

# "Pattachitra"- a traditional hand painted textile of Orissa

Akanksha Pareek<sup>1</sup> & Prof. Suman Pant<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Departments of Textile Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

<sup>2</sup>Department of Home Science, Clothing & Textile, Banathali University, Tonk Rajasthan

**Abstract:** "Pattachitra" is one of the distinct form of traditional hand painting in India which have been continuously in existence for almost 300 years. The pigment painted cloths for ritual use consist of "Pattachitra" (Scroll Painting) associated principally with the Lord Jagannath temple at Puri. The ritualistic art "pattachitra" is mainly practised by painter community where emphasize is given on narration and ornamentation of figure drawing with vegetable and mineral colours. Primary colours are used in "Pattachitra" of Orissa, other different shades are obtained by mixing the primary colours. Themes and motifs of "Pattachitra" are based on Hindu mythology, generally depicted the Puri temple and its rituals in a prescribed and highly stylized format. The most tedious Orissa scroll painting is done by both man and women.

The present study attempts to document the magnificent colourful artistic hand painted natural dyed "Pattachitra" in its pure form. The objective is to document the art of "pattachitra" in detail and record colours, motif, tools, equipments, and manufacturing process. This study also aims to document the data of traditional practises of natural dyeing/painting. Apart from secondary data, the purposively data regarding the craft was collected from Raghurajpur village, based on observation and interview method. The data pertaining to craft documentation was collected from five craftsmen, who were practising "Pattachitra" painting in traditional method during the time of data collection. "Pattachitra" popularly known as *pata* or *pat*, done on thinly woven cotton cloth, has undergone through few deviation in themes, colours and technique used.

**Key words** - Ritualistic textile, Hand painted textile, natural dyed/painted, Hindu mythology, Orissa

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Pattachitra, a scroll painting of Orissa is a very important class of pigment painted cloths for ritual use.<sup>1</sup> The folk painting of Orissa popularly known as Pattachitra or Pata, has a history of great antiquity. The painting is said to have a basic resemblance to the old mural of the region dating back to the fifth century, B.C.<sup>2</sup> Although the earliest extant Patas date only from the late seventeenth century, it is thought that the practise may have originated with the establishment of Jagannath temple in the eleventh century. The Patas served as substitute icon for the wooden image of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra when these were removed for repainting. They also doubled as temple offering or souvenirs for visiting pilgrims and devotees. By the early 1980s, the Pattachitra had evolved from a temple offering into a popular tourist souvenir.<sup>1</sup> Patta or scroll painting is done by the traditional painter communities, Chitrakaras, who are often Sutradharas by caste, make Pattachitras as well as painted wooden figures of god and goddesses, animal and other mythological figures. The painters of Puri, however, have a more sophisticated style of painting which, to some extent, has been influenced by the classical tradition of south India and of western India with which the Jagannath temple has continued its association. Indeed, as a great centre for pilgrimage and commerce, it is the temple that has indirectly, helped to keep the tradition of Pata painting still alive.<sup>2</sup> These painted scrolls are done on a thinly woven cotton bonded cloth may be in sizes of vertical or horizontal with mineral pigments colours.<sup>3</sup> Traditional

craft has reflected continuously the culture, history, social, economical state of the society. So there is need to promote the traditional painting art of Pattachitra. The study is an attempt to document artistic natural hand painted paintings in its pure form recorded with all the changes which have come through from generations.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Raghurajpur village was selected for the study. The main objective of the study was to document the colours, motif, tools, equipments and manufacturing process of Pattachitra Painting. A field study with descriptive design research was conducted to get complete and authentic data. Data was collected with the help of interview schedule. The questions dealt with demographic details, history of craft, process of producing the craft, colours, motifs, product produced. In addition, observation method was also used. Selection of the artisans was done purposively, only those artisans were selected who are practicing the craft in traditional manner. Five artisans' families were selected, which included two national awardees artisans; all were from Raghurajpur village only.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The village Raghurajpur is located nearby southern bank of Bhargabhi River. It is situated 11 km far away from Puri via Chandanpur, which fall on the national highway 203. The village has total 376 craft persons where 251 is male and 225 is female. Educational institute like Angan Wadi kendra and Higher secondary school is also located

in the village.<sup>4</sup> The artisans interviewed were of the age between 26 to 60 years, who were Hindu and belong to Chitrakar community and their mother tongue was Odia. They all lived in nuclear family set up and all owned their own Pakka houses. Three of them had undergone primary schooling and two had undergone secondary schooling. The children in the family were not motivated to study. It was left to them to whether they would like to study further and get another kind of job or get engaged in the craft but older male children's of the family were expected to continue the Pattachitra painting profession and the younger one were expected to know the craft. The craft was handed over from one generation to other. The learning of drawing skill of the painting still followed the tradition of Guru- Shishya Parampara (Teacher and student tradition), where experienced generally old and master artisans enrolled 5 to 7 children's of the village to teach them the art of drawing painting. This traditional followed like hobby classes, where very young children aged between 12 to 15 years started getting lessons from their Guru (Teacher). All the five respondents had a sole proprietorship type business and were engaged with other traditional crafts like Palm leaf engraving, coconut shell painting, betel nuts painting, papier-mâché work. It was observed that the main source of income is craft painting. The women of the household also earned a small amount of money by helping them in the Pattachitra painting; most of the women were engaged with Papier-mâché craft. The respondents mentioned that craft is continuing with the establishment of Lord Jagannath temple at Puri and the craft was given world renowned identity due to the extreme efforts of Shilpguru Shri Jagannath Mohapatra (1916 to 1998). The respondents also mentioned that originally craft was pertaining to Chitrakaras, but other castes such as Brahmin, Khandayat, Badhei, Gauda etc. are involved now.

#### IV. TOOLS AND EQUIPMENTS

The tools and equipments required for Pattachitra painting were traditionally handmade. The material used to prepare tools was locally available or they sourced from the local market of Puri. Traditionally tools and equipments like Umhei (furnace), Mati Patra or Atika (mud pot container), Sadhei (coconut shell, keeping colour paste), Matka (ring, which is made out from edges of old cotton saris, used as a stand of Sadhei), Tuli (brushes), (Fig. 1) Silapathara (flat stone bed, to grind tamarind seed), were used, but today most of the tools and equipments are same, but mud pot container with aluminium or steel container, electric grinder with Silapathara, handmade Tuli with brushes have been replaced.

#### V. INGREDIENTS

A number of ingredients are used during the entire process of Pattachitra Painting and these ingredients are water, Kaithatta or Kainth (locally available fruit gum) (Fig. 2 & 3), Tentuli gunda (Tamarind powder), Tentuli Manji (Tamarind seed) (Fig. 4), Lakha (Lac), Haritali (Yellow stone), Hingula (Red ochre), Ramaraja or Ghanila (Indigo stone), Shankha Gunda (Conch shell powder), Deepa ra Shikha (lamp black) (Fig 5 & 6), Khadi pathar (white stone

powder) (Fig.7). Ingredients like Gayi ra Gobar (Cow Dung), Kalla Matti (Black earth) were used earlier but find no use today in the process of Pattachitra Painting.

#### VI. PAINTING PROCESS

As per the information gathered from the artisans, the Pattachitra process may be divided into two main headings **Preparation of Canvas or Pataastra (Base fabric)**

The Chitrakaras have unique technique of preparing the Patta. The preparation of the handmade Patta or Patti (canvas) is an extremely laborious task, for which artisans used two layers of old cotton saris locally sourced from old cloth seller (Fig. 8). In the late nineteenth century, the canvas was prepared by smearing it with the mixture of cow dung and black earth. After drying in sunrays, white coating was applied to cover the pores of fabric. Now days, the old cotton saris are also used which are washed in plain water thoroughly to remove all impurities from the cloth. After drying it, the cloth is spread over the flat cemented floor and than a coating of a gum made from tamarind seed powder is applied on the fabric. A second layer of cloth is pasted on first layer and another layer of gum is applied, fabric is then allowed to dry in sunlight. (Fig. 9) The bubbles and the patches of gum in between the layers are removed and if required, small piece of the cloth is applied to avoid torn portion of old used cotton cloth. The gum of tamarind seed is prepared to grind the tamarind seeds in an electric grinder, earlier seeds were crushed on flat stone bed. Later on grounded tamarind thick powder cooked with required quantity of water to obtain gum.

When the fabric is totally dry, the glutinous coating obtained with soft white stone powder and tamarind gum in the ratio of 1:4 is rubbed on the dried fabric with the help of cotton puff. (Fig.10 & 11) When it is dry, the rubbing process is followed with sharp edged steel glass (Fig. 12), later on the same process is repeated with wet cotton puff and stone (Fig. 13 & 14). After drying the fabric, it is taken off the floor and cut into required rectangular or square sizes without any wastage (Fig.15). The individual pieces are polished with burnishing the smooth pebbles on both side of surface. The entire process of making patta (canvas) is known as "Pataastra".

#### VII. PAINTING

The experienced chitrakaras do not use the pencil to make the sketches but young painters first draw the sketches with the help of pencil. First stage is Dhadimara or demarcation of the borders, with the help of scale; earlier string was used to make lines in the border. (Fig. 16) The second stage is Tipana or sketching, which starts with head, then torso and legs are added. Generally experienced painter or head of the family draws it (Fig. 17). The next stage is Hingula Banka, where spaces outside the sketched figures are filled with red colour, the Hingula or red background is most commonly used in Pattachitra paintings (Fig.18). The process is followed by Ranga Banka where application of the colours in the figures are painted in a prescribed norms for a particular deity as per their Dhyamantra or visualization like black is used for face of Lord Krishna (Fig. 19). Mostly yellow colour is

applied to the garments including other colours, the process is called Pindha Luga. The procedure of colouring ornaments is known as Gahnalekha. This process is followed by colouring the black in required areas like hairs, outlining of the figures known as Mota Kala. Next process is Sarakala, finishing the fine outline with black colour (Fig. 20). Next stage is Sankhpata and Haladiyapata, where background is treated in floral with other colours. In Dhadibanka process borders are filled with floral, animal and geometrical motifs. The Sankhpata, Haladiyapata and Dhadibanka work is done by those painters who are not good at figure drawing; there are few painters who are skilled in border paintings. The process of reviewing the paintings before lacquering known as Baigeba, finally Joshala or lacquering is done to give glow and protection from moisture. Earlier Joshala or lacquering process was done from melted Lac but now these days readymade lacquer paint is used.

### Colours

As stated by the artisans during earlier times natural sources such as stone and vegetable extracts were used to make Canvas. Currently the same tradition is followed to develop the painting by some artisans. Five primarily colours- black, white, red, blue and yellow are used to make the Pattachitra, where black is prepared from burning coconut shell or from lamp, white is from conch shell by powdering, red from Hingula mineral, yellow is made from Haritali stone and blue is from Ramaraja

stone. The stone is first ground into a fine powder and made into a thick paste by adding water and then the locally available fruit gum known as Koithatta is mixed with this paste, and pate is converted into small tablets. When required tablets may be dissolved into the water or wet brush is rubbed on the tablet for using the colour. The colours used in painting are primarily bright colours, limited to red, yellow, indigo, white and black. These days besides these five colours, different shades are achieved from these stone and mineral colours. Moreover, these days different shades of artificial colours are bought to prepare less expensive painting, Acrylic colour is used to paint Tussar silk fabric. (Fig.21)

### Themes

The themes and motifs of Pattachitra painting centres around the Lord Jagannat, the chief deity of Puri, and the Vaishnav cult. The subjects of paintings are from the ancient epic, mostly mythological, religious stories and folk lore. Very popular themes are different Vesas or attire of Lord Jagganath, who was an incarnation of Lord Krishna, with older brother Balram and sister Subhadra, different depiction related to Lord Krishna such as Shri Krishna Janam (The birth of Krishna), Shri Krishna Leela (narrative of Krishnas life), Dola Yatra and Rath Yatra (Spring and chariot festival of Orissa) and the temple activities (Fig. 22 & 23).



Fig. 1 *Sadhei, Matka, Tuli*



Fig. 2 *Kaithatta- Fruit gum*



Fig. 3 *Refined Kaithatta*



Fig. 4 *Tantuli Manji*





Fig. 5 Haritali, Ramaraja, Conch Shell, Lamp Black



Fig. 6 Colour Powder



Fig. 7 White Stone and left over white stone paste



Fig. 8 Old Cotton Saris



Fig. 9 Dried Layered Fabric



Fig. 10 White Stone Powder



Fig. 11 Rubbing

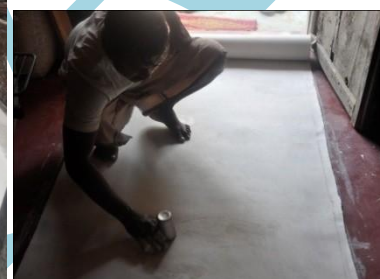


Fig. 12 Rubbing with glass



Fig. 13 cotton puff rubbing



Fig. 14 Stone rubbing



Fig. 15 Cut-outs



Fig. 16 Dhadimara



Fig. 17 Tipana



Fig. 18 Hingula Banka



Fig. 19 Dhyanamanttra



Fig. 20 Sarakala





Fig. 21 Painting on Tussar silk

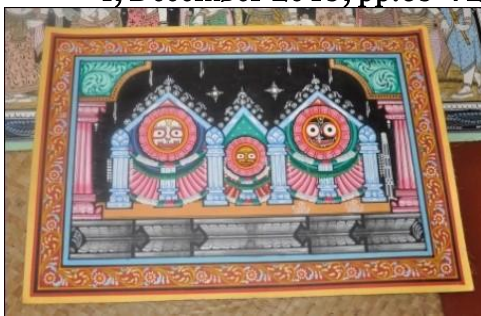


Fig. 22 Lord Jagannath



Fig. 23 Deities in modern style



Fig. 24 Padma Vesha of Trinity



Fig. 25 Suna Vesha of Trinity

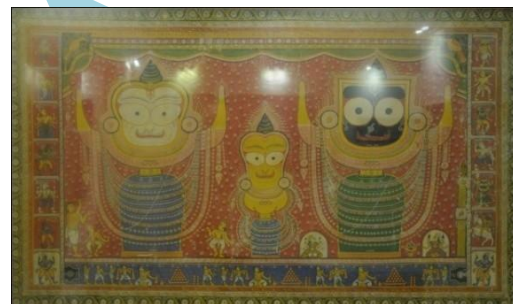


Fig. 26 Bada Singara Vesha of Trinity



Fig. 27 Thia Badhia or Shree Mandira

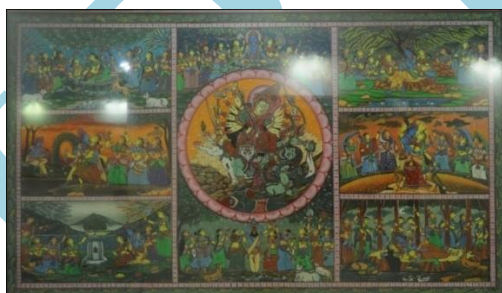


Fig. 28 Sarata Rasa



Fig. 29 Krishna Leela



Fig. 30 Nava Gunjara



Fig. 31 Kandarp Ratha

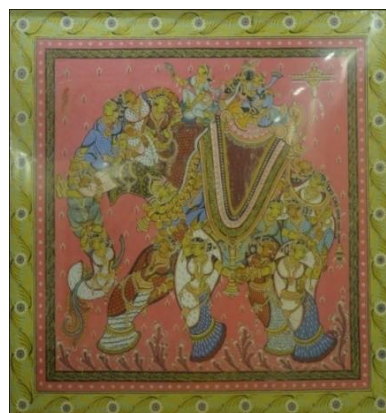


Fig. 32 Kandarp Hasti





Fig. 33 *Sada Rutu*



Fig. 34 *Tapoi*



Fig. 35 *Gaja Laxmi*



Fig. 36 *Varsa Rasa*

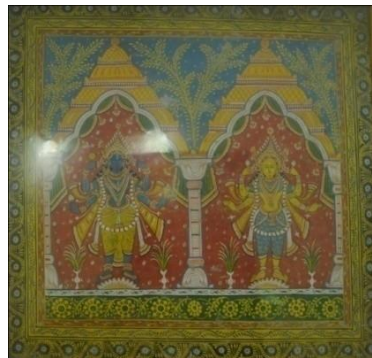


Fig. 37 *Laxmi Narayan*

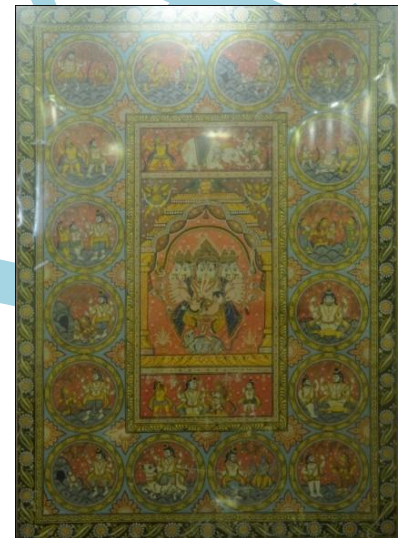


Fig. 39 *Ganesha Charita*



Fig. 38 *Budh Charita*



Fig. 41 *Ramabhiska*

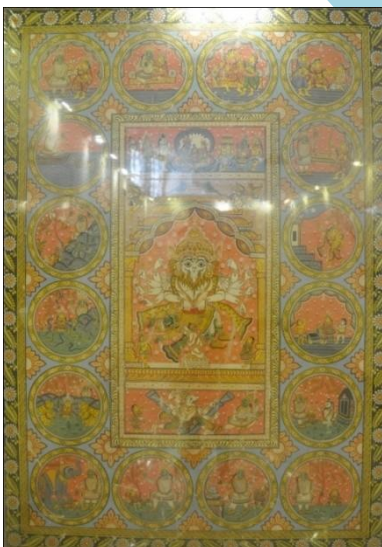


Fig. 42 *Kanchi Abhijana*

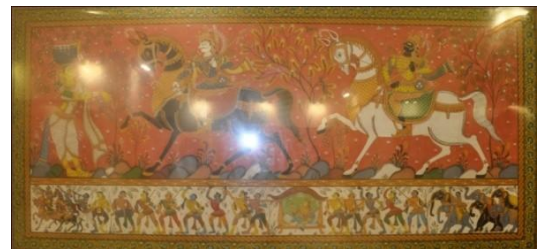
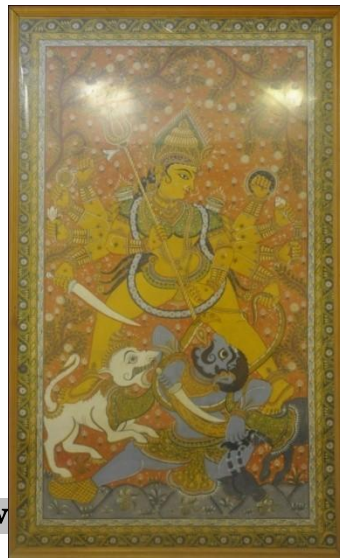


Fig. 43 Narasimha Charita

Fig. 40 Mahisha Mardini Durg



Fig. 44 Sketch Book

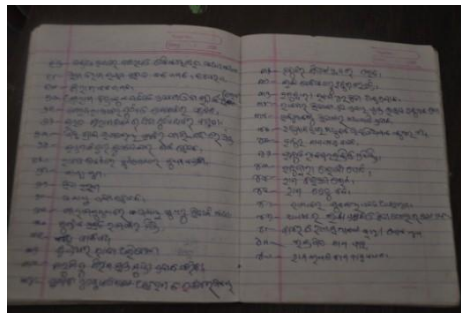


Fig. 45 Themes

The centres shows the combined figure of *shree krishna* and *Shri Radha* (Fig. 29), *Nava Gunjara*- is a composite animal having nine parts of nine animal- the head of cock, the neck of peacock, the hump of bull, a snake for tail, the waist of lion, three of the legs are those of tigers, horse and elephant and the fourth is not a leg but hand of a man holding a Chakra (Fig. 30), *Kandarp Ratha*- This is one of the most popular decorative motifs of *Pattachitra* paintings. Here sixty four *gopis* placed themselves in the shape of a chariot, *Shree Krishna* remain in the centre (Fig. 31), *Kandarp Hasti*- Nine *gopis* pose themselves in a mutually interlocked position as to create a shape of an elephant. Shree Krishna is seated on the back of it (Fig. 32), *Sada Rutu*- The scene of nature in six season namely *Greeshama* (Summer), *Varsha* (Rainy), *Sheeta* (Winter), *Hemanta*, *Vasanta* (Spring) has been depicted in the painting (Fig. 33), *Tapoi*- Goddess *Mangala* occupies a prominent position in the centre and other sequences based on *Tapoi* (Daughter of a merchant) story are painted around (Fig. 34), *Gaja Laxmi*- *Gaja Laxmi* is seated on lotus is flanked by two elephants. Laxmi associated with *Gaja* (Elephant) named *Gaja Laxmi* (Fig. 35), *Varsa Rasa*- The divine alliance of *Shri Krishan* with *gopis* in the rainy season has been depicted in three parts of the painting (Fig. 36), *Laxmi Narayan*- *Narayan* stand with his consort *Laxmi* (Fig. 37), *Budh Charita*- The middle of the painting shows compassionate standing *Buddha* while the circles around narrate different event of his life (Fig. 38), *Ganesha Charita*- In middle five headed *Ganesha* with above and below circle depict various event of his life (Fig. 39), *Mahisha Mardini Durga*- Goddess *Durga* is killing Demon *Mahisha* (Fig. 40), *Ramabhiska*- The coronation ceremony of *Shri Rama*, king of *Ayodhya* after returning from exile has been depicted (Fig. 41), *Kanchi Abhijana*- A popular legend of Orissa narrate lord *Jagganath* and *Balbhadra* preceded (Fig. 42), *Narasimha Charita*- *Narsimha*, the fourth incarnation of Vishnu, is killing the demon *Hiranya Kasipu* are collected from state museum of Bhubaneswar (Fig. 43).

Contemporary themes like different depiction of *Rasalila*

(Lord Krishna dance with *gopis*), Lord Hanuman, Goddess *laxmi* etc have been added to the *Pattachitra* tradition. Young artisans, who are learning the craft from their Guru (teacher), maintain the sketch book with all the themes and sketches (Fig.44 & 45).

### Products

Traditionally, paintings were used only as banners to offer to the *Lord Jagganath* Temple, but these days different type of products are prepared using *Pattachitra* technique which include saris, dress material, dupatta (stoles), bed sheet, cushion and wall hangings. Tussar silk or cotton cloth is used for these products. Paintings are commercially used now.

### Conclusions

The production process has not changed in the number of stages but there is a change in the natural ingredients used at different stages. The base fabric of canvas was traditionally plain white cotton cloth to make *Pattachitra* painting, as it was offered to the *Lorad Jagannath* temple. Today old cotton cloth sari is used to make painting to be sold to customers. Earlier, only five colours white, black, red, blue and yellow were used to develop the painting but now these days a range of different shades of colours have been introduced to fulfil the growing demand of the customer. Mostly traditional themes are continuing the craft. Traditionally *Pattachitra* were made to offer to Lord *Jagganath* temple as in *seva* (Services) from pilgrims but today, it is used to produce whole range of products like saris, *dupattas* (stoles), bed sheets, cushion, dress material etc. to fulfil the household demand for which tussar and mill cotton cloth is used. The craft is still as brilliant as ever and competing in the modern market to maintain the heritage of India.

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- [5]. State Museum of Bhubaneswar, *Pattachitra* painting section, Collection of the paintings Fig. 24 to 43.

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