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to suit Contemporary Society**

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Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society

Abstract

With the conception of this project I decided to look into two aspects. Firstly I went to Naya to try and understand the requirements of the *patuas* and secondly I visited various boutique and shops and had discussions with a few interior designers to understand the contemporary urban requirement. I realized that the *patuas* are not being able to diversify their stories and applications as per the modern society, hence their work seems repetitive when they paint the utilitarian objects. I plan to be with them and make them paint some objects that I believe will fit better in today's world. These products will be put to test in the coming fairs and by December-January a clear picture of acceptance or rejection shall immerge. The work for the coming year shall be modified accordingly.

Introduction

Patachitra has been considered as one of the most musical and illustrious form of folk narrative in Bengal and its adjoining states of Odhisa, Bihar and Jharkhand. While the art form and music distinctively puts forward a local flavor of the particular state, West Bengal in particular has its own panache of *patuas* from the districts of Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum and West Midnapore. It may be rightfully considered a conjoint of various methods of communication which includes visual, oral and musical forms to narrate stories related to society, culture, religion, nature and popular folklore. Through its strong visual and oral medium it preserves the documentation of the society down the ages. It is also a witness to the social transformation and tells stories of the socio-political and religious reflections and changes over the years.

These painted scrolls were migratory saga of the *patuas*, who were wanderers in origin. They travelled from state to state enjoying the patronage of several kings, landlords and nobles. Though the origin of *Patachitra* as a narrative form of folklore cannot be traced exactly, yet various oral form of record dates it back to around 10th - 11th century AD in Bengal. The art of scroll painting has been handed down from generation to generation in the families of *patuas* or artisans. Arguably, some 300 years ago, Raja Balaram Sen patronized the advancement of *patachitra*. The main

theme, around which the *pats* were painted, comprised of stories from the three *Mangal Kavyas*- the *Manasa Mangal Kavya*, *Chandi Mangal Kavya* and *Dharma Mangal Kavya*, along with epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Beside these deities, folklores, socio-political scenario of the time along with religious connotations and beliefs also reflected.

The *patachitra* also caught the fancy of the British Rulers. It was considered a form of folk entertainment that appeals to both the visual and auditory senses. It was a complete form by its own comprising of painting, story and song.

This narrative art form however, with the loss of legacy and royal patronage, declined from its high stature of performing art of court to the common man's entertainment during festivals and rural *melas* (fair). The *Patuas* then began to travel from village to village showcasing and performing their narrative style of painting portraying the same variety of subjects. The villagers, on the receiving end, would sit down in groups and watch the *Patuas* perform and listen to their songs with utmost faith as if the portrayals of God in the scrolls were actually coming to life. Yet, for the *Patuas*, *Patachitra*, was not an act of religious preaching but rather a livelihood. They would generally receive in kind in exchange for their performance and seldom got money.

This art form soon could not help sustain the livelihood of the artisans. Lack of demand resulted from the emergence of other forms of mass media and entertainment, thus folklore and narrative forms were forced to give way to radio, television, satellite and finally internet. These survival threats forced *patuas* to look for alternative diversification for this performing art form. From its elaborate form of performance which included several forms of communication-visual, oral and music, *patachitra* was forced to be reduced to an illustrative form of scroll art. Although *patachitra* appealed to the new generation, the format of scrolls (6-10ft. long) proved to be inconvenient. This gave way to the *Chaukapat* format (squarish in shape) in *Patachitra* painting. Eventually this scroll art got restricted into modern lifestyle products with functionality far from its original purpose of story-telling art. Product diversification was their only mode of survival. While the government and several Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) helped some clusters of *patuas*, especially in Naya village of Pingla in West Midnapore to take up trainings for design up-gradation and product diversification in order to cater to the demands of the new age market. They made further adaptations to fit in the modern societies by bringing their artistic practice on to various utility oriented items such as t-shirts, tea trays, carved

table tops, tea kettles, glass bottles, flower vase, pencil stand, bookmark- all containing characteristics and features of *Patachitra* paintings. This gave the artists scope to sell their work better.

Very few privileged and fortunate *Patuas* get the chance to represent the folk form in other states as well as countries while the majority of the *Patuas* fight for survival.

It must be mentioned that 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 in organising for the trips or by drawing and preparing the canvasses. However, as new media and global reach of the *patachitra* increased, the active participation of the women came to the forefront. 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 is gripping the medium- that of ethics and specific issues questioning the survival, sustainability and continuity of the folk tradition of *patachitra*.

Origin of the Research Problem:

Every year The Lalit Kala Akademi, Kolkata regional centre hosts an Exhibition/*Mela*. The scholarship holders display their work as a part of their exhibition and along with it a few artisans are also invited to display and sell their works. During the Annual exhibition/*Mela* of 2014 when I as a working artist displayed my works, I came across Manu *Chitrakar* for the very first time. He had come from Naya Pingla village along with his mother, Mina *Chitrakar*. Here I got the opportunity to engage into a conversation with him. The dialogue was rather extensive as I got interested and learned about his village, community, *Patachitra* as a way of life, and his concerns regarding the same. I decided to work for the subject and thus chose my area of concern to be *Patachitra* paintings for the Senior Fellowship Research and applied for it.

I feel that these paintings when originated were related to their contemporary social issues and culture. If this tradition could be brought to the today's contemporary life style and be meaning full to the present society their survival and importance will bounce back automatically. Hence I would like to initiate these paintings in contemporary living style, ex. illustration in books, in screens, partitions, cushion covers, curtains, and other contemporary products. This is my humble endeavor to let the world know about them.

Patuas are already experimenting with various items other than *patachitras* to bring forth wide array of products. If these *Patuas* could be made further aware about the contemporary requirements in terms of products and aesthetics, they would have a better chance of survival. *Patuas* are today trying to create something unique and exceptional in the market that may be appreciated by customers worldwide but are confused about the contemporary taste. They are now painting pats over shirts, costumes, dresses, accessories, key-rings, cards, vases, show-pieces, bags and caps. If these *Patuas* who are willing to adapt could further be made aware about the contemporary design sense and requirement they will definitely benefit. I feel that since I am a contemporary artist I may be of some help in bridging this gap. Thus being a Bengali, I wish to try and do something in this area if I am given an opportunity to do so.

Interdisciplinary Relevance:

Patachitra by itself is multidisciplinary. *Patachitra*, apart from being closely related to our society also has a significant role in history of folk-lore. It has a deep connection with many branches of knowledge or subject like literature, song, humanity, anthropology, sociology, environment, history, culture etc. It was felt that if *Patachitra*, the multifaceted cultural folk-art can be linked with today's present day to day problems and today's interiors and attire, it will survive.

Objectives:

1. Popularize Patachitra- the ancient folk art
2. To bring Patachitra to contemporary society
3. Make Patachitra viable and thus survive

Visit to Naya

After the scholarship was sanctioned, I got in touch with *Manu chitrakar* once again. I knew he would be of utmost help as he had knowledge of the community's whereabouts and functioning in relation to my research. Hence I discussed my proposal with him and mutually decided upon a date when we could meet in person to take the research further.

On the 14th of February I travelled from Kolkata to Naya Pingla village in Medinipore. *Manu chitrakar* greeted me on my arrival. Having no hotels in and around the village, He arranged for my stay at his brother, *Anwar Chitrakar's* house, and reassured me that he will provide all the support I needed in order to carry out my research in the village. Thereafter being guided by *Manu Chitrakar* I was introduced to the village which goes by the name Naya. I learnt from him that about more than 80 families reside in this village and amongst them, 65 or even more are professionally involved in *Patachitra* painting. Most of the family members in the *Chitrakar* families indulge in the artistic activity themselves. They have arranged for their studio space within the household and routinely work on, or create paintings or crafts on a daily basis. These *Chitrakars*, for about 5 months in year, engage in various events and

activities outside the village. They are generally invited to various cities in India like Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai etc. to hold a workshop or to exhibit. Few do get a chance to do the same on an International level. A few from the village have travelled to Paris, Denmark and other countries in Europe to educate the people about their art form. This also allows them to interact and understand the demands of the urban culture. Subsequently to suit the demand, the *Patuas* need to make alterations in their traditional way of painting. This has given way to *Chaukapats* (square or rectangular in format) as opposed to the scroll like format. The rest of the 7-8 months are spent in the village for creating works in accordance to the demand.

I then decided to interview each *Chitrakar*. I prepared a questionnaire and set myself to work.

I shall mention 5 interviews in detail and then sum up the rest.

The first person I interviewed was Manu Chitrakar. I am mentioning his views as follows-

Interview 1:

Name: *Manu Chitrakar* also known as *Manoranjan Chitrakar*

Sex: Male

Age: 44 years old

Address: Naya Pingla , Medinapore, West Bengal

Years of experience: Round about 26-27 years of experience in this field

Why have you chosen this profession: I have been following what you may call the family tradition. It is an ancestral activity that has been brought down from one generation to the next. I personally got interested in the activity by observing my parents, sister and other relatives working on these paintings and performing scrolls. Further enthusiasm was generated when I tried the activity myself and that is when I truly started developing an innate love for this art form. My mother and younger brothers are active *Chitrakars* who are presently engaged in the same occupation. My sister, *Swarna Chitrakar*, is noteworthy for she has gained international recognition through this very practice. I also encourage the upcoming generations to indulge into the artistic activity and follow the traditions that I've grown up with.

General income per month: There is no certainty in the amount. Some in the family sell more than the other but generally my family's combined efforts generates approximately 12-15 thousand rupees per month.

Appreciation of work in the past: The past was rather glorious for us *chitrakars*. The faith that people had in our art form was very different from what it is today. When we would travel from village to village showing our scroll paintings and performing to it as it unfolded the mythologies of various Gods and Goddesses, the audience perceived it like devotees. A *chitrakar* was treated with immense respect and was paid handsomely for the same either in cash or in kind.

Appreciation of work in the recent day: As of today, with societal transformation,

there has remained no place for faith and devotion with regard to *Patachitra* paintings. With technological advancement such as the advent of Television in the rural areas, the villagers prefer to watch entertainment based movies, soaps, and serials over a performance by a *Chitrakar*. They tend to take *Patachitra* for granted. As a result of which the neglected *Chitrakars* have had to look out for other ways to make ends meet. This in order has obviously taken away the originality and authenticity of the Art form.

I believe that the concerns for our art form, is seen much more in urban cities and towns rather than villages. The appreciation for our art form is much more prevalent amongst the people from cities who understand and value it further more than the native villagers do. The urban people value the picture quality in our art while the villagers used to appreciate our performance along with it.

If changes are observed, state reasons: The primary reason for change is the increase in awareness amongst the villagers causing a decline of the art form. The villagers now distracted by technological advancements have neglected the performing pieces by the *Chitrakars*. They do not heed now as they would in the past. This has resulted in the drift of the target audience from rural to urban population.

While dealing with the urban population, the *Chitrakars* had to take a few things in consideration. They had to understand that the urban people appreciated the picture quality and were more or less disinterested in the performing nature. Hence they had to mould their art form in respective ways. The long scroll format of painting proved to be inconvenient for urban people to buy and display at home, work place, gallery or where ever they wished to. Hence the *Chitrakars* changed the format to a single square or rectangle piece also known as *Chaukapat*.

Although the target was urban life, the *chitrakars* did not want the rural native areas to be completely disconnected with the art form. Hence the *Chitrakars* along with the support of the UNESCO and various other institutions arranged for the occurrence of an annual *mela/* exhibition held during the month of November in Naya Pingla village of Medinipore. Through this *mela/exhibition* the *chitrakars* continue to form an association with the village and their people alike. Although designed for the native crowd, the *mela/* exhibition attracts a lot of attention, hosts a variety of both national and international tourists.

Products other than *pat* painting: Other products that I associate my art with are T-shirts, *sarees*, *odhna*, hand fans, table lamps, flower vase, tea trays and other utility cum decorative items.

Adaptations in the working process in the recent years and the results:

Govt. support: The government supports us by organizing a fair/ *mela* called the

Hastya Shilpa Mela. Other than that the government sometimes calls the performing artist for certain occasions for a cultural cause.

Other Support: The UNESCO and other institutions like banglanatok.com help us organize the annual exhibition/ *mela "Pat Maya"*. Other than that some individuals who are researching into our art and trying to revive our art form, support and encourage us as well.

Sale during *mela*/ exhibition: Sale during *mela*/ exhibition is the primary source of our income. Through this medium we are able to earn about 3-4 lakh per year.

How do you perceive future: I would like to mention two very important aspects in terms of the future of *Patachitra* paintings. Firstly, with advancements, the art form has gone through significant changes. In the process it has lost the authenticity of being a performing art form. The primary importance of the song which used to accompany the visuals into saying a story has now become rather secondary. The appreciation now comes in terms of visual quality of *Patachitra* paintings. As a result there is sheer neglect for the folk songs that we would usually sing along. I believe we will slowly lose out on that completely.

Secondly,

Anything else you would like to mention:

Interview 2:

Name: Bahadur Chitrakar

Sex: Male

Age: 41

Address: Naya Pingla, Medinipore, West Bengal

Years of experience: 28-29 years of experience

Why have you chosen this profession: During the initial years of my life I worked as carpenter. I built houses along with other supporting carpenters and did other work in relation to it. But as time passed by the work inflow decreased by a great margin. It became difficult to sustain myself as a carpenter during those times. That is when I saw more scope in being a *Chitrakar* and developed a knack for *Patachitra* paintings.

General income per month: I am able to earn about 6000 rupees per month through the sale of paintings alone.

Appreciation of work in the past: I think the demand of scroll paintings at that time came from two different sources. One, where we would travel from village to village, perform and show our *Patachitra* paintings for the villagers and earn our living from it. The other, when foreigners would often visit our village in order to acquire our paintings for their personal collection or Museums. Hence we would enact our *Patachitra* paintings in front of them and sell our works accordingly.

Appreciation of work in the recent day: To answer this question, the advent of television needs to be talked about first. I believe that the arrival of television in rural land, both, killed us and saved us. I say 'killed' because, with the television coming into the scenario, the villagers stopped taking our art form seriously as they had better alternatives for entertainment. This resulted in a major downfall for us *patuas*. On the other hand the widespread of television did happen to save us again. It is through this device that our art form was also advertised. Before television, we would have to go to a certain place in order to educate them and introduce them to our art form. Now, the television and media does that bit where it takes our art form and reaches it to millions. This allows people all over the World to experience and get interested in *Patachitra* paintings. As a result, all the opportunities, which includes exhibitions, workshops, and displays, all, in a way come with the help of television.

Also, in recent times, the demand for our work comes mostly from big cities. This obviously changes the context that we would work under. But I don't fight that break of notion. I feel that our art also needs to adapt to the change and if we do so, then we can sell ourselves better as artists in the modern society.

If changes are observed, state reasons: Like I said, the advent of television in villages is a major turning point. Along with it, the growth of demand from modern societies has also called for changes. It has made us shift into decorative and utilitarian objects. We now paint on bottles, flowers vases, t-shirts. We also infuse our art work within ornaments and wooden decors at times. By these adaptations we are able to meet the demands of almost all the households belonging to the modern societies.

Products other than *pat* painting: Our focus has now shifted towards utilitarian products. For example, *odhna*, *sarees*, *kurtis*, t-shirts, pen stand, hand fans, carry bags, bed covers, etc.

Adaptations in the working process in the recent years and the results: If we can hold up our traditions and continue to adapt with the change, then we can move towards progress and accordingly the results will also be in favour.

Govt. support: The *melas* is probably the biggest help we have received from the government. We spend almost 3-4 months in a year visiting *melas*. Other than *Milan mela* in Kolkata, there are other *melas* as well such as *Posh Mela* in Shantiniketan. By help of the government, we also get to take workshops in other cities teaching them various techniques required for the making of *Patachitra* for example making colours from nature.

Other Support: Other than government, we have received major help from individuals- Ruby Pal Chowdhury, Mira Mukherjee, Shanu Lahiri, P. Lal. They have

helped us immensely by providing us monetary and emotional support and encouraging us to continue with our art form.

Sale during mela/exhibition: The *mela* that is takes place in our own village has of late started to flourish. In the initial years the inflow of people and their interest was rather low. In the last two years, we have received a different sort of interest from not only adjoining villages but from other communities. School and college students have started taking interest in our work. They not only buy our products because they like them but also because they understand that this is how they can help in promoting our art form. The *mela* is now widely recognized and brings people from all over to our very own Naya Pingla village.

How do you perceive future: On a personal level I see myself bringing up a museum in the future. In this museum I want to display works pertaining to folk art from all over the world. Through my travels within and outside the country, I have been able to collect over 2000 works already. Once built, I want to welcome both Indian and foreign tourist to witness our *Patachitra* paintings alongside many great folk art forms from all over the world.

Anything else you would like to mention: Terrorism is also affecting our future. Before the widespread of terrorism the foreign nationals would visit our village, appreciate our work, and provide us with opportunities. Now the number and frequency of visits by foreigners has reduced drastically due to terror threats. This has obviously resulted in lesser opportunities and will continue to be the same way in the future as well unless we find a solution to this crisis.

Interview 3:

Name: Swarno Chitrakar

Sex: Female

Age: 46 years

Address: Naya Pingla Village

Years of experience: 40 years

Why have you chosen this profession: I wanted to help my father in his work as a child. As I would, I also started enjoying the work he did and slowly started seeing myself taking it up as a passion and profession in the future. I have immense love for people, singing for them and reaching out to them through my work and they loved me back equally.

General income per month: *She humbly let this question pass as she is the most renowned Patachitra painter in the world and her works are sold for rather high prices.*

Appreciation of work in the past: The joys of the past has led to my joyous life

now. Everything that I have learnt and experienced in the past has molded my present. It is because of yesterday's hard work that I am happy today.

Appreciation of work in the recent day: In the recent times my work is largely appreciated for two prime reasons. First, for my technique and style of painting, secondly, I have subjectivity progressed with time. Along with the traditional display of *Manasa Mangal* and other Goddesses, I also deal with modern issues and situations. One can see through my work about our society and understand what happens around me every day.

If changes are observed, state reasons: In the past, Man would indulge himself primary in religious beliefs and activities. Faith would drive everything in the past. But, in today's World, man has stepped away from blind faith and is engaged in issues that pertain to the Nation and to the World. He is more socially aware of what surrounds him. Hence the change in subjectivity from traditional Gods and Goddesses to the present social scenario is rather relevant and inevitable. I have made Pats about the 2011 bomb blasts in Mumbai, Osama Bin Laden, and the recent terror attacks in Paris as well. I believe that we have to address the current social issues. We, *Patuas*, will otherwise be lost if we continue to stick on to the traditional subjects of religion faith and mythology.

Products other than *pat* painting:

Adaptations in the working process in the recent years and the results: The adaptations in recent years cannot be rejected for it is our only hope for survival. The *Patua* community needs to make progress together as one in order to keep the art form from extinction. We are dependent on each other's progress for the survival of the art form. One man cannot individually take the responsibility for the progress of the art form. It has to be done in unity.

Govt. support: The government supports us by organizing the *mela*, calling us for workshops and exhibitions. Also banglanatok.com is of immense help.

Other Support: Other than the government we receive a great deal of help from individuals like Ruby Pal Chowdhury, Nandita Chowdhury, Malini Bhattacharya, Rajeev Sethi and more. They help us in promoting our art form.

Sale during *mela*/exhibition: I sell reasonably well during the *mela*. Other than the *mela*, when the tourists visit our village, the sale of my paintings are generally on a high. They appreciate my paintings and encourage me to do more by buying my paintings and giving me love in return.

How do you perceive future: I have utmost belief in our art form and I do not think that we will ever stop painting. The only thing that we *chitrakars* need to keep in mind is to make sure the legacy continues. Just like we learnt from our parents and

elders, we need to teach our children and inspire them enough to take up the art form and push it forward.

Anything else you would like to mention:

Interview 4:

Name: Rahaman Chitrakar

Sex: Male

Age: 34 years

Address: Naya Pingla village

Years of experience: 26 years

Why have you chosen this profession: My love for the art form is my only reason to choose *patachitra* as my profession. I would watch my father work on paintings as a child. This made me interested further and eventually I took up the profession myself. I do not think of business while I paint. That has never been my motive. I naturally enjoy the process of painting.

General income per month: 2500 rupees per month approximately

Appreciation of work in the past: In the past our only driving force was happiness. We would paint and go to perform in villages just to make people happy which in turn brought us happiness.

Appreciation of work in the recent day: In the recent days man has succumbed to his own greed. The only thing that matters to him is money. This has obviously affected our lives and has made us stoop down in front of it.

If changes are observed, state reasons: The fact that we are being able reach out to the urban society through the sale of utilitarian products itself has caused changes. Now in order to survive we do work on products other than *pat* painting.

Products other than *pat* painting: I do work on other products. But my motive is different while I work on these products. While I paint *patachitra* paintings, I require a different mindset. Hence I do not work on both simultaneously. I work on products like ornaments, *sarees*, t-shirts, bottles, tea trays etc.

Adaptations in the working process in the recent years and the results: These adaptation have resulted in loss of authenticity and originality of the art form. We have given away too much of our art form in order to suit the needs of the urban societies as a result our art form is now lost.

Govt. support: Two members from our family receive the *shilpi bhatta* (pay) from the Government. Thus we receive 2000 rupees per month from the Government.

Other Support: Banglanatok.com has provided us with immense support.

Sale during *mela*/exhibition: The *mela* is our primary source of income.

How do you perceive future: The only thing I am certain about the future is that we are going to continue working as *chitrakars*. I do not understand the rights or wrongs. Hence we might or might not succeed. But all I know is that we have to keep working otherwise everything will be lost.

Anything else you would like to mention: I am personally not very happy with the diversification into other products. I believe that this has resulted in the loss of our art form. I want to understand why the artists are indulging in the production of utilitarian objects at the cost of the originality in our art form.

Interview 5:

Name: Yakub Chitrakar

Sex: Male

Age: 50 years

Address: Naya Pingla village

Years of experience: 42 years

Why have you chosen this profession: At the very first the stories of *Manasa Mangal* would absorb me. By the time I was 8 my interest grew even stronger as I started to help my father in painting the scrolls. At the age of 12, my father instilled faith in me and encouraged me to venture out by myself to perform and show the paintings in other villages. There onwards I have never looked back and have lived the life of a *chitrakar* ever since.

General income per month: My whole family (comprising of 5 members) together is able to earn about 10000 rupees per month.

Appreciation of work in the past: In the past there was no direct relationship between money and joy. We would simply be happy painting and creating works of art. We would rejoice upon completion of a particular scroll. The monetary returns were less significant in comparison to the joy in creating art.

Appreciation of work in the recent day: The recent days have proved out to be rather different. Although we get money in exchange for our works, we have lost out on the joy of painting the scrolls itself. It fulfills our needs but fails to satisfy our creative surge.

If changes are observed, state reasons: We are dependant upon the needs of the urban societies for our survival. This obviously calls for changes in our work. We have to change our work whether it be in technique or subjectivity in order to suit the demands of the urban market. Also we have taken inspiration from other folk art form of India which have been successful in creating a market for itself. For example we have looked into *patachitra* from Orissa, *Kalighat* Paintings, *Warli* painting, *Gond*

paintings etc. and incorporated characteristics from their art as well. This has also resulted in changes within our art form.

Products other than *pat* painting: I personally don't work on anything other than *pats*. In cases of requirement, other members of my family work on the some utilitarian products that other *chitrakars* are constantly working on in order to sell.

Adaptations in the working process in the recent years and the results: The fact that we have been flexible about changes in our art form has obviously given us more scope for survival. It has also done major good to the art form itself in breaking out of the traditional age-old methods and techniques. I know many such *chitrakars* who have failed to adapt to the changes and as a result have lost out and diverted themselves into different professions in hope for survival.

Govt. support: The Government has helped us by organizing the *mela* which is a major source of income for us *chitrakars*. Other than that, recently the government has started to provide for those *chitrakars* who can still sing the songs of the folk art form. The singers receive an amount of 1000 rupees per month which obviously is of major help to us.

Other Support: Other than the government there are various N.G.O.'s who come and help us promote our art form. There are also people on individual levels who are a source of encouragement helping us push our art form further. We also get to participate in various workshops and exhibitions which is held in institutions like schools and colleges. This in turn helps people recognize our art form.

Sale during *mela*/ exhibition: We have reasonably good sale during the *mela*.

How do you perceive future: I believe that we need to be flexible and adapt according to the demands of the contemporary society. This is our only scope for survival. Hence we must be open to changes in the future.

Anything else you would like to mention: I would like to mention that the products that we *chitrakars* are making other than *pat* paintings are very scattered and the returns from it are rather insignificant. Hence we need to put more thought behind it in order to succeed in selling our art in the contemporary markets.

I have taken interview of 50 *chitrakars* in Naya and after analysis have come to the conclusion that they are very confused. They feel making products is going against their ethics and dignity. They do not take pride in their own work. They feel they should resist the change and stick to their ancient tradition. Majority of them are not secured monetarily yet there are a few who are well accomplished and have travelled around the world.

Conclusion from my visit to Naya :

I feel the *chitrakaras* should take pride in their work. The entire world is changing and

everybody has to adapt with the changing times. If they resist the change they will be left behind. They should feel free to work as per the situation today without feeling guilty. Money is a prime requirement today. They have to look forward and create their own importance. I shall try and help them in this regard.

I feel the first point that the *patuas* have to keep in mind in order to adapt to the contemporary society is the differences in lifestyles. There exists a huge gap in between the lifestyle of the *patuas* and that of the urban societies. I want to step in here in order to bridge those very gaps and help the *patuas* understand the modern society better. This will allow the *patuas* to comprehend the functionality of people and what exactly gives way to their demands and needs. Once that is grasped, the *patuas* can be trained to produce in accordance.

Being a resident of Kolkata, I interacted with people from all kinds of professions. Among those, the ones who pertain specifically to my project are architects, interior designers, retail and exhibition designers, furniture designers, fashion designers etc. My interest lies in linking the professionals with the *patuas*. It was felt that the *patuas* are painting on decorative and utilitarian objects like bottles, flowers vases, t-shirts without their soul in it. They are painting motifs mechanically in a repetitive manner without any emotional involvement. This has to be done in a way that the artistic skills of the *patuas* can be implemented along with the essence of their culture and involvement that they once had when the whole family created paintings together for their performances. That feel of involvement and pride in their work is required to make them create work of quality. The *patuas* also have to adapt to the aesthetics of the modern society. They may have to change the context under which they would usually work so that the urban societies are able to relate to their work better. The adaptation henceforth calls for a transformation of subjectivity from the traditional folk tales to issues surrounding the urban societies, for example, works dealing with socio political issues and scenarios, keeping their sensitivity for their own working style. This adaptation is not sudden for the *patuas*, rather it is something the *patuas* have already been working on. I myself have witnessed works focusing on awareness, for example, there were works that demonstrated the benefits of planting a tree, also there were works that created awareness about AIDS. They have also worked with social issues addressing the discrimination between castes and classes within the society. The *patuas* have confronted the terror attacks of 9/11 through their work as well, portraying imageries of the World trade Centre and that of Osama Bin Laden. Hence this transformation can be achieved rather conveniently if the *patuas* are instructed and guided well.

Just like *Kalighat* Paintings dealt with contemporary visuals for the urban society to relate to, even *Patachitra* can adapt and dwell into visuals pertaining to issues that surround us and can build its own market for survival within the urban societies provided they maintain a high standard of quality and sensitivity and take pride in what they are doing.

Visit to Showrooms

Keeping the motive of my project in mind, I visited several showrooms and boutiques. This was done in order to discuss with the owners and customers, what they have in mind with regard to inclusion of *Patachitra* within their products of sale.

One amongst them was the Sienna showroom situated in Jodhpur Park, Kolkata. They sell a variety of articles. The ambience of the showroom is decorated just like one would want their homes to be like. The articles have also been put up very appropriately inspiring the customers to put it up in a similar manner at their homes as well. I was particularly happy seeing a section of the showroom dedicated to *Patachitra* painting. One wall and the false ceilings had *Patachitra* paintings on them. This inspired me as well as reassured me that *Patachitra* could in fact be implemented in homes to enhance the ambience. Thus I felt that I can work further with the *chitrakars* and introduce them and their work to the owners and customers in order to get their feedback. Thereafter we can implement the suggestions given by them and adapt accordingly to improvise on the products.

Another showroom that I visited is Byloom situated at Hindustan Park, Kolkata. They have a brilliant collection of men and women's fabric. I visited with the motive of finding out whether *Patachitra* art can be infused within their fabrics of sale or not. In general the customers are from upper middle or upper class societies. They are constantly looking out for new designs not just in terms of motifs but also designs that incorporate the surroundings of the urban man. Hence if *Patachitra* paintings portraying contemporary stories and issues could be introduced within the fabrics, a different sort of appeal can be generated amongst these customers. If a market can be created based on this then *chitrakars* can later get directly linked with showrooms like this and can work in accordance and can provide for themselves.

Anupam Chakraborty is an entrepreneur and paper maker who runs his own business enterprise. He is renowned for his process of paper making and production of diaries, notebooks etc with those handmade papers. The *chitrakars* could implement their art on the notebook and diary covers as well. They could probably work on a narrative which shows how paper is made or portrays the history of paper making. Furthermore they could also illustrate a few pages within the notebook or diary. This in turn would help in beautifying the product and in turn increase the sale of these very notebooks and diaries.

After a lot of observation and discussion I have created some images by punching objects and *patachitra* paintings in photoshop software. I am inserting some of the images here. At present I have used pictures of the existing paintings but I feel the products and the subject matter can be related, for example 'history of papermaking' on a diary made of handmade paper.

Plan for next six months

I shall go to the village Naya Pingla and work with the patuas. For example I can buy 50 handmade diaries and explain my concept to them and get them paint these diaries, make panels for the doors and furniture, paint t-shirts, and cushion covers with urban stories. We shall carry these products to various *melas* in the months of November and December and try and analyze the response of the urban society. During these *melas* I shall try to take some interior designers, boutique owners and artists to get their views and opinion regarding the existing products and the newly developed products and then plan the course of action for the next year.

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Fellowship Holder

Annexure
Questionnaire



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

Senior Fellowship Grant Scheme(Visual Arts, Painting) year 2013-14

Adaptation of Patachitra to Suit Contemporary Society : by Samir K Dutta

Date :

Name : Sex : Age :

Address :
.....

Years of Experience :
.....

Why have you chosen this profession :
.....
.....

General income per month :
.....

Appreciation of work in the past :
.....

Appreciation of work in recent days :
.....

If changes are observed state reasons :
.....

Products other than pot painting :
.....

Adaptations in the working process
in the recent years and the results :
.....

Govt Support :
.....

Other support :
.....

Sale during mela/ exhibition :
.....

How do you perceive future :
.....

Anything else you like to mention :

**Ministry of Culture
Govt. of India**

***Senior Fellowship
2013-2014***

Field of the Fellowship:
Visual Art (Painting)

File No. - CCRT/SF-3/166/2015

Subject:
**Adaptation of *Patachitra*
to suit Contemporary Society**

2nd Report :
1st July, 2016 to 31st December, 2016

Name and address of the awardee:
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Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society

Abstract

It was observed that the *patuas* are not being able to diversify their stories and applications as per the modern society, hence their work seems repetitive when they paint on the utilitarian objects. In this regard, *Chitrakaras* were brought from *Naya* to Kolkata to feel and understand the requirements of the urban society. They were asked to paint on chosen objects under guidance regarding the use of space, material and theme. The objects chosen were utilitarian but new to *Chitrakaras*. Secondly these products were displayed along with the *patua* painters in two fairs (Melas), ‘Pot Maya’ at *Naya* organized by ‘*Chitrataru*’ and ‘*Hasta Shilpa Mela*’ at *Milan Mela* Grounds organized by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise & Textile Department, Govt. of West Bengal, in Kolkata. These products were put to test in these fairs where they received a clear picture of acceptance and appreciation as per the analysis of the feedback form filled by the respondents who had come to visit the fair. Accordingly I have planned to develop some more new products and also visit *Naya* to discuss my findings with the *Chitrakaras* which I feel will help them to improvise their own products and reach out to the urban society.

Introduction

Patachitra has been considered as one of the most musical and illustrious form of folk narrative in Bengal and its adjoining states of *Odisha*, *Bihar* and *Jharkhand*. While the art form and music distinctively puts forward a local flavor of the particular state, West Bengal in particular has its own panache of *patuas* from the districts of *Bankura*, *Purulia*, *Birbhum* and *West Midnapore*. It may be rightfully considered a conjoint of various methods of communication which includes visual, oral and musical forms to narrate stories related to society, culture, religion, nature and popular folklore. Through its strong visual and oral medium it preserves the documentation of the society down the ages. It is also a witness to the social transformation and tells stories of the socio-political and religious reflections and changes over the years.

These painted scrolls were migratory saga of the *patuas*, who were wanderers in origin. They travelled from state to state enjoying the patronage of several kings,

landlords and nobles. Though the origin of *Patachitra* as a narrative form of folklore cannot be traced exactly, yet various oral form of record dates it back to around 10th - 11th century AD in Bengal. The art of scroll painting has been handed down from generation to generation in the families of *patuas* or artisans. Arguably, some 300 years ago, Raja Balaram Sen patronized the advancement of *patachitra*. The main theme, around which the *pats* were painted, comprised of stories from the three *Mangal Kavyas*- the *Manasa Mangal Kavya*, *Chandi Mangal Kavya* and *Dharma Mangal Kavya*, along with epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Beside these deities, folklores, socio-political scenario of the time along with religious connotations and beliefs also reflected.

The *patachitra* also caught the fancy of the British Rulers. It was considered a form of folk entertainment that appeals to both the visual and auditory senses. It was a complete form by its own comprising of painting, story and song.

This narrative art form however, with the loss of legacy and royal patronage, declined from its high stature of performing art of court to the common man's entertainment during festivals and rural *melas* (fair). The *Patuas* then began to travel from village to village showcasing and performing their narrative style of painting portraying the same variety of subjects. The villagers, on the receiving end, would sit down in groups and watch the *Patuas* perform and listen to their songs with utmost faith as if the portrayals of God in the scrolls were actually coming to life. Yet, for the *Patuas*, *Patachitra*, was not an act of religious preaching but rather a livelihood. They would generally receive in kind in exchange for their performance and seldom got money.

This art form soon could not help sustain the livelihood of the artisans. Lack of demand resulted from the emergence of other forms of mass media and entertainment, thus folklore and narrative forms were forced to give way to radio, television, satellite and finally internet. These survival threats forced *patuas* to look for alternative diversification for this performing art form. From its elaborate form of performance which included several forms of communication-visual, oral and music, *patachitra* was forced to be reduced to an illustrative form of scroll art. Although *patachitra* appealed to the new generation, the format of scrolls (6-10ft. long) proved to be inconvenient. This gave way to the *Chaukapat* format (squarish in shape) in *Patachitra* painting. Eventually this scroll art got restricted into modern lifestyle products with functionality far from its original purpose of story-telling art. Product diversification was their only mode of survival. While the government and several

Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) helped some clusters of *patuas*, especially in *Naya* village of *Pingla* in West *Midnapore* to take up trainings for design up-gradation and product diversification in order to cater to the demands of the new age market. They made further adaptations to fit in the modern societies by bringing their artistic practice on to various utility oriented items such as t-shirts, tea trays, carved table tops, tea kettles, glass bottles, flower vase, pencil stand, bookmark- all containing characteristics and features of *Patachitra* paintings. This gave the artists scope to sell their work better.

Very few privileged and fortunate *Patuas* get the chance to represent the folk form in other states as well as countries while the majority of the *Patuas* fight for survival.

It must be mentioned that 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 in organising for the trips or by drawing and preparing the canvasses. However, as new media and global reach of the *patachitra* increased, the active participation of the women came to the forefront. 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 is gripping the medium- that of ethics and specific issues questioning the survival, sustainability and continuity of the folk tradition of *patachitra*.

Origin of the Research Problem:

Every year The *Lalit Kala Akademi*, Kolkata regional centre hosts an Exhibition/*Mela*. The scholarship holders display their work as a part of their exhibition and along with it a few artisans are also invited to display and sell their works. During the Annual exhibition/*Mela* of 2014 when I as a working artist displayed my works, I came across Manu *Chitrakar* for the very first time. He had come from *Naya Pingla* village along with his mother, Mina *Chitrakar*. Here I got the opportunity to engage into a conversation with him. The dialogue was rather extensive as I got interested and learned about his village, community, *Patachitra* as a

way of life, and his concerns regarding the same. I decided to work for the subject and thus chose my area of concern to be *Patachitra* paintings for the Senior Fellowship Research and applied for it.

I feel that these paintings when originated were related to their contemporary social issues and culture. If this tradition could be brought to the today's contemporary life style and be meaning full to the present society their survival and importance will bounce back automatically. Hence I would like to initiate these paintings in contemporary living style, ex. illustration in books, in screens, partitions, cushion covers, curtains, and other contemporary products. This is my humble endeavor to let the world know about them.

Patuas are already experimenting with various items other than *patachitras* to bring forth wide array of products. If these *Patuas* could be made further aware about the contemporary requirements in terms of products and aesthetics, they would have a better chance of survival. *Patuas* are today trying to create something unique and exceptional in the market that may be appreciated by customers worldwide but are confused about the contemporary taste. They are now painting pats over shirts, costumes, dresses, accessories, key-rings, cards, vases, show-pieces, bags and caps. If these *Patuas* who are willing to adapt could further be made aware about the contemporary design sense and requirement they will definitely benefit. I feel that since I am a contemporary artist I may be of some help in bridging this gap. Thus being a Bengali, I wish to try and do something in this area and I am glad I have been given an opportunity to do so.

Objectives:

4. Popularize *Patachitra*- the ancient folk art
5. To bring *Patachitra* to contemporary society
6. Make *Patachitra* viable and thus survive

My Work since July 2016

In the first report of my project I had quoted that in the days to come I would be touching base with the artists working at *Nayagram* at their villages itself and further inviting them over to the city. Thus, by understanding the requirements of the populace in urban areas, the artists would be able to mould and shape their articles

accordingly. These would then be displayed at fairs at villages and cities like and feedback along with opinions could be obtained.

In July 2016, I visited *Pingla, Nayagram at Mednipur* to understand the varieties of products and articles being created by the *Patuas* or Chitrakars.

On returning I started collecting and creating different articles giving importance to following areas:

1. Choosing surfaces on which the artists would be working on in the future. Here particular thought was given to what would be pleasing to the urban population.
2. Creating contemporary structures that would go with the modern interiors as well as have space where the *chitrakars* can show their skills with ease, while enhancing the dignity of the chosen product, for example a display unit or a side table.
3. The eco-friendly aspect was also kept in mind while choosing the products
4. The pricing model had to be construed with due consideration towards affordability with respect to the targeted customers. Here I would also like to highlight that it was understood that if the product is of good quality, material wise and aesthetically pleasing price is not a major factor.
5. Considerable thought was put into creating an interrelated design article. For example musical instruments were painted on *Ektara* and a lady reading was painted on a notebook cover.
6. Care was taken to ensure that these articles could be utilized in a traditional interior design theme based on *Patachitra*. The products could be integrated together for a complete interior design concept or they could be displayed in an isolated manner. Both these factors were given due consideration in the designing process.
7. A *Patua* artist when working on an article for commercial purpose does not bother to think of deviating from the traditional surfaces or forms on which he/she is usually painting on. The manner in which he/she paints on a two-dimensional object, he similarly paints on a three-dimensional surface without adapting to the form or surface. They do not have experience with respect to the proportion of area of an object that needs to be worked on to how much of it should be left such that the original characteristic of the surface is retained and thus make it more aesthetic in appeal. Their experience fails them when

they have to work on any other surface than paper. The usual tendency is to flood the surface with drawings and paintings. This is one area where I had to concentrate so that the individual character of any surface is not lost.

8. The *Patuas* are accustomed to using fabric colours for their work. I encourage them to use textile pigments. The primary reason was the fact that the textile pigments bind better with the surface compared to the fabric colours which coagulate on the surface itself. The textile pigments would retain the characteristic of the surface well as compared to the fabric colours would provide a glazed layer on the surface. The intention was to create these articles based on the demands of the contemporary society.

Thus base units were created and procured.

Three artists from Nayagram were invited over to Kolkata at Lalit Kala Akademi Regional Centre guest house. I selected these three artists from different age groups, namely –

1. *Manoranjan Chitrakar*, age 44, from *Pingla, Nayagram*
2. *Hasir Chitrakar*, age 19, from *Pingla, Nayagram*
3. *Riya Chitrakar*, who goes to school, does her daily household chores, plays with her friends and also devotes her time to drawing. *Riya* is 12 years of age, from *Pingla, Nayagram*.

Along with these three artists and the articles created and procured by me earlier, we start our journey. Altogether, we managed to create 10 products which are:

1. Side table
2. Wall mounted showcase
3. Notebooks (Eco cover based)
4. Notebooks (Handmade paper with complete covers and stitching based on Patachitra)
5. *Ektara*
6. Wooden Bowl
7. Blouse
8. *Dupatta*
9. Cushion Cover
10. Table Lamp (Designed using natural resources)

Now with the above mentioned products, I discussed with the artists on the subject of materials being used and the type of colour to be utilized.

Now when we came to the point where the subject matter of the paintings was to be decided, I felt it was necessary to digress from the usual subjects of *Manusha Mangal*, *Behula*, *Chandi*, *Kaba* etc. that the painters generally work with. I wanted to incorporate a contemporary emotion in these products so that they would help connect with the buyer.

Apart from this we also had a discussion pertaining to the combination of the surface used and the paintings. There would be a need to balance out the negative surface as well. For example if the work is being done on a wooden surface, there would be certain segments where the texture of the wooden surface is brought out as well. As I had explained earlier, the original character of the surface needs to be retained. Thus I showed them how to use fixatives and pigments along with the colours to bond with the surfaces.

Over a week of intensive toiling from dawn to dusk, we created the products mentioned before.

While working, I paid careful attention so that the spontaneity and rapid strokes associated with *Patachitra* are retained in these products as well.

Every year in West Mednipur, Nayagram, Pingla, a 'Pot Maya' fair is held, where *Patachitra* artists display their works. The organizing committee Chitrataru comprises of the artists community of this village itself. Rural Crafts Hub of West Bengal takes particular interest in this fair. Planning and financial assistance is extended by *Pashchim Banga Khadi o Grameen Shilpa Parishad*. Other than this UNESCO, department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise and Textiles (Govt. of West Bengal) also extended their support. I would also like to make a mention of *BanglaNatok .com*, which has been associated with *Chitrataru* and 'Pot Maya' for considerably long time.

This fair is a major attraction for foreign as well as Indian tourists. Especially those who are interested in this line of art as well as those associated with interior designing or boutique industry. Apart from this, the rural folk of all nearby villages throng to Pat Maya, the fair being an impressive affair for them as well.

This year, starting from the 11th of November to the 13th of November, I had set up a stall at the fair to display the *Patachitra* themed products created by the *Patuas* under my guidance. Utilizing this foothold in the fair, I gathered valuable feedback and also

interacted with the local artisans in the fair and showed them the products created till then. When they see that the customers are interested in the products that we have developed, they expressed their interest and were motivated to start working on a similar line.

With the help of *Manu Chitrakar*, *Chitrataru* and *BanglaNatok.com*, I was able to secure a stall in the mela and display their work. I interacted with customers of all age groups and focused on understanding their interests, opinions, what they found attractive and penned it down in the feedback form. I divided my subject sample cases into male and female and further subdivided them according to age into three brackets, 16-25; 26-45; 46-65. This would give a clearer picture as to the preferences of the targeted customer base.

The analysis has been described later.

Further after this, I attend a handicraft fair in Kolkata, organized by the Government of West Bengal at *Milon Mela* grounds. Mr. Subol Panja was the coordinator at this fair. The fair was organized by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise & Textile Department, Govt. of West Bengal. I approached the Ministry and discussed my fellowship project with the officials there. On showing them documentations of my previous project I was granted permission to set up a site at the fair and collect feedback. Thus on 9th Dec, I displayed all my articles at the *Milon Mela* grounds. Artisans from all over Bengal attended this fair for displaying and selling their works.

The handicraft fair is an immense kaleidoscope of numerous artists from different regions and a varied mix of skills and forms of art. Amidst this vast buffet of crafts, there was a section dedicated to *Patachitra*. I collaborated with the artists in this section and presented my products. Considering the fact that my products were based on *Patachitra*, meaningful feedback could be obtained as I displayed my works alongside the works of the *Patuas*. This helped me achieve the perfect forum where my experimental articles could be compared against the traditional *Patachitra* works. My intention was not to sell my articles. I wanted to survey and generate a response whether the articles would be accepted and whether there is a possibility of creating a demand in the market for these products such that in the future, the *Patuas* could diversify and sustain themselves as well as their art.

A considerable majority of the populace expressed their interest and showed eagerness to procure the articles. A number of retailers dealing with similar products

were keen on exploring the commercial aspects in the future. Interior designers were quite fascinated by the idea of *Patachitra* as a concept and were excited about incorporating it in their works.

The encouragement I received from the discussions and deliberations with artists, designers, boutique owners and the general masses provided a sense of reassurance, convincing me that I was on the correct path. I have gained in confidence and can visualize the right direction in which to move forward.

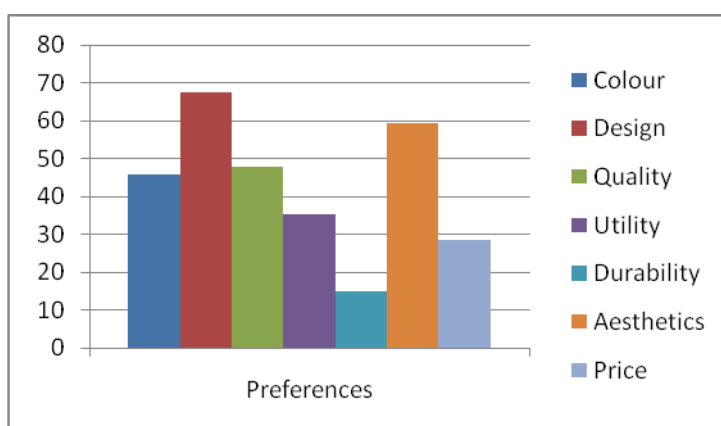
Analysis of the Feedback

Feedback collected at ‘Pot Maya’ Mela held in West Mednipur, Nayagram, Pingla, has been analyzed as follows:-

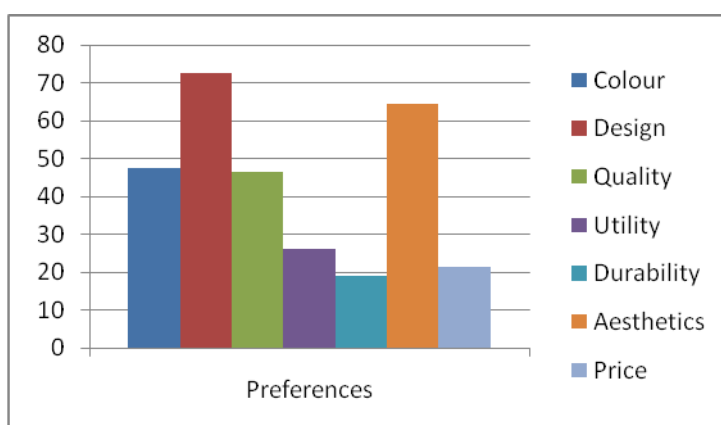
Q1 to Q 4 was based on personal information.

Q 5 was based on understanding of preferences while purchasing household product.

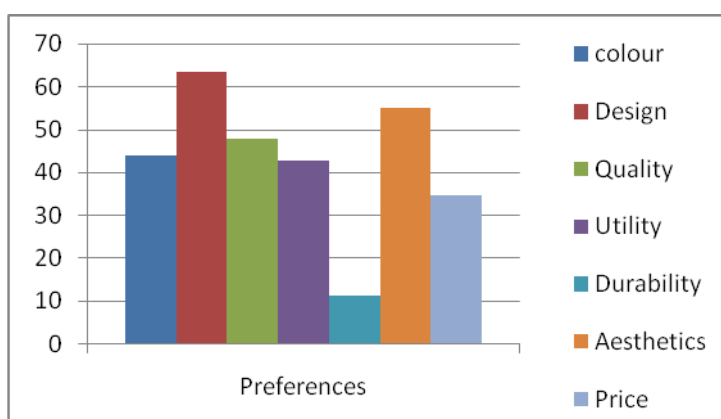
General



Males



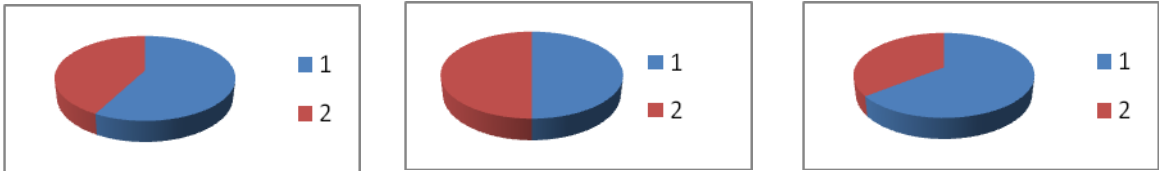
Females



It was observed that the respondents gave more importance to ‘Design’ and ‘Aesthetic appeal’. Price was more important for female respondents than their male counterparts. No

major difference was noted between the male and female preference. However it was felt females gave significantly more importance to ‘Utility’ than ‘Durability’ as compares to male respondents. Different age groups were also analyzed but no significant difference was found.

Q 6 was based on acceptance adaptation of *Patachitra* in various utilitarian products as a concept.



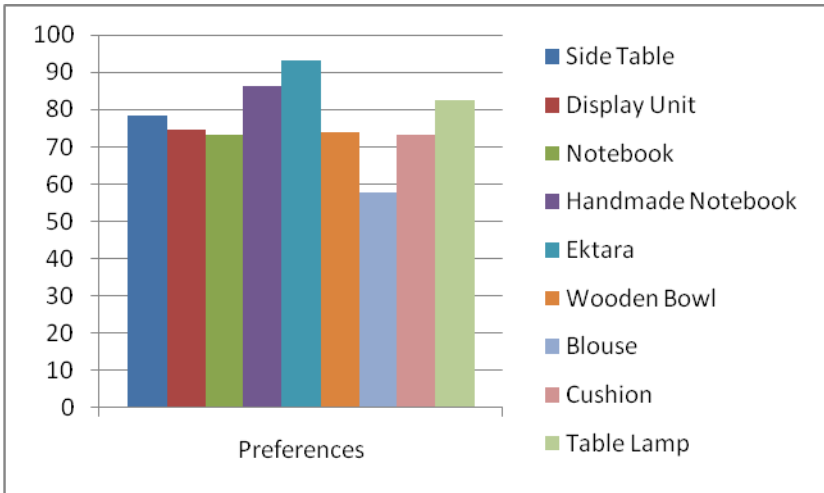
General 57.7 excellent, 42.3 Good Males- 50.0 excellent, 50.0 Good Females -64.3 excellent, 35.7 Good

It was observed that female respondents liked the products more than the male respondents.

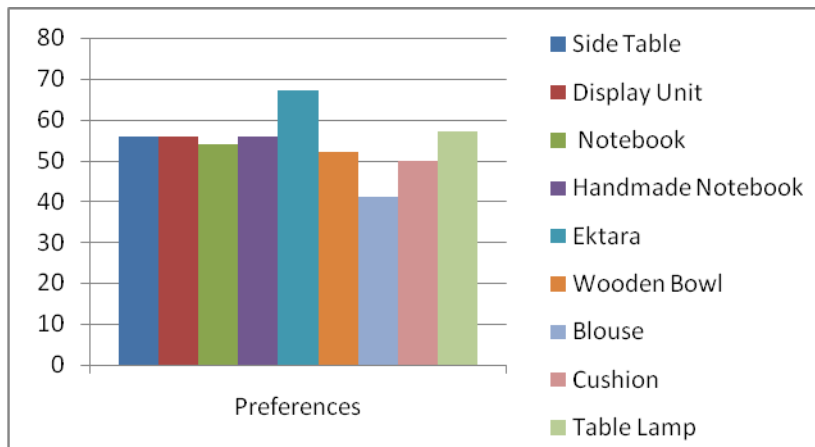
Q7 asked for suggestions for objects suitable for modified *Patachitra*.

Respondents suggested leather wallets, leather bags, ceramic products, jewellery, curtains, book cover, school bag, hand bag and windows and door panels.

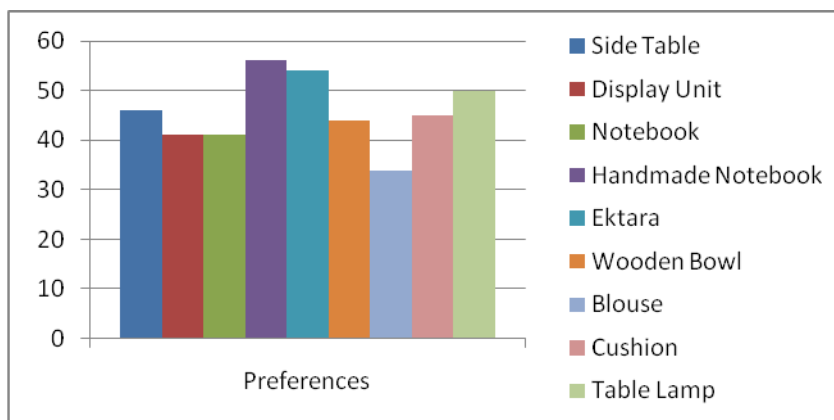
Q8 asked respondents to state their liking for the new created products.



Rating of respondents (General)



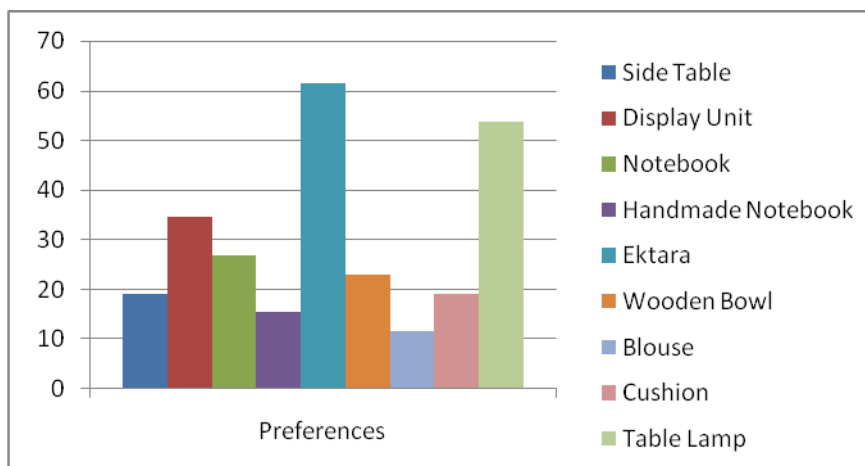
Rating of respondents (Males)



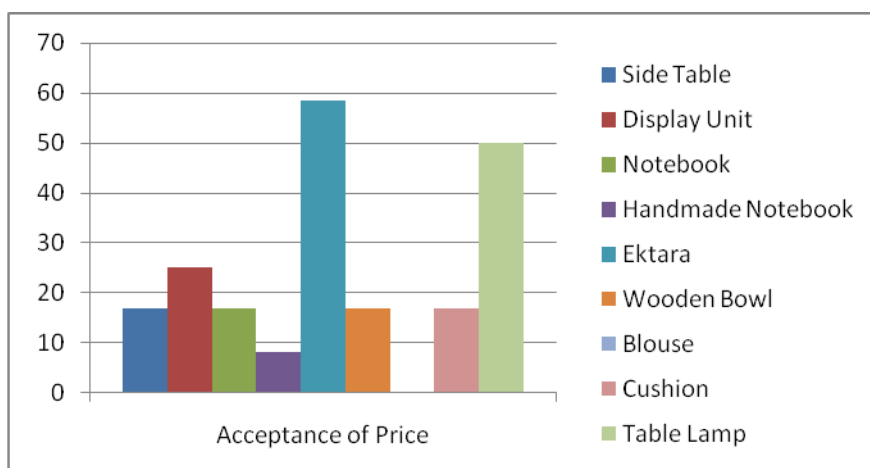
Rating of respondents (Females)

It was noted that the males preferred '*Ektara*' the most, while females preferred the 'Handmade notebook' the most. Blouse was preferred the least by all. It was observed that the blouse was similar to the products that the *Chitrakars* were already making.

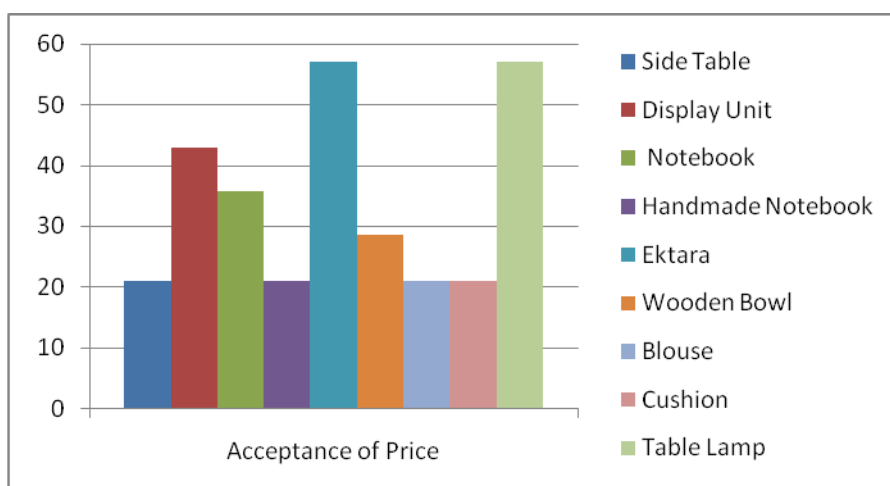
Q9 asked the respondents if they would purchase the articles at the given price



Price acceptance of respondents (General)



Price acceptance of respondents (Males)

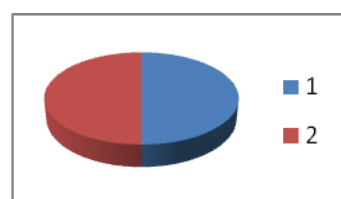
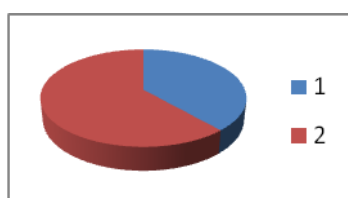


Price acceptance of respondents (Females)

It was observed that respondents were eager to buy the 'Ektara' and 'Table lamp' the most. Male respondents did not care for the 'Blouse' at all.

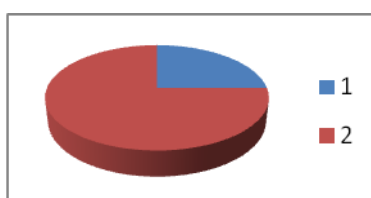
Q10 was to know if the respondents felt the price suitable for the products. The result is as follows:

General



Suitable- 38.47%

Males



Suitable 25%

Females

Suitable 50%

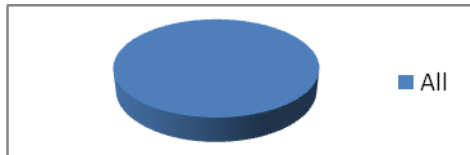
Not Suitable 61.53%

Not Suitable 75%

Not Suitable 50%

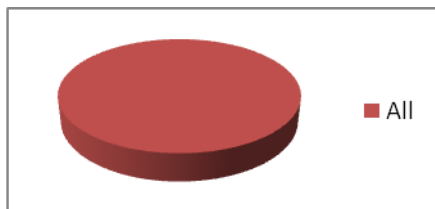
It was observed that the respondents felt the prices were rather steep. However females accepted the price more than the males.

Q11 was to know if the respondents would buy the products with lower price. The respondents were unanimous about the answer. They all were eager to buy at lower prices.



Q12 said if your answer is no again, please give reasons and suggestions.

Q13 asked if the respondents felt that the products can be marketed. The answer was an unanimous 'yes'.

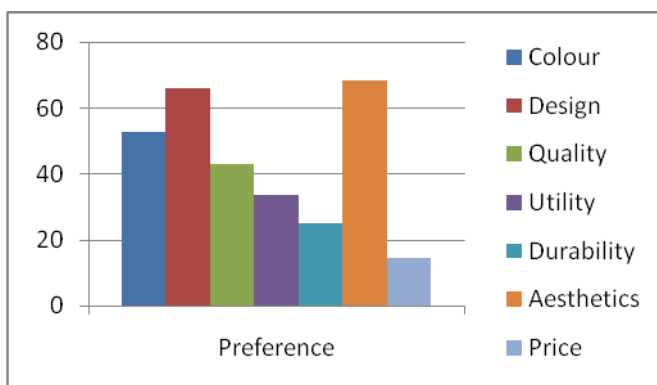


Feedback collected at 'Hasta Shilpa Mela', at 'Milan Mela' Grounds in Kolkata, W. Bengal, has been analyzed as follows:-

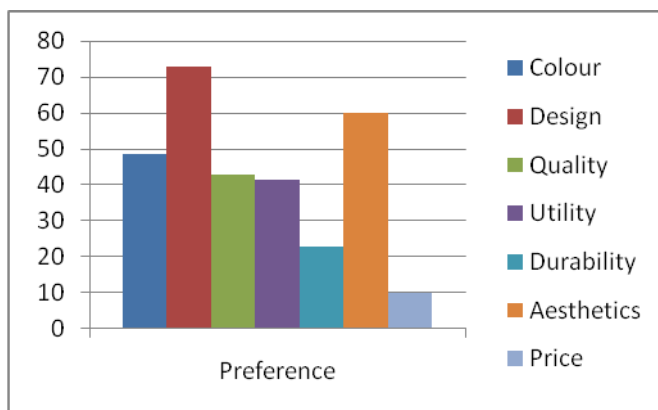
Q1 to Q 4 was based on personal information.

Q 5 was based on understanding of preferences while purchasing household product.

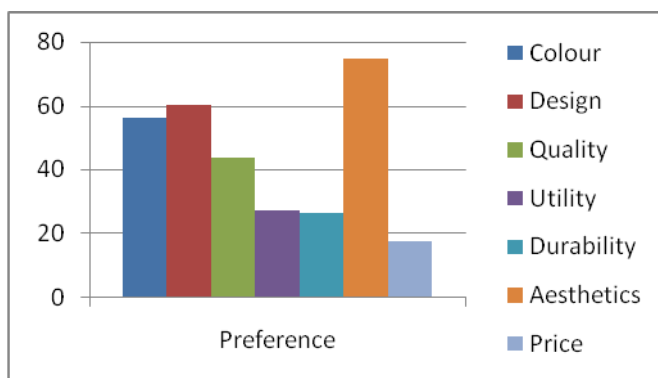
General



Males

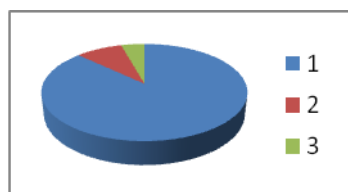


Females



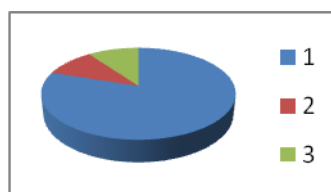
Here too, it was observed that the respondents gave more importance to 'Design' and 'Aesthetic appeal'. Price was more important for female respondents than their male counterparts. No major difference was noted between the male and female preference. City female respondents were looking out more for 'Aesthetics' than 'Utility'. Different age groups were also analyzed but no significant difference was found.

Q 6 was based on acceptance adaptation of *Patachitra* in various utilitarian products as a concept.



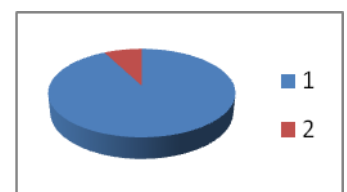
General

Excellent 86.95%, Good 8.7%,
7.7%
Average 4.34%.



Males

Excellent 80%, Good 10%,
Average 10%



Females

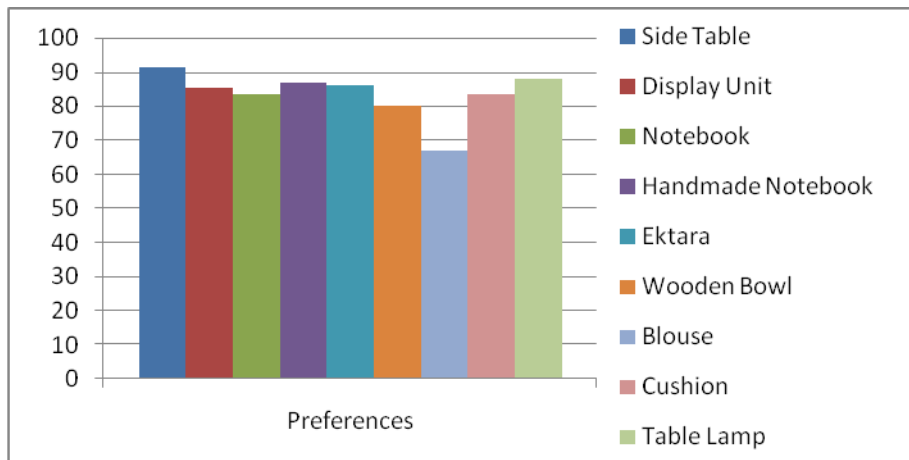
Excellent 92.3% Good

Here too, it was observed that female respondents liked the products more than the male respondents.

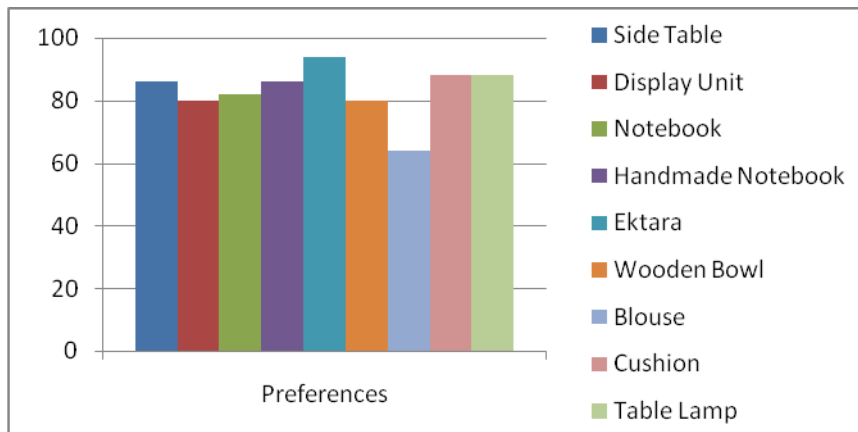
Q7 asked for suggestions for objects suitable for modified *Patachitra*.

Majority of the respondents were happy with the products developed. Only one respondent suggested table mats could be developed.

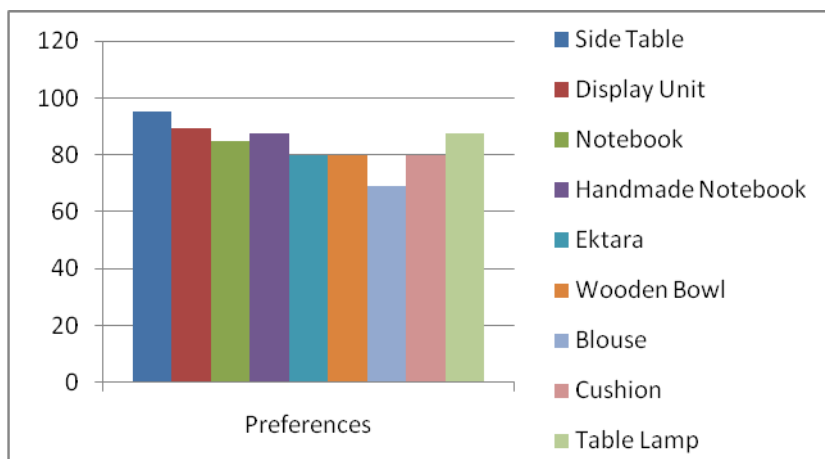
Q8 asked respondents to state their liking for the new created products.



Rating of respondents (General)



Rating of respondents (Male)



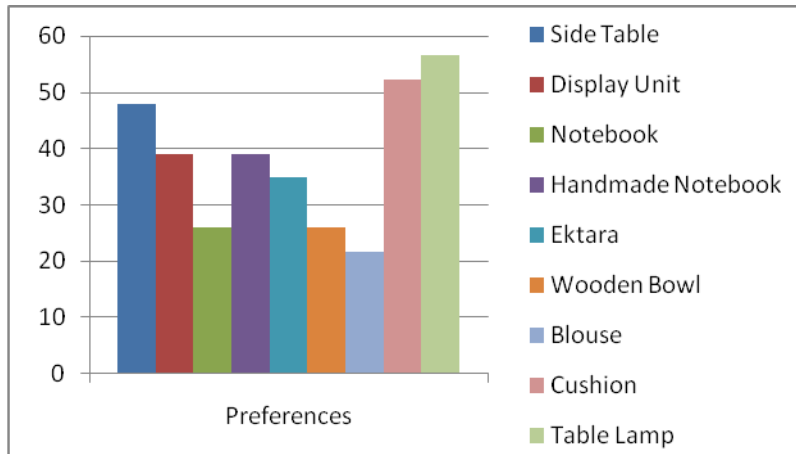
Rating of respondents (Female)

It was noted that here too, males preferred '*Ektara*' the most, while females preferred the 'Side table'. 'Handmade notebook' was the second choice for both. Blouse was preferred the

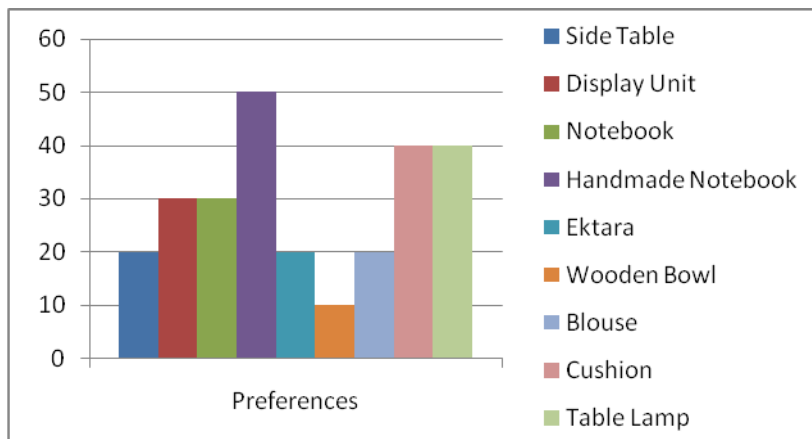
least by all. It was observed that the blouse was similar to the products that the *Chitrakars* were already making.

It was also noted that the city respondents appreciated the products much more than the respondents at Naya.

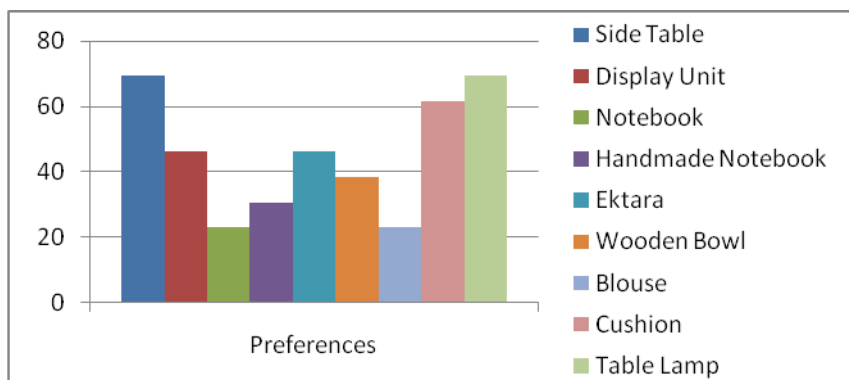
Q9 asked the respondents if they would purchase the articles at the given price



Price acceptance of respondents (General)



Price acceptance of respondents (Male)



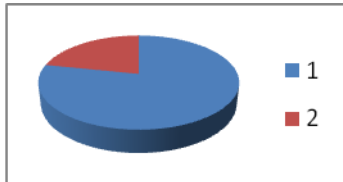
Price acceptance of respondents (Female)

It was observed that when buying was in question, city respondents were eager to buy products for life style and home décor. Though males appreciated the ‘*Ektara*’ the most they did not prefer buying it. On the contrary they wanted to buy the ‘Handmade Notebook’,

‘Cushion cover’ and the ‘Table lamp’. Female respondents wanted to buy the ‘Side table’, ‘Cushion cover’ and the ‘Table lamp’.

Q10 was to know if the respondents felt the price suitable for the products. The result is as follows:

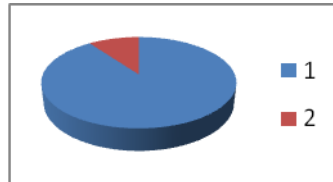
General



Suitable- 78.26%

Not Suitable 21.74%

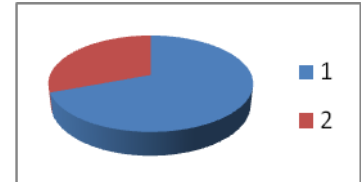
Males



Suitable 90%

Not Suitable 10%

Females

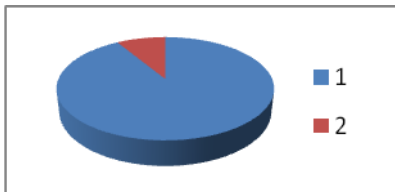


Suitable 69.23%

Not Suitable 30.77%

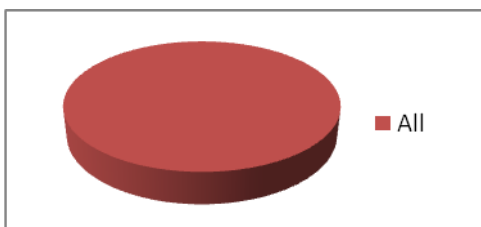
It was observed that the city respondents accepted the prices much more than the respondents from Naya. Here on the contrary, more male respondents found the prices suitable than their female counterparts.

Q11 was to know if the respondents would buy the products with lower price.



It was observed that respondents were satisfied with the price. Price was not the factor here for their interest in buying. 8.7% respondents were not interested in buying these products because it did not suit their life style.

Q13 asked if the respondents felt that the products can be marketed. The answer was an unanimous ‘yes’.



Observation

The following points were noted

1. It was observed that the respondents gave more importance to 'Design' and 'Aesthetic appeal' both at Naya and Kolkata.
2. It was observed that female respondents liked the products more than the male respondents.
3. Respondents at Naya suggested leather wallets, leather bags, ceramic products, jewellery, curtains, book cover, school bag, hand bag and windows and door panels. Whereas city respondents did not give much input. Only table mat was suggested.
4. It was noted that, males appreciated '*Ektara*' the most, while females preferred the 'Side table'. 'Handmade notebook' was the second choice for both. Blouse was preferred the least by all. It was observed that the blouse was similar to the products that the *Chitrakars* were already making so it was less interesting.
5. It was also noted that the city respondents appreciated the products much more than the respondents at Naya.
6. It was observed that when buying was in question, city respondents were eager to buy products for life style and home décor where as respondents from Naya were looking for cheaper products.
7. It was observed that the city respondents accepted the prices much more than the respondents from Naya.
8. All the respondents felt the developed products were worth marketing.

Projection of work for next six months

1. I have planned to develop some more new products.
2. I will visit Naya to discuss my findings with the *Chitrakars* through 'CHITRATARU' (organization of *Pata Chitrakar*s of Naya). I feel I will be able to help them to improvise their own products and reach out to the urban society. I shall discuss the following points with them.
 - i. Choosing surfaces on which the *Chitrakars* would be working on in the future. Here particular thought should be given to what would be pleasing to the urban population.
 - ii. Creating contemporary structures that would go with the modern interiors as well as have space where the *Chitrakars* can show their skills with ease, while enhancing the dignity of the chosen product, for example a display unit or a side table.
 - iii. The eco-friendly aspect should also be kept in mind while choosing the products
 - iv. The pricing model had to be construed with due consideration towards affordability with respect to the targeted customers. Here I would also like to highlight that it was understood that if the product is of good quality, material wise and aesthetically pleasing price is not a major factor for urban buyers.
 - v. Considerable thought should be put into creating an interrelated design article. For example musical instruments can be painted on *Ektara* and a lady reading painted on a notebook cover.
 - vi. Care should be taken to ensure that these articles can be utilized in a traditional interior design theme based on *Patachitra*. The products could be integrated together for a complete interior design concept or they could be displayed in an isolated manner. Both these factors should be given due consideration in the designing process.
 - vii. A *Patua* artist when working on an article for commercial purpose does not bother to think of deviating from the traditional surfaces or forms on which he/she is usually painting on. The manner in which he/she paints on a two-dimensional object, he similarly paints on a three-dimensional

surface without adapting to the form or surface. They do not have experience with respect to the proportion of area of an object that needs to be worked on to how much of it should be left such that the original characteristic of the surface is retained and thus make it more aesthetic in appeal. Their experience fails them when they have to work on any other surface than paper. The usual tendency is to flood the surface with drawings and paintings. This is one area where they need to concentrate so that the individual character of any surface is not lost.

- viii. The *Patuas* are accustomed to using fabric colours for their work. I will encourage them to use textile pigments. The primary reason was the fact that the textile pigments bind better with the surface compared to the fabric colours which coagulate on the surface itself. The textile pigments would retain the characteristic of the surface well as compared to the fabric colours would provide a glazed layer on the surface. The intention should be to create these articles based on the demands of the contemporary society.

In future I shall try to involve Interior Designers, Interior Design students and teachers in this project.

Annexure
Questionnaire
Adaptation of Patachitra
to suit Contemporary Society

A. GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Name-

2. Sex- Male / Female:

3. Age group:

• 16-25 years:

☐

• 26-45 years:

☐

• 46-65 years:

☐

4. Address:

• Ph.no:

• Email id:

5. While purchasing household product, what is important for you? Grade them

• Colours

☐

• Designs

☐

• Quality

☐

• Utility

☐

• Durability

☐

• Aesthetic value

☐

• Price

☐

6. Adaptation of Patachitra in various utilitarian products is according to you-

• An excellent idea

☐

• Good idea

☐

• Don't have any special feelings

☐

• Don't like

☐

7. What articles do you think are suitable for modified Patachitra ?

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

8. Rate the Products.

	Product	Poor	Fair	Good	V.Good	Excellent
1	Stool					
2	Show Case					
3	Notebook 1					
4	Notebook 2					
5	Ektara					
6	Wooden Bowl					
7	Blouse					
8	Dupatta					
9	Cushion					
10	Table Lamp					

9 Would you like to purchase these?

S.No	Products	Cost	Price	Buy Y/ N
1	Stool	2800	3500	
2	Show Case	950	1200	
3	Notebook 1	450	550	
4	Notebook 2	1400	1600	
5	Ektara	550	700	
6	Wooden Bowl	250	400	
7	Blouse	400	500	
8	Dupatta	450	600	
9	Cushion	350	450	
10	Table Lamp	400	500	

10 Do you feel the prices of the products are suitable?

- Yes

☐
☐

- No

11 If no, would you like to purchase these if the price is lower?

- Yes

☐
☐

- No

12. If your answer is no again, please give reasons and suggestions.

13. Do you think the Products can be Marketed ?

- Yes

☐

-

- No

☐

Ministry of Culture
Govt. of India

Senior Fellowship
2013-2014

Field of the Fellowship:
Visual Art (Painting)

File No. - CCRT/SF-3/166/2015

Subject:
Adaptation of *Patachitra*
to suit Contemporary Society

3rd Report :
1st January, 2017 to 30th June, 2017

Name and address of the awardee:
Samir Kumar Dutta
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Kolkata, West Bengal
Pin-700 075

Email- samircreates@gmail.com
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Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society

Abstract

It was observed that the *patuas* are not being able to diversify their stories and applications as per the modern society, hence their work seems repetitive when they paint on the utilitarian objects. In this regard, a few artists were brought to Kolkata last year. It was felt that there was a need to discuss with the other *chitrakaras* at Naya, Pingla. Thus a presentation on the requirements of the urban society was given at Naya, 'Chitrataru Centre' followed by a discussion. It was felt that the focus should be kept on understanding the requirement and not on the quantity of production. It was felt that *ektara, dubki and flute* are simple musical instruments with which the *chitrakaras* could relate culturally. As the number of *chitrakaras* was large the articles chosen were restricted to only the above mentioned musical instruments. The instruments were ordered and procured from Shantiniketan, and distributed amongst them free of cost. They were asked to paint on chosen objects under guidance regarding the use of space, colour and theme. The objects chosen were new to *chitrakaras*. These products will be sold in the two fairs (Melas), 'Pot Maya' at Naya organized by 'Chitrataru' and 'Hasta Shilpa Mela' at Milan Mela Grounds organized by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise & Textile Department, Govt. of West Bengal, in Kolkata.

A talk and presentation on the importance of 'Traditional Design elements in Contemporary Interiors, with special mention to Bengal Patachitra' was arranged at Sarat Chandra Baas Bhawan, 24, Aswini Dutta Road, Kolkata 700029 (behind City Style, Rashbehari Avenue) between 01:00 to 03:30 pm on Saturday, the 17th of June 2017. Interior Designers, Interior Designing students and artists were invited.

Ms. Megha Lohia, an Interior Designer, Mrs. Amita Dutta, Ex Head of the Department of Interior Designing and Mr Mrinal Mondal, Secretary of 'Chalchitra Academy' gave presentation and their views. This was followed by an interactive session and discussion. The programme seemed to be very inspiring as many designers seemed eager to incorporate *patachitra* in their designs.

Introduction

Patachitra has been considered as one of the most musical and illustrious form of folk narrative in Bengal and its adjoining states of *Odisha*, *Bihar* and *Jharkhand*. While the art form and music distinctively puts forward a local flavor of the particular state, West Bengal in particular has its own panache of *patuas* from the districts of *Bankura*, *Purulia*, *Birbhum* and *West Midnapore*. It may be rightfully considered a conjoint of various methods of communication which includes visual, oral and musical forms to narrate stories related to society, culture, religion, nature and popular folklore. Through its strong visual and oral medium it preserves the documentation of the society down the ages. It is also a witness to the social transformation and tells stories of the socio-political and religious reflections and changes over the years.

These painted scrolls were migratory saga of the *patuas*, who were wanderers in origin. They travelled from state to state enjoying the patronage of several kings, landlords and nobles. Though the origin of *Patachitra* as a narrative form of folklore cannot be traced exactly, yet various oral form of record dates it back to around 10th - 11th century AD in Bengal. The art of scroll painting has been handed down from generation to generation in the families of *patuas* or artisans. Arguably, some 300 years ago, Raja Balaram Sen patronized the advancement of *patachitra*. The main theme, around which the *pats* were painted, comprised of stories from the three *Mangal Kavyas*- the *Manasa Mangal Kavya*, *Chandi Mangal Kavya* and *Dharma Mangal Kavya*, along with epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Beside these deities, folklores, socio-political scenario of the time along with religious connotations and beliefs also reflected.

The *patachitra* also caught the fancy of the British Rulers. It was considered a form of folk entertainment that appeals to both the visual and auditory senses. It was a complete form by its own comprising of painting, story and song.

This narrative art form however, with the loss of legacy and royal patronage, declined from its high stature of performing art of court to the common man's entertainment during festivals and rural *melas* (fair). The *Patuas* then began to travel from village to village showcasing and performing their narrative style of painting portraying the same variety of subjects. The villagers, on the receiving end, would sit down in

groups and watch the *Patuas* perform and listen to their songs with utmost faith as if the portrayals of God in the scrolls were actually coming to life. Yet, for the *Patuas*, *Patachitra*, was not an act of religious preaching but rather a livelihood. They would generally receive in kind in exchange for their performance and seldom got money.

This art form soon could not help sustain the livelihood of the artisans. Lack of demand resulted from the emergence of other forms of mass media and entertainment, thus folklore and narrative forms were forced to give way to radio, television, satellite and finally internet. These survival threats forced *patuas* to look for alternative diversification for this performing art form. From its elaborate form of performance which included several forms of communication-visual, oral and music, *patachitra* was forced to be reduced to an illustrative form of scroll art. Although *patachitra* appealed to the new generation, the format of scrolls (6-10ft. long) proved to be inconvenient. This gave way to the *Chaukapat* format (squarish in shape) in *Patachitra* painting. Eventually this scroll art got restricted into modern lifestyle products with functionality far from its original purpose of story-telling art. Product diversification was their only mode of survival. While the government and several Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) helped some clusters of *patuas*, especially in *Naya* village of *Pingla* in West *Midnapore* to take up trainings for design up-gradation and product diversification in order to cater to the demands of the new age market. They made further adaptations to fit in the modern societies by bringing their artistic practice on to various utility oriented items such as t-shirts, tea trays, carved table tops, tea kettles, glass bottles, flower vase, pencil stand, bookmark- all containing characteristics and features of *Patachitra* paintings. This gave the artists scope to sell their work better.

Very few privileged and fortunate *Patuas* get the chance to represent the folk form in other states as well as countries while the majority of the *Patuas* fight for survival.

It must be mentioned that 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 in organising for the trips or by drawing and preparing the canvasses. However, as new media and global reach of the *patachitra* increased, the active participation of the women came to the forefront. 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 is gripping the medium- that of ethics and specific issues questioning the survival, sustainability and continuity of the folk tradition of *patachitra*.

Origin of the Research Problem:

Every year The *Lalit Kala Akademi*, Kolkata regional centre hosts an Exhibition/*Mela*. The scholarship holders display their work as a part of their exhibition and along with it a few artisans are also invited to display and sell their works. During the Annual exhibition/*Mela* of 2014 when I as a working artist displayed my works, I came across Manu *Chitrakar* for the very first time. He had come from *Naya Pingla* village along with his mother, Mina *Chitrakar*. Here I got the opportunity to engage into a conversation with him. The dialogue was rather extensive as I got interested and learned about his village, community, *Patachitra* as a way of life, and his concerns regarding the same. I decided to work for the subject and thus chose my area of concern to be *Patachitra* paintings for the Senior Fellowship Research and applied for it.

I feel that these paintings when originated were related to their contemporary social issues and culture. If this tradition could be brought to the today's contemporary life style and be meaning full to the present society their survival and importance will bounce back automatically. Hence I would like to initiate these paintings in contemporary living style, ex. illustration in books, in screens, partitions, cushion covers, curtains, and other contemporary products. This is my humble endeavor to let the world know about them.

Patuas are already experimenting with various items other than *patachitras* to bring forth wide array of products. If these *Patuas* could be made further aware about the contemporary requirements in terms of products and aesthetics, they would have a better chance of survival. *Patuas* are today trying to create something unique and exceptional in the market that may be appreciated by customers worldwide but are

confused about the contemporary taste. They are now painting pats over shirts, costumes, dresses, accessories, key-rings, cards, vases, show-pieces, bags and caps. If these *Patuas* who are willing to adapt could further be made aware about the contemporary design sense and requirement they will definitely benefit. I feel that since I am a contemporary artist I may be of some help in bridging this gap. Thus being a Bengali, I wish to try and do something in this area and I am glad I have been given an opportunity to do so.

Objectives:

7. Popularize *Patachitra*- the ancient folk art
8. To bring *Patachitra* to contemporary society
9. Make *Patachitra* viable and thus survive
- 10.

My Work since July 2016

In July 2016, I visited *Pingla, Nayagram at Mednipur* to understand the varieties of products and articles being created by the *Patuas* or Chitrakars.

On returning I started collecting and creating different articles giving importance to following areas:

9. Choosing surfaces on which the artists would be working on in the future.
10. Creating contemporary structures that would go with the modern interiors
11. The pricing model had to be construed with due consideration towards affordability with respect to the targeted customers.
12. Considerable thought was put into suitability of the theme selected
13. Design should be used in moderation and not overdone.
14. Use of textile pigment colour was encouraged over fabric colours.

Thus base units were created and procured.

Three artists from Nayagram from different age groups were invited over to Kolkata at Lalit Kala Akademi Regional Centre guest house.

Namely –

4. *Manoranjan Chitrakar*, age 44, from *Pingla, Nayagram*

5. *Hasir Chitrakar*, age 19, from *Pingla, Nayagram*
6. *Riya Chitrakar*, age 12 years, from *Pingla, Nayagram*.

The articles painted upon were:

11. Side table
12. Wall mounted showcase
13. Notebooks (Eco cover based)
14. Notebooks (Handmade paper with complete covers and stitching based on *patachitra*)
15. *Ektara*
16. Wooden Bowl
17. Blouse
18. *Dupatta*
19. Cushion Cover
20. Table Lamp (Designed using natural resources)

Over a week of intensive toiling from dawn to dusk, we created the products mentioned here.

I had set up a stall at ‘Pot Maya’ starting from the 11th of November to the 13th of November, and penned down in the feedback from the visitors. The feedback was analyzed later.

Further after this, I displayed all my articles at a handicraft fair in Kolkata, organized by the Government of West Bengal at *Milon Mela* grounds on 9th Dec, and noted the feedback from the visitors for analysis.

A considerable majority of the populace expressed their interest and showed eagerness to procure the articles. A number of retailers dealing with similar products were keen on exploring the commercial aspects in the future. The encouragement I received from the discussions and deliberations with artists, designers, boutique owners and the general masses provided a sense of reassurance, convincing me that I was on the correct path. I have gained in confidence and can visualize the right direction in which to move forward.

Projection of work for January to June 2017

3. I will visit Naya to discuss my findings with the *Chitrakars* through '*CHITRATARU*' (organization of *Pata Chitrakaras* of Naya).
4. Develop some more new products.
5. In future I shall try to involve Interior Designers, Interior Design students and teachers in this project.

My Work since January 2017

I planned my visit to Naya Pingla with a lot of enthusiasm for 24th February 2017. I had a lot of expectations and was looking forward to a new beginning. I reached Naya Pingla and arranged for a meeting with Chitrataru Executive members. This is an organization which brings together all the Patachitra artists of Naya Pingla. It arranges Patachitra Melas (fairs) and looks into the overall welfare of Patachitra artist community. A presentation on the work executed under my guidance and displayed in two melas was discussed. I would like to mention that every year in West *Mednipur, Nayagram, Pingla*, a '*Pot Maya*' fair is held. Here *Patachitra* artists display their works under the guidance of the organizing committee Chitrataru. Rural Crafts Hub of West Bengal takes particular interest in this fair. Planning and financial assistance is extended by *Pashchim Banga Khadi o Grameen Shilpa Parishad*. Other than this UNESCO, department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise and Textiles (Govt. of West Bengal) also extended their support. I would also like to make a mention of *BanglaNatok .com*, which has been associated with *Chitrataru* and '*Pot Maya*' for considerably long time.

This fair is a major attraction for foreign as well as Indian tourists. Especially those who are interested in this line of art as well as those associated with interior designing or boutique industry. Apart from this, the rural folk of all nearby villages throng to Pat Maya, the fair being an impressive affair for them as well.

I had set up a stall at the fair to display the *patachitra* themed products created by the *patuas* under my guidance. Utilizing this foothold in the fair, I had gathered valuable feedback and also interacted with the local artisans in the fair and showed them the products created till then. With the help of *Manu Chitrakar, Chitrataru* and

BanglaNatok.com, I was able to secure a stall in the mela and displayed these work. I interacted with customers of all age groups and focused on understanding their interests, opinions, what they found attractive and penned it down in the feedback form.

Further after this, I attend a handicraft fair in Kolkata, organized by the Government of West Bengal at *Milon Mela* grounds. Mr. Subol Panja was the coordinator at this fair. The fair was organized by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise & Textile Department, Govt. of West Bengal. I approached the Ministry and discussed my fellowship project with the officials there. On showing them documentations of my previous project I was granted permission to set up a site at the fair and collect feedback. Thus on 9th Dec, I displayed all my articles at the *Milon Mela* grounds. Artisans from all over Bengal attended this fair for displaying and selling their works.

The handicraft fair is an immense kaleidoscope of numerous artists from different regions and a varied mix of skills and forms of art. Amidst this vast buffet of crafts, there was a section dedicated to *patachitra*. I collaborated with the artists in this section and presented my products. Considering the fact that my products were based on *patachitra*, meaningful feedback could be obtained as I displayed my works alongside the works of the *patuas*. This helped me achieve the perfect forum where my experimental articles could be compared against the traditional *patachitra* works.

My intention was not to sell my articles. I wanted to survey and generate a response whether the articles would be accepted and whether there is a possibility of creating a demand in the market for these products such that in the future, the *patuas* could diversify and sustain themselves as well as their art.

Thus in the presentation, I compared the work executed under my guidance and the traditional work that was being done at Naya, Pingla without design intervention.

Here stress was laid on the following points:

- 1 Choosing of surfaces on which the artists could be working on in the future. Here particular thought should be given to what would be pleasing to the urban population.

- 2 Creating contemporary structures that would go with the modern interiors as well as have space where the *chitrakars* can show their skills with ease, while enhancing the dignity of the chosen product, for example a display unit or a side table.
- 3 The eco-friendly aspect should also be kept in mind while choosing the products
- 4 The pricing model should be construed with due consideration towards affordability with respect to the targeted customers. Here I highlighted the fact that if the product is of good quality, material wise and aesthetically pleasing, price is not a major factor.
- 5 Considerable thought should be put into creating an interrelated design article. For example musical instruments may be painted on *Ektara* and a lady reading on a notebook cover.
- 6 Care should be taken to ensure that these articles could be utilized in a traditional interior design theme based on *Patachitra*. The products could be integrated together for a complete interior design concept or they could be displayed in an isolated manner. Both these factors should be given due consideration in the designing process.
- 7 I had observed that normally, a *Patua* artist when working on an article for commercial purpose does not bother to think of deviating from the traditional surfaces or forms on which he/she is usually painting on. The manner in which he/she paints on a two-dimensional object, he/she similarly paints on a three-dimensional surface without adapting to the form or surface. They do not have experience with respect to the proportion of area of an object that needs to be worked on to how much of it should be left such that the original characteristic of the surface is retained and thus make it more aesthetic in appeal. Their experience fails them when they have to work on any other surface than paper. The usual tendency is to flood the surface with drawings and paintings. This is one area where I tried to concentrate so that the individual character of any surface is not lost.
- 8 The *Patuas* are accustomed to using fabric colours for their work. I encourage them to use textile pigments. The primary reason was the fact that the textile pigments bind better with the surface compared to the fabric colours which coagulate on the surface itself. The textile pigments would retain the characteristic of the surface well as compared to the fabric colours would

provide a glazed layer on the surface. The intention was to create these articles based on the demands of the contemporary society.

In my presentation I tried to compare the newly developed work with the work that was being done by the traditional Patachitra artists without design intervention. The ‘Chitrataru’ members were very enthusiastic and showed a lot of interest. But, I realized that it is difficult to deal with all aspects of design with them at one go. Thus I have to proceed, one step at a time. I then decided to pick up one area and concentrate on that and narrowed down on the idea of using musical instruments as base material for the artists to work on. The rich musical heritage and tradition of West Bengal is reflected in the folk music of its indigenous rural community. Simple songs that lend rhythm to the task of paddy-husking, songs sung to celebrate a birth or marriage or ritual, or the spiritual songs of symbolic love of the *bauls* and *fakirs* are all enhanced by the sounds of the simple folk instruments that accompany these songs. The instruments used by the *Bauls* are so simple that they are usually self-made with a little help from local *Doms* (dead animal skinners), *Akure-doms* (bamboo basket makers), *Bayens* (drummers) and carpenters. Besides the one stringed *ektara* or *gopijantra*, the *Baul* often uses his free hand to play the *duggi*, a small percussion instrument which is slung across his shoulder with a belt or scarf and rests on his thigh. Typical also are the *khamak*, also known as the *anandalahari* and the tambourine-like *dubki*, while in certain regions the *dotara* and the *sarinda* are also played. I selected the musical instruments like *ektara*, *dubki*, *flute* and *ananda lahiri* for the first project with the *Patachitra chitrakaras*.

The ‘Chitrataru’ organizers agreed to display the articles produced by the *chitrakars* with this new notion in mind in ‘Pot Maya’ fair in the second week of November 2017. It was decided that the base material required by them accordingly will be provided by me from the grant money of the Senior Fellowship that I have received.

Artists will only have to bear the costs of colours and tools that they will be using such as brushes and varnish. This factor would encourage more *chitrakars* to participate in this venture. On selling their products, the artist shall be allowed to keep the complete profit. He shall have to submit the cost of the base material to ‘Chitrataru’. For example if the investment on an article is Rs 200 and the artist manages to sell the product for Rs 500, an amount of Rs 200 will be submitted to

‘Chitrataru’ which will be deposited as a part of a Welfare Fund for the artists and shall be used for buying further material for the next project.

‘Chitrataru’ members further suggested that it will be a good idea to request the vendors from whom the base materials were obtained by me to sell their wares in the ‘Pot Maya’ fair. The vendor will be requested to bring the wares without colour and polish to facilitate the *patachitra* artists to work. Now considering the practical fact that I would not always be the mediator for acquiring these raw materials, this move would encourage collaboration between the artists and the vendors for future projects as well in case the outcome is commercially viable for both.

Hence, on the 25th of March 2017, I travelled to Shantiniketan, near Bolpur, in Birbhum district to procure the above mentioned base materials to be used by the *chitrakars*.

Shantiniketan attracts a lot of people as it is the abode of Rabindranath Tagore and the *Poush Mela* that he had begun here. *Bauls* and *Fakirs* can be spotted with their *ektaras*, singing and playing in the crowded compartment of the local trains plying to and from Kolkata to Bolpur. *Goalpara Santhals* attract crowds from near and far and here instruments like the *ektara*, *dubli*, *kortal*, *dotara* are sold. Every Saturday, in the *Shonajhuri* area of Santiniketan, a local market is set up. Here amongst local artisans I met Kalohajra. His instruments attracted me. They were burnished with a personalized pattern and lacquered to create an appealing effect. However I need basic materials, without any designs or lacquer as that would not be suitable as a surface for *patachitra* artists. The artists need to express themselves without the inclusion of existing patterns on the material.

I ordered for 25 units of basic *ektaras* made of plain wood and bamboo

and 25 basic *dubkis* made of plain wood and leather.

Kalohajra agreed to give the material in 10 days time, thus I return on the 8th of April, to procure the *ektaras* and *dubkis*.

On the 22nd of April, I reached Naya, Pingla with the musical instruments purchased from Shantiniketan. At Chitrataru, the members present were Manu *Chitrakar*, Bahadur *Chitrakar*, Shah Jahan *Chitrakar* and Montu *Chitrakar*. They helped me to

bring the local artists together. Here a presentation was given followed by a discussion on the contemporary design requirements with the local *chitrakaras*. The instruments were handed over to them. Painting on flute was also introduced. They were then requested to sketch the basic composition as per the discussion on the instruments provided. Basic colourscheme was also discussed. They then had the option of working at the 'Chitrataru' community centre or their own homes.

I then went back to see the developments on 25th of May and found the entire village full of excitement over a work order they had bagged from the Government of West Bengal. They were designing a part (8ft by 108ft area and some freestanding images) of the interiors of the upcoming *Chaitanya* Museum in Bag Bazaar, Kolkata. It was a huge project that involved almost the *chitrakaras* of the entire village.

Individual houses of the *chitrakaras* were visited to see how they had completed the musical instruments. Whether the above mentioned discussions had any impact on them was also verified. The result of the observation was very satisfactory. It was felt that they have to some extent been able to grasp the new concept. It is definite that they will be able to do even better with some more discussion followed with more projects. The next project planned with them for interiors could not be executed as the work order with which they were busy with was massive in scale. They said the on-going work will take at least two months to complete. Hence there was no option but to wait.

The '*Pata Mela*' is scheduled to be held from the 11th of Nov to the 13th of Nov. These articles that the *chitrakars* are working on will be displayed on the Community Centre Display. There would be encouraging efforts made for the provision of selling their wares as well. By this time period definite efforts will be made to complete two more projects with them. The success of this fair would result in the realization of the consumer base with regard to the utility as well as decorative items.

Post the '*Pot Maya*', increased awareness and conscious realization by *patachitrakars* of Naya Pingla, and other *patachitrakars* is expected. More *chitrakaras* might be encouraged to join them and adapt their art to cater to the modern consumer. The consumers too are expected to appreciate the efforts taken by the *chitrakars* in this respect.

Regular communication is being kept with Kalohajra, from whom the base material for the artists was purchased and steps are being taken to encourage collaboration between him and the *chitrakars*.

A talk and presentation on the importance of ‘Traditional Design elements in Contemporary Interiors, with special mention to Bengal *Patachitra*’ was organized at Sarat Chandra Baas Bhawan, 24, Aswini Dutta Road, Kolkata 700029 (behind City Style, Rashbehari Avenue) between 01:00 to 03:30 pm on Saturday, the 17th of June 2017. Interior Designers, Interior Designing students and artists were invited. It must be mentioned here that *patachitrakaras* were also invited for this seminar. But, they could not make it as they were busy with their Government work order.

Ms. Megha Lohia, an Interior Designer, at present involved with a multi-crore project for State Bank of India, at Rajerhat in collaboration with Mumbai based architect Sanjay Puri, gave a presentation and talk on how traditional design elements can be introduced in contemporary interiors. She laid stress on the division of space, use of line and colour selection.

Mrs. Amita Dutta, Ex Head of the Department of Interior Designing, with 33 years of teaching experience at J. D. Birla Institute, talked about the origin and importance of Bengal *patachitra*. She then laid stress on how *patachitra* could effectively be used in interiors and on other utilitarian as well as decorative products. She gave various examples of interiors in India where *patachitra* could effectively be incorporated. She also mentioned that Indian designers should maintain Indianness in their designs rather than going after the western trends.

Mr Mrinal Mondal, Secretary of ‘*Chalchitra* Academy’, also talked about *patachitra*. *Chalchitra* Academy is a unique initiative to bring in traditional artists, contemporary artists and professionals and amateurs from all walks of society on a common platform to create art as never before. He talked about the work process and living conditions of the *chitrakaras* of past and today.

The talk and presentation was followed by an open discussion and many gave their opinion. Many were not aware of *patachitra* paintings. The designers felt that these paintings could be incorporated in interiors. Some present were very inspired. One of

them wanted one of his walls to be painted by *patachitra chitrakaras* and wanted to begin the work at the earliest.

Projection of work for July to December 2017

- 1 Two more projects involving both utilitarian and decorative products by November 2017.
- 2 Holding a larger seminar where the Interior Designers, Interior Designing students, artists and *patachitra chitrakaras* can all come on the same platform for discussion and interaction.

I feel that these factors- a) guidance b) exposure and discussions will be of immense help for the growth of *patachitra chitrakaras* from Naya, Pingla

**Ministry of Culture
Govt. of India**

***Senior Fellowship
2013-2014***

**Field of the Fellowship:
Visual Art (Painting)**

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**Subject:
Adaptation of *Patachitra*
to suit Contemporary Society**

4th Report :
1st July, 2017 to 31st December, 2017

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Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society

Abstract

It was observed that the *patuas* are not being able to diversify their stories and applications as per the modern society. Their work on the utilitarian objects felt repetitive. It was felt that there was a need to discuss with the *chitrakaras* at Naya, Pingla tand keep the focus on understanding the aesthetics and not on the quantity of production. Simple musical instruments like *ektara*, *dubki* and *santhal banshi* with utilitarian objects like *kather chiruni* (wooden comb) and *talpatar tupi* (cap made out of palm leaves) which the *chitrakaras* could relate culturally were procured, and distributed free of cost. They were asked to paint on chosen objects under guidance regarding the use of space, colour and theme. Selected products were displayed in the community hall during the fair '*Pot Maya*' at Naya and the remaining products were displayed and sold from the open area outside the Community Hall. A feedback regarding the quality and acceptance of the product was taken which was very positive. The effort and outcome of this project was appreciated. Almost all the products were sold.

An eight by six feet display shelf was constructed to display of *patachitra* where *patachitras* and other displayed objects complemented each other. Theme for *patachitras* was culture of rural Bengal. Use of space in the *patachitra* was guided. Flowers and leaves were consciously avoided and colour palette restricted. This helped in making the paintings suit the urban interiors of today.

A presentation and interactive session on 'Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society' was arranged in the Lalit Kala Akademi, Regional Centre, Kolkata to spread awareness amongst contemporary artists of today's Bengal. I hope in future artists, will be inspired to project the work of these *chitrakaras* to larger society in some form or other.

The fact that the *chitrakaras* can now come closer to the urban market with new concept and understanding and will also be able to sustain themselves makes me feel that all my efforts have been paid. I also believe that once awareness spreads

about these products, they will be appreciated by modern generation. This in turn will keep the almost stagnant and dying *potachitra* alive.

Introduction

Patachitra has been considered as one of the most musical and illustrious form of folk narrative in Bengal and its adjoining states of *Odisha*, *Bihar* and *Jharkhand*. While the art form and music distinctively puts forward a local flavor of the particular state, West Bengal in particular has its own panache of *patuas* from the districts of *Bankura*, *Purulia*, *Birbhum* and *West Midnapore*. It may be rightfully considered a conjoint of various methods of communication which includes visual, oral and musical forms to narrate stories related to society, culture, religion, nature and popular folklore. Through its strong visual and oral medium it preserves the documentation of the society down the ages. It is also a witness to the social transformation and tells stories of the socio-political and religious reflections and changes over the years.

These painted scrolls were migratory saga of the *patuas*, who were wanderers in origin. They travelled from state to state enjoying the patronage of several kings, landlords and nobles. Though the origin of *Patachitra* as a narrative form of folklore cannot be traced exactly, yet various oral form of record dates it back to around 10th - 11th century AD in Bengal. The art of scroll painting has been handed down from generation to generation in the families of *patuas* or artisans. Arguably, some 300 years ago, Raja Balaram Sen patronized the advancement of *patachitra*. The main theme, around which the *pats* were painted, comprised of stories from the three *Mangal Kavyas*- the *Manasa Mangal Kavya*, *Chandi Mangal Kavya* and *Dharma Mangal Kavya*, along with epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Beside these deities, folklores, socio-political scenario of the time along with religious connotations and beliefs also reflected.

The *patachitra* also caught the fancy of the British Rulers. It was considered a form of folk entertainment that appeals to both the visual and auditory senses. It was a complete form by its own comprising of painting, story and song.

This narrative art form however, with the loss of legacy and royal patronage, declined from its high stature of performing art of court to the common man's entertainment during festivals and rural *melas* (fair). The *Patuas* then began to travel from village to

village showcasing and performing their narrative style of painting portraying the same variety of subjects. The villagers, on the receiving end, would sit down in groups and watch the *Patuas* perform and listen to their songs with utmost faith as if the portrayals of God in the scrolls were actually coming to life. Yet, for the *Patuas*, *Patachitra*, was not an act of religious preaching but rather a livelihood. They would generally receive in kind in exchange for their performance and seldom got money.

This art form soon could not help sustain the livelihood of the artisans. Lack of demand resulted from the emergence of other forms of mass media and entertainment, thus folklore and narrative forms were forced to give way to radio, television, satellite and finally internet. These survival threats forced *patuas* to look for alternative diversification for this performing art form. From its elaborate form of performance which included several forms of communication-visual, oral and music, *patachitra* was forced to be reduced to an illustrative form of scroll art. Although *patachitra* appealed to the new generation, the format of scrolls (6-10ft. long) proved to be inconvenient. This gave way to the *Chaukapat* format (squarish in shape) in *Patachitra* painting. Eventually this scroll art got restricted into modern lifestyle products with functionality far from its original purpose of story-telling art. Product diversification was their only mode of survival. While the government and several Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) helped some clusters of *patuas*, especially in *Naya* village of *Pingla* in West *Midnapore* to take up trainings for design up-gradation and product diversification in order to cater to the demands of the new age market. They made further adaptations to fit in the modern societies by bringing their artistic practice on to various utility oriented items such as t-shirts, tea trays, carved table tops, tea kettles, glass bottles, flower vase, pencil stand, bookmark- all containing characteristics and features of *Patachitra* paintings. This gave the artists scope to sell their work better.

Very few privileged and fortunate *Patuas* get the chance to represent the folk form in other states as well as countries while the majority of the *Patuas* fight for survival.

It must be mentioned that 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 in organising for the trips or by drawing and preparing the canvasses. However, as new media and global reach of the

patachitra increased, the active participation of the women came to the forefront. 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 is gripping the medium- that of ethics and specific issues questioning the survival, sustainability and continuity of the folk tradition of *patachitra*.

Origin of the Research Problem:

Every year The *Lalit Kala Akademi*, Kolkata regional centre hosts an Exhibition/*Mela*. The scholarship holders display their work as a part of their exhibition and along with it a few artisans are also invited to display and sell their works. During the Annual exhibition/*Mela* of 2014 when I as a working artist displayed my works, I came across Manu *Chitrakar* for the very first time. He had come from *Naya Pingla* village along with his mother, Mina *Chitrakar*. Here I got the opportunity to engage into a conversation with him. The dialogue was rather extensive as I got interested and learned about his village, community, *Patachitra* as a way of life, and his concerns regarding the same. I decided to work for the subject and thus chose my area of concern to be *Patachitra* paintings for the Senior Fellowship Research and applied for it.

I feel that these paintings when originated were related to their contemporary social issues and culture. If this tradition could be brought to the today's contemporary life style and be meaning full to the present society their survival and importance will bounce back automatically. Hence I would like to initiate these paintings in contemporary living style, ex. illustration in books, in screens, partitions, cushion covers, curtains, and other contemporary products. This is my humble endeavor to let the world know about them.

Patuas are already experimenting with various items other than *patachitras* to bring forth wide array of products. If these *Patuas* could be made further aware about the

contemporary requirements in terms of products and aesthetics, they would have a better chance of survival. *Patuas* are today trying to create something unique and exceptional in the market that may be appreciated by customers worldwide but are confused about the contemporary taste. They are now painting pats over shirts, costumes, dresses, accessories, key-rings, cards, vases, show-pieces, bags and caps. If these *Patuas* who are willing to adapt could further be made aware about the contemporary design sense and requirement they will definitely benefit. I feel that since I am a contemporary artist I may be of some help in bridging this gap. Thus being a Bengali, I wish to try and do something in this area and I am glad I have been given an opportunity to do so.

Objectives:

11. Popularize *Patachitra*- the ancient folk art
12. To bring *Patachitra* to contemporary society
13. Make *Patachitra* viable and thus survive

My Work since January 2017

I visited to Naya Pingla on 24th February 2017 and gave a presentation to Chitrataru Executive members. I compared the work executed under my guidance and the work that was being done at Naya, Pingla without design intervention.

Stress was laid on the following points:

- 9 Choosing of objects according to the urban population which also has space where the *chitrakars* can show their skills with ease
- 10 The eco-friendly aspect should also be kept in mind
- 11 The fact that if the product is of good quality, material wise and aesthetically pleasing, price is not a major factor was highlighted.
- 12 Considerable thought should be put into creating an interrelated design article. For example musical instruments may be painted on *Ektara* and a lady reading on a notebook cover.

- 13 The difference between painting a two dimensional surface and three dimensional surface was discussed
- 14 The importance of free space within design was explained
- 15 The *Patuas* were encouraged to use textile pigments instead of fabric (acrylic) colours for their work.

After the presentation, I realized that it is difficult to deal with all aspects of design with them and have to proceed, one step at a time. I narrowed down on the idea of using traditional musical instruments as base material for the artists to work on and instruments like *ektara*, *dubki*, and *flute* for the first project with the *Patachitra chitrakaras* were chosen.

The ‘Chitrataru’ organizers agreed to display the articles produced by the *chitrakars* in ‘Pot Maya’ fair in the second week of November 2017.

On the 22nd of April, ‘Chitrataru’ brought the local artists together and I gave a presentation followed by a discussion on the contemporary design requirements.

I provided 25 units of basic *ektaras* made of plain wood and bamboo and 25 basic *dubkis* made of plain wood and leather from the grant money of the Senior Fellowship that I have received. They were then requested to sketch the basic composition as per the discussion on the instruments provided. Basic colourscheme was also discussed.

Individual houses of the *chitrakaras* were visited to see how they had completed the musical instruments. The result of the observation was very satisfactory. It was felt that they have to some extent been able to grasp the new concept. It is definite that they will be able to do even better with some more discussion followed with more projects.

A talk and presentation on the importance of ‘Traditional Design elements in Contemporary Interiors, with special mention to Bengal *Patachitra*’ was organized. Interior Designers, Interior Designing students and artists were invited.

Ms. Megha Lohia, an Interior Designer, then involved with a multi-crore project for State Bank of India, at Rajerhat in collaboration with Mumbai based architect Sanjay Puri, Mrs. Amita Dutta, Ex Head of the Department of Interior Designing, with 33 years of teaching experience at J. D. Birla Institute, and Mr Mrinal Mondal, Secretary

of ‘*Chalchitra Academy*’ talked about *patachitra*, and how it could effectively be used in interiors and on other utilitarian as well as decorative products.

The talk and presentation was followed by an open discussion. Many were not aware of *patachitra* paintings. The designers felt that these paintings could be incorporated in interiors.

Projection of work for July to December 2017

- 3 Two more projects involving both utilitarian and decorative products by November 2017.
- 4 Holding a larger seminar where the Interior Designers, Interior Designing students, artists and *patachitra chitrakaras* can all come on the same platform for discussion and interaction.

My Work since July 2017

In due course of my work in the 3rd stage, I had involved the *chitrakars* of *Naya-pingla* with utilitarian and decorative products. To throw light on exactly what my vision was and the products I wanted to give shape to, I had given a presentation to the executive members of Chitrataru, the welfare organization for the *chitrakars*. The presentation led to further discussions about how I would proceed with the project and the manner in which the products would be displayed.

Accordingly, mass production for *ektaras*, *dubkis* and *santhal* flutes had been started and I was supervising the whole process regularly and ensuring that things were on schedule and the production ensued ahead smoothly.

I had planned earlier to introduce two new articles in the 4th stage of my project. As decided earlier, in August 2017, I had begun searching for raw materials in different locations. I visited various craft fairs in and around Kolkata, searching for the material, I was looking for. In one of these fairs, I happened to meet an artist, Ashok Pramanik, who was working with wooden products, such as coasters, mats, flower vases, combs and a lot more. The thought of working with a wooden comb

appealed to me. The top portion of the comb could feature *patachitra* renditions which might be absorbed by the urban populace.

A comb is one such thing that provides utility for all kinds of people, from rural to urban, and is also a product that is used on a daily basis and the *patachitra* depictions would add to the visual appeal, thus will increase the monetary value of the product as well. This comb could be used as a regular daily use item apart from being displayed as a decorative item. I felt that once the combs are worked on and exhibited, it will grab attention and be sellable. As the people already know the market value of the comb, the selling price for it after painting should be relative.

I enquired about the basic cost of a comb at one of the stalls set up in the handicrafts fair in Kolkata. They told me that depending on the size and design of a comb, the cost varies between 30 - 40 rupees each piece. I thus bought 30 units of such combs varying in size and design as products for this project.

In search of more products I travelled to Shantiniketan. Here, I noticed that many people, both - locals and tourists, were wearing *talpatar tupi* (caps made out of palm leaves). These caps are not only utility based but also have an aesthetic appeal. I felt, if worked on by *chitrakars*, it will attract not only local customers but customers from cities and urban areas as well. Other than being worn, even if hung on the wall, it can operate as a decorative piece in households.

These caps made out of palm leaves, have their own craft value. The locals cherish the caps for the quality of weaving that goes into constructing one, the outcome of which is quite mesmerizing. On my visit, I came across a lot of stalls in Bhubandanga in Shantiniketan where these caps are available for locals and tourists to buy. I found one particular stall which had these caps stocked in bulk. On enquiry, they assured me that they could provide me with as many required in case I placed an order. I ordered 15 caps for 60 rupees each. After having acquired them, I ventured further into other stalls in the Bhubandanga area and discovered a stall that was selling the flutes played by the *santhal* community while they perform their traditional dance. In my previous project, I had made use of other musical instruments like the *ektara* and *dupki*, similarly, for this project, I thought of incorporating these flutes as products to be worked on. I, therefore, made a purchase of 20 *santhal* flutes for my fourth project.

Thus the products chosen for my 4th project were as stated under:

1. *Kather Chiruni* (Wooden comb)
2. *Talpatar Tupi* (Cap made out of Palm leaves)
3. *Santhal Bansi* (Tribal flute)

After procuring the above mentioned objects I visited Naya gram in the beginning of October and had a basic discussion with ‘Chitrataru’ organizers. The theme, colour scheme, and design aspects were conveyed and discussed. The *chitrakaras* under ‘Chitrataru’ were assembled and the concept was explained in details. A demonstration was arranged by one of the *chitrakaras* under my guidance. The other *chitrakaras* then painted one sample each. When a satisfactory result was achieved the products were distributed amongst the *chitrakaras* according to the family members actively involved in *pot* painting. The *chitrakaras* were requested to maintain the quality, theme and colour scheme as per the sample created. A specific time period was given to them for the completion of the remaining objects.

The address of the person and place from where the above mentioned products were sourced was given to one and all for future procurement.

Here I would like to mention that every year in West *Mednipur, Nayagram, Pingla*, ‘*Pot Maya*’ fair is held. Here *Patachitra* artists display their works under the guidance of the organizing committee *Chitrataru*. Rural Crafts Hub of West Bengal takes particular interest in this fair. Planning and financial assistance is extended by *Pashchim Banga Khadi o Grameen Shilpa Parishad*. Other than this UNESCO, department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise and Textiles (Govt. of West Bengal) also extended their support. I would also like to make a mention of *BanglaNatok .com*, which has been associated with *Chitrataru* and ‘*Pot Maya*’ for considerably long time.

The dates for ‘*Pot Maya*’ fair were fixed for 10th to 12th of November. This fair is meant exclusively for *patachitra* in various forms, be it pure *pot* painting or any other object enhanced with *pot* painting.

The '*Chitrataru*' organizers were very enthusiastic and had wanted to display the thus created products in a grand way. It was decided that a few selected products from the above mentioned creations and the musical instruments mentioned in my previous report will be displayed in the Community Hall as special items. A direct feedback regarding the quality, design and colour scheme of the products will be taken from the visitors of this fair. This would help us in understanding the viability, acceptance, appreciation or criticism for the products created. A special corner will be created for the sale of the remaining objects. Some representatives from amongst the *chitrakaras* and I shall be present here to sell and take a feedback of the products. To go as per the plan the painting work was completed and the objects were lacquered by the first week of November. I reached Naya and after close analysis selected products from the *Dubki*, *Ektara*, wooden combs, caps made from Palm leaves and *santhal* flutes, to be displayed in the Community hall. The remaining products were displayed in the open area outside the Community Hall.

From 8th November onwards I witnessed the slow transformation of the entire village into a fair ground. On 10th the fair was inaugurated by the minister for Small Scale Industry at 1:00 pm followed by the singing of a *pot* song. The gathering on the first day was from the neighboring towns and villages and was rather small. The second and third day saw a larger crowd and people from places like Kolkata, Birbhum, Bankura and other districts. I tried and interacted with all who came to visit this fair. A feedback regarding the quality and acceptance of the product was taken which was very positive and each one appreciated the effort and outcome of this project. They were definite that the *chitrakars* will benefit immensely. They will get new ideas and will know how to deal with the objects chosen effectively. The objective of this entire project was to encourage the *chitrakars* to come up with new concepts, theme and ideas and implement them effectively for urban market. The fact that almost all the products created got sold inspired them a lot. They understood that if thought goes behind the execution of design, the product is bound to create interest. I would further like to mention that these objects (*Dubki*, *Ektara*, *Santhal flute*, *wooden comb and cap made out of palm leaves*) stood out from the rest of the products displayed in the fair, both in terms of quality and novelty. They were highly appreciated and sought after. What I appreciated the most was the fact that the *chitrakaras* could associate themselves with these new products and could maintain

their character while painting on them. This understanding of the product and choosing the area, theme and colour scheme according to the product is what I would consider as an achievement.

I would thus like to conclude that this project would help the *chitrakaras* to come closer to the urban market with new concept and understanding and will also be able to sustain. I also believe that once these products find place in designer homes, they will be appreciated by the so called carefree, young and modern generation. This in turn will keep the almost stagnant and dying *patachitra* alive.

A talk and presentation on the importance of ‘Traditional Design elements in Contemporary Interiors, with special mention to Bengal *Patachitra*’ was organized in the month of June. Here Interior Designers, Interior Designing students and artists were invited. After this presentation, that was followed by discussion, everyone present had agreed that the people from all strata should be made conscious about Indian tradition and culture so that they can understand and appreciate folk art. Feeling for the roots should become an integral part of our lives. Indian designers should maintain Indianness in their designs rather than going after the western trends. We can keep our heritage alive only by appreciating, respecting and bringing the art and craft of our past into our present modern world.

All this made me eager to work towards bringing *Patachitra* into modern interiors. To fulfill this desire of mine I created an eight feet by six feet display shelf at my home. This showcase was planned in such a way that the folk artists can use specific areas for the display of their paintings. Then I had a detailed discussion with *Manoranjan Chitrakar* from Naya, Pingla in the month of November, during the ongoing ‘*Pata Mela*’ fair.

On the basis of this discussion *Manoranjan Chitrakar* came to my place in Kolkata to see the shelf. The measurements and colour combinations were discussed. In this case, the communication with the folk artist was very important because here the painting required is not only a standalone painting. Generally they make scroll paintings (*jorano pot*) or square (*chowko pot*) paintings but here the paintings have to suit the surrounding and the interior in totality. The display area will not have only paintings. It will also have other folk objects displayed. The paintings and other displayed objects should complement each other rather than overpowering or

suppressing one another. Thus the style of painting and the colour combination is very important and had to be communicated in details before the execution. For this special venture *Riya Chitrakar* was chosen to assist *Manoranjan Chitrakar*. *Manoranjan Chitrakar* was to draw the main pictures and *Riya Chitrakar* would do the filling and other assisting work. The drawing style of Kalighat painting was chosen and executed and the colours used for filling in are primarily yellow, yellow ochre, brown, grey and black. Highlights of blue, green and red made the paintings vibrant as well as related them with other folk objects displayed in the racks.

Attention was given to subject matter as well. Instead of mythological stories, various aspects of the folk culture of Bengal had been highlighted. The *zamindari* tradition of Bengal, the use of *palki*, the traditional singing and dancing scenes, all talk about the heritage of Bengal. Musical instruments like *dhak*, counc (shonkho) marriage and *puja* depicted here express the festivities of Bengal. Everyday village life, too, has also been portrayed within these paintings.

The style used is traditional *patachitra* style, but care has been taken to not over fill the area. Flowers and leaves have been consciously avoided. The colour palette has been restricted. This helped in making the paintings suit the urban interiors of today.

All of this was done with the intention of showing this piece at the presentation that was conducted at Lalit Kala Academy.

A presentation and interactive session on ‘Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society’ was arranged in the Lalit Kala Akademi, Regional Centre, Kolkata to spread awareness amongst contemporary artists of today’s Bengal. Many artists in Kolkata are involved with theme based creative *pandal* making for *Durga Puja* and similar other festivities. Very often folk culture and art is used to embellish these *pandals*. This way they enrich both, the folk artists and the people who come to see these *pandals*. These *pandals* are not less than artistic installations. Many artists are also involved with exhibition pavilion designing, showroom designing and interior designing. I thus felt that if this topic was placed before them, they may get interested to work with *patachitras*. This may further inspire other artists and society at large. Whenever an artwork is done for general masses, may it be *puja*, showroom or pavilion design, it attracts the eyes of thousands and has an impact on their hearts.

With exposure comes liking for the subject and desire to know further. Thus directly or indirectly, the passion to possess the work of these folk artists arises automatically. With this intention, I met Mr. Siddhart Ghosh, the General Secretary of Lalit Kala Akademi, Regional Centre, Kolkata, and discussed my desire of holding a presentation at the Akademi center. After I got a whole hearted support from him I requested and invited the artists to be present for the presentation cum discussion on 15th of December 2017. The presentation began by general awareness on *patachitra* followed by highlighting their social and economical conditions. The reasons for their crisis today, was stressed upon. I also justified my reasons to select this topic. I felt that many were aware about the *patachitra* paintings but not about the crisis they were facing.

I also showed slides of the showcase that I had designed and explained how *patachitra* could be used in contemporary interiors, hoping it would inspire the artists involved with interior designing.

I felt that the presentation was important and the purpose was fulfilled. I could express my emotions since the first day of my project. My involvement with the *chitrakaras* for the last two years, working with them hand in hand, being with them in thick and thin and being their friend, was all reflected in my presentation.

All products made through my intervention have been exhibited in various fairs, in villages, small towns and cities and everywhere people appreciated and bought them wholeheartedly.

I am extremely happy to be able to reach out to so many knowledgeable persons. I hope in future some artist or other, will be inspired to project the work of these *chitrakaras* to larger society in some form or other. When that happens I shall feel that my presentation was worthwhile and purposeful.

Conclusion

Since last 2 years I have been interacting with the *chitrakaras* of Naya with great passion. A number of discussion and presentations were followed by work sampling and production. These works have been displayed and sold at various fairs

and the feedback has been very encouraging. The factor that these products sold faster than the products they were making before and the confidence that it gave to the *chitrakaras* proves that the project ‘Adaptation of *Patachitra* to suit Contemporary Society’ was largely positive. Hopefully *chitrakaras* can come a few steps closer to the urban market with new concept and understanding and will also be able to sustain themselves better makes me feel that all my efforts have been paid.

Parallely two seminars were arranged, one with students of Interior designing and the other with contemporary artists to spread awareness and artistic viability of these products in contemporary society.

I also believe that once awareness spreads about these products, they will be appreciated by the present generation. This in turn will keep the almost stagnant and dying *patachitra* alive.

Pictures for First Report



My shelter at Naya, Pingla



Painting of Chouko Patachitra



Rahaman *Chitrakar* at work, Naya , Pingla



Bahadur *Chitrakar* at work, Naya, Pingla



Patachitra painted on Palki, Naya, Pingla



Village, Naya, Pingla



Painted door, Naya, Pingla



Village, Naya, Pingla



Swarna Chitrakar



Yakub Chitrakar



Manu Chitrakar showing scroll Patachitra



Bhramasundar Chitrakar

Projections



Panels on the Main Door
may be painted as *Choukopatachitras*



The cover of a handmade paper diary may contain a *Patachitra* story



Wooden Bowl with *Patachitra* panel



Panels on the partition may be painted with *Patachitra* stories



A cushion cover with a
Choukapatachitra story



Ektara decorated with
a *Patachitra* panel



Blouse with a *Patachitra* story
enhancing the women



Small counter with *Patachitra* scroll panel



Center table enhanced by
a *Patachitra* panel

Pictures for Second Report

Display at Pot Maya Mela, Naya, Pingla



Inauguration of Pot Maya Mela at Naya



Pot Maya Mela at Naya



Display at Pot Maya Mela



Filling of the Feedback form



Observing products on display



Observing the displayed products

Display at Hasta Shilpa Mela, Kolkata



Hasta Shilpa Mela, Kolkata



Display at Mela



Discussing about the project



Filling of the Feedback form



Filling of the Feedback form



Interested in the Project

Designed Products



Table Lamp



Note Book-1

Designed Products



Wooden Bowl

Note Book-2

Designed Products



Cushion Cover



Wall Mount Display unit

Designed Products



Ektara



Blouse

Designed Products



Side Table

Pictures for Third Report



Presentation and discussion with *Chitrataru* members





Provided base material 'Ektara' and 'Dubki'





Work in progress





Work in progress



'Ektara' and 'Bansi' after finishing



Work before design intervention



Work after design intervention



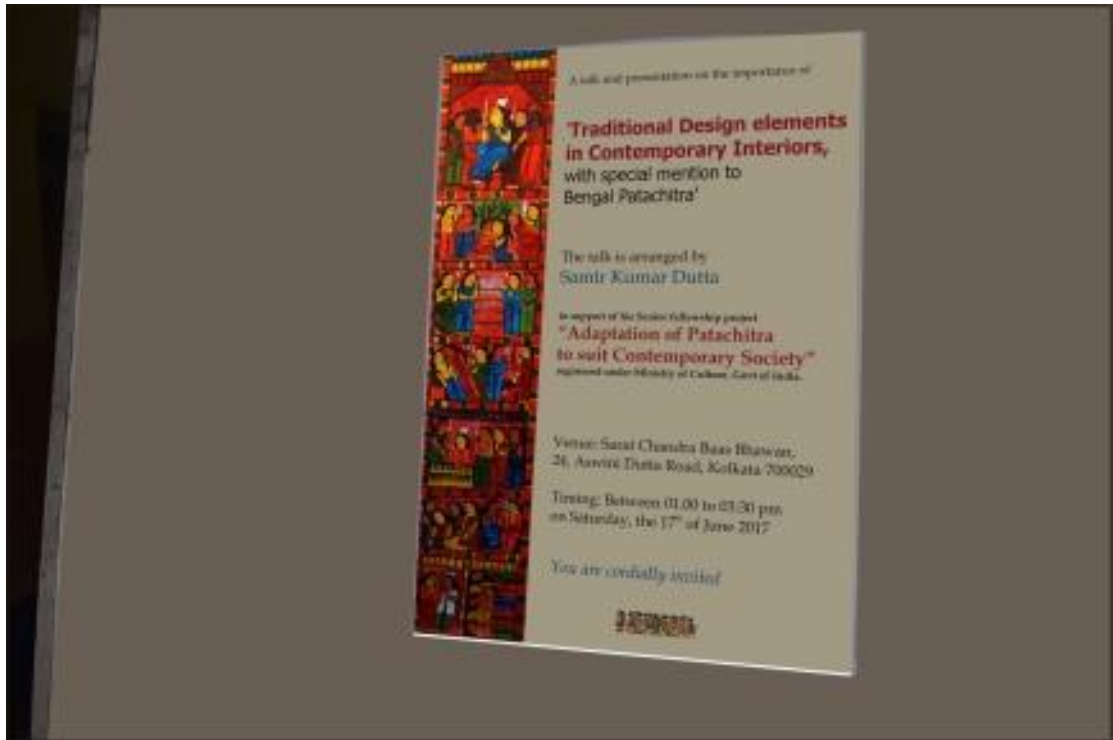
Work completed





Completed Products (*Dubki and Ektara*)





Poster for the talk & presentation



Ms. Megha Lohia (Interior Designer) giving a talk and presentation on 'Traditional Design Elements in Contemporary Interiors'



Discussion between Interior Designers, Artists and me



Mr. Mrinal Mondal (Secretary, *Chalchitra Academy*) emphasized the working method and living conditions of *Patachitra chitrakars*.



Mrs. Amita Dutta (Ex. Head, Department of Interior Designing, J D Birla Institute)
talked about Patachitra and its possible applications in Interiors



Pictures for Fourth Report

Pata Maya Mela, Naya, Pingla 2017



Opening Ceremony, Naya, Pingla



Mela Ground, Naya, Pingla

Pata Maya Mela, Naya, Pingla 2017



Display at Chitrataru community centre, Naya, Pingla



Visitor at community centre, Naya, Pingla



Display at *Chitrataru* community center, Naya, Pingla



Selling article at *Mela* Ground, Naya, Pingla



Mela Ground, Naya, Pingla



Visitor at Mela, Naya, Pingla



Visitors at *Mela*, Naya, Pingla



Wooden Comb displayed at *Mela* Ground, Naya, Pingla



Display for selling at *Mela*, Naya, Pingla



Mela at Naya, Pingla

Interior with *Patachitra* theme



Panel without article



Panel without article displayed

Interior with *Patachitra* theme



Panel with article displayed



Detail view of panel



Detailed view of panel

Presentation at Lalit Kala Akademi, Kolkata



Interactive session



Presentation in front of Artists

Presentation at Lalit Kala Akademi, Kolkata



Presentation at Lalit Kala Akademi, Kolkata

