 :Patua (Putul Chitrakar) of Naya

Conclusion

'Patachitra' is not a mere artform. This is our pride, as well as part of cultural heritage of India. West Bengal and Odisha - both the places are very famous for their specific style of 'Patachitra'. Naya of West Bengal and Raghurajpur of Odisha - both are very famous names in the world of Patachitra making. From dates going back, before 1912, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal were included within Bengal Presidency. As a result, the cultural habits, rituals, customs are more or less similar to each other. During the era of the last 'Nawab' Siraj-Ud-Daula of undivided Bengal, evidences of Patachitra have been found in the house of the famous merchant Jagat Seth. So, 'Patachitra' is also a common cultural heritage for both Odisha and West Bengal. In spite of having common characteristics mostly, these some areas have distinctness also. Origin of patachitra, preparation of colours for Pata from natural extracts, preparation of canvas, painting on the canvas - these are the most common steps of 'Patachitra' making and these all are mostly same for Naya as well as Raghurajpur. This artform being their family tradition, each and every member of the family participate in some activities related to this artform. But in case of delivery, Patuas of Naya make songs and perform story telling for each and every Pata, whereas, unlike Naya, the Patuas of Raghurajpur are not story tellers. Also, the detailing in Patachitra is more prominent in Raghurajpur Pata than Naya. Both males and females

are involved in 'Patachitra', but in Raghurajpur, the females work mostly at the backdrop doing major stuffs related to Pata making, whereas, the males work at the forefront in selling the Pata and communicating with the customers. On the other hand, in Naya, both females and males work independently. Not only Pata making or song making, but the females are very much efficient in Pata selling and dealing with the customers.

Nowadays, after the introduction of modern and digital world, the demand for traditional Patachitra is gradually diminishing, resulting a drop in the sale for this artform, and therefore, this has become a dying artform. The corresponding patuas are also living in below poverty level. So, finding no other way out, the Patuas have brought some changes in their traditional artform. They, instead of using natural colours, are using fabric colours in some cases. Also, they have started selling their Pata in a diverse and new look. Thus, both diversification and traditionalism have started playing key roles in the journey of Patachitra nowadays. So, in spite of having some similarities and dissimilarities, the main essence of intangible cultural heritage is same in both the places. The struggle to save their artform, to maintain position in modern society is present in the Patuas of both the places to the fullest. Last but not the least, we can boast of saying that, one of the major cultural heritages in our country is Patachitra, and this is solely because of the Patuas.

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