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**PAITKAR PAINTING: AN ART STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The specific cultural tradition of the community elder is Paitkar painting, an indigenous painting of eastern India. Paitkar painting is considered one of the popular craft of Jharkhand in India. Paitkar painting is the pictures with performance of storytelling. This living tradition of Jharkhand is dying slowly because of its improper exploration and patron. It is more archaic than any other folk art form of India but yet to come in the Indian art scenario. The century old tradition form of scroll painting is preserved by few families in Amadubi under Dhalbhumgarh block of East Singhbhum district. Lack of recognition and promotion from any quarter for decades had prompted the painters to think of abandoning their profession. Financial crunch had also forced the painters of this tribal community to look for alternative avenues of livelihood. The social and economic hardships coupled with government's indifferent attitude towards the art form forced the poor tribal painters to even dissuade their children from pursuing their age old profession resulting in the essence of paitkar slowly being replaced by modern techniques.*

**KEYWORDS**

Paitkar, economic and social hardships, tribal painting, scroll painting, struggle.

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**ORIGIN**

Amadubi village or the *Paitkar para* is very old more than about 400 years. Various legends and stories about the origin of Amadubi and Chitrakar are preserved orally by the Paitkar group also suggest similar results of achieving identity and place. *The kings of the Ghatsila brought them here to sing padas or songs. Dhabaldev was the first to patron the Paitkar and this is why his reputation deservedly carried by his fellow kings. Paitkar artists has a good relation with king palace. The king used to invite them for performing pada as well as painting scroll. One day the Paitkar artists were called upon by Dhabaldev king of Ghatsila to perform the Srisastyanarayandev pata and Naramedh jagya pata. The performance of Paitkars was so beautiful that the king wanted to give them some gift. Then the Paitkars were asking for a land so that they can happily do practices of this Paitkar. And king accepted their proposal and gave them a land near Ghatshila and later it is known as Amadubi. King also honored them with the title of Gayen. Before Amadubi, the Gayens resided near Narsinggarh. Their village was called Patekarpara. Due to some natural calamities the village was ruined and they scattered over to other area.*

The chief of Grama Panchayat, Kamal Kanta Gope also added that the patekar artists were originally migrated from the Malbhumgarh (the present Purulia of West Bengal). The Chitrakars were fond of doing the art to entertain and this is how the tradition has also come from Malbhumgarh Paitkar artists are Hindu in origin. They speak Bengali and also introduce themselves as Bengali. However it is not clear that they are migrated from Bengal. Their livelihood is unlike the Santhal, the main indigenous people of Jharkhand.

Earlier the Paitkar artists were known as Gayen but slowly they used chitrkaar as their surname. People who perform singing are called Gayen and the people who paint are called chitrkaar. Paitkar painting may be considered as the variant of pata painting. It is the term used for long scroll painting having vertical format. The communities who paint pata in the area of Jharkhand are also known locally as Patidar, Patekar, or paitkar. Patachitra has been derived from Padya which means a verse of two rhyming line. This style of narrative scroll of Paitkar painting is derived from Pandulipi which was earlier used by kings to send a message to other kings. The *Paitkar* artist has a strong awareness of their surroundings and this is reflected in the contemporary images. They use to paint the social issues and stories to create awareness among the people.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To analyse the economic and social status of the paitkar painters of Amadubi Village of Jharkhand
2. To project the need of finances and marketing for the upliftment of the poor Paitkar Painters
3. To analyse the need of intervention of government and nongovernment organisations to improve their social and economic status
4. To throw light on the fact that this rare painting is on the verge of extinction.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Primary and secondary data was used for the present study. Secondary data was collected from reports and available material with government and non government and other related organisations. For primary data survey of the concerned village Amadubi was done pertaining to present study.

**SPECIFIC CULTURAL TRADITION FORM**

Paitkar art is one of the popular form of art of Jharkhand state and also it is the oldest tribal painting in India. Another name of paitkar painting is scroll painting owing to its appearance. Paitkar paintings are practiced by the tribals in some places of Jharkhand. It is more archaic than any other folk art form of India but yet to come in the Indian art scenario. These paintings mainly reflect the day to day life of people, stories of legends and mythology. It also depicts life after death. These paintings were used in storytelling programs. It is a painting performance where the artists transform narration into a series of sketches in the house of recent demise. The colors used by Paitkar artists are earth colors which give it a rustic and warm look. They use a kind of handmade paper to paint this painting which is treated with soil and glue. Also they prepare the colors from natural vegetables, crushed stone. There is the orchid color derived from a certain kind of earth/stone. At either ends of the painting, beautifully carved bamboo sticks are inserted by the artists to scroll it. Interviewing Anil Chitrkaar regarding the Paitkar Painting, Juel Narzari cited that, " ... The story telling Indian mythology or folklore on paper that runs on a scroll." The people sit throughout the story telling session which involves scroll paintings and it is supported by traditional songs. These paintings give a philosophical view about life and death, added Anil Chitrkaar. In its thematic point of view *Paitkar* is more Archaic than any other contemporary scroll paintings. Except some government sponsored events there is hardly any *Paitkar* painting which has done on the theme of current happening. The *Paitkar* artists are not cultivators and want fallow or unused land for making colour. This type of land is in a huge cavity, full of snakes. So preparing colours is very risky. That's why they worship the snake goddess Manasa and paint the story of Manasa in *Paitkar*.

*Paitkar* painting reflects many realities of day-to-day human life, legends and mythologies of their society. The tribal artists in Jharkhand who have fostered this art of scroll painting that has long been used in story telling performance and also in socio-religious custom. The historical lineage of the *Paitkar* painting can be traced to the culture associated with the state of West Bengal. Now-a-days the *Paitkar* painting is practicing only in Amadubi village of Dhalbhumgarh area,

Jharkhand. The *Paitkar* artist has a strong awareness of their surroundings and this is reflected in the contemporary images. They use to paint the social issues and stories to create awareness among the people.

Amadubi village or the *Paitkar* para is very old more than about 400 years. Various legends and stories about the origin of Amadubi and Chitrakar are preserved orally by the *Paitkar* group also suggest similar results of achieving identity and place. For instance, The kings of the Ghatsila brought them here to sing padas or songs. Dhabaldev was the first to patron the *Paitkar* and this is why his reputation deservedly carried by his fellow kings. *Paitkar* artists has a good relation with king palace. The king used to invite them for performing pada as well as painting scroll. One day the *Paitkar* artists were called upon by Dhabaldev king of Ghatsila to perform the *Srisastyanarayandev pata* and *Narmedh jagya pata*. The performance of *Paitkars* was so beautiful that the king wanted to give them some gift. Then the *Paitkars* were asking for a land so that they can happily do practices of this *Paitkar*. And king accepted their proposal and gave them a land near Ghatshila and later it is known as Amadubi. King also honored them with the title of Gayen. Before Amadubi, the *Gayens* resided near Narsingarh. Their village was called *Patekarpara*. Due to some natural calamities the village was ruined and they scattered over to other area.

The chief of Grama Panchayat, Kamal Kanta Gope also added that the *paitkar* artists were originally migrated from the Malbhumgarh (the present Purulia of West Bengal). The *Chitrakars* were fond of doing the art to entertain and this is how the tradition has also come from Malbhumgarh. Dhalbhum or Ghatshila was included with the district of Midnapore, now in Singhbhum. The capital of Dhalbhum was Ghatsila where one fort (*gārh*) was established by a king from which the name Dalbhumgarh has been derived.

*Paitkar* artists are Hindu in origin. They speak Bengali and also introduce themselves as Bengali. However it is not clear that they are migrated from Bengal. Their livelihood is unlike the Santhal, the main indigenous people of Jharkhand.

## TECHNIQUES

Till date *Paitkar* artists are not trying any commercial colours in their painting. The artist uses certain leaves, coloured stone and soil to prepare colour. The soil and colour stone are available by the riverside. But it is tiresome to find them. For the colour preparation, at first they grind leaf and fruits and make a paste. Then take out the liquid part from the paste and pour some water in a certain proportion. After that boil this liquid and filter the concoction. And for making this liquid more thickly, the artist boils it again. They collect coloured stones, soil, vegetables and leaves from their surroundings. They grind it with water on a plain stone surface. When the mixture is completed they remove the dust from it with a strainer and boil it to make it thicker. After that they use the gum on it. The *Paitkar* artists use a natural gum with the colours to make it permanent and give more glazes. This natural gum is collected from *bel* (wood apple) fruit and the resin of *neem* tree. The black colour is made up of the smoke of kerosene lamp. Kerosene lamp creates black smoke and *Paitkar* artist store the clinker or carbon residue from the black smoke and then mix it with the natural gum and water.

Some of the colours used in *Paitkar* and their sources are as follows-

White – lime powder,

Yellow – stone or soil,

Black – lampblack, burnt rice, ashes from kerosene lamp,

Red – stone or soil,

Blue – indigo,

Green – broad bean leaves.

The shells of coconut are used to store the prepared colours. The *Paitkar* artists make the brushes from the hair of squirrel and goat. They use the hair of squirrel which acts like a fine quality 1-00 numbered brush. The hairs are tightened by thread on a bamboo stick.

The surface they used to paint is the bulk of palm tree. But now-a-days artists use paper and cloth as it is convenient. For paint in paper they choose the rough side of it. Usually they make the paintings into parts and then sew them together. Once the pieces of paper or the frame have been assembled, the artist rolls the paper to conform to the proper shape. Most *Paitkars* use pencil to outline the forms of the characters and images. The individual frames are demarcated with decorative borders which disguise the seams between frames. Usually the dark outlines are added at the end of the painting process. Cloth is adhered to the back to strengthen the seams. Often old saris are used as the backing and the patterns of the fabric add visual depth to the *Paitkar's* presentation. Traditionally, *Paitkars* artists are men. Women have always assisted with the preparation of dye and colours, but now they are also recognized as talented artists and performers in their own right.

## PLIGHT OF PAITKAR PAINTING

The century old traditional form of scroll painting is preserved by few families in Amadubi under Dhalbhumgarh block of East Singhbhum district. Lack of recognition and promotion from any quarter for decades had prompted the painters to think of abandoning their profession. Financial crunch had also forced the *paitkar* painters of this tribal community to look for alternative avenues of livelihood. The social and economic hardships coupled with government's indifferent attitude towards the art form forced the poor tribal painters to even dissuade their children from pursuing their age old profession resulting in the essence of *paitkar* art slowly being replaced by modern techniques.

Another problem of *paitkar* painting is its marketing. This painting lacks a proper market and is confined to melas and fairs. People are unaware of its importance and don't show much interest as well. The day to day livelihood disappoints the budding practitioners of *paitkar*. There are not enough buyers to buy their art works which does not lead them to a safe and better life and further discourage the new generation into this tradition. As a result the artists in new age do not rely on this practice unlike their forefathers. In Amadubi there 40-50 houses among which presently only few are practicing *Paitkar* painting although most of the villagers know about the art. It has been observed that only 3-4 artists are practicing this scroll painting. Most of The Amadubi villagers gave up the tradition of *paitkar* because it is not economically viable. They have pursued a range of occupations such as carpentry, *murtimaking*, tailoring, agricultural labour, repairing work etc. The new generations not interested in continuing with the art. Scarcity of water and lack of communication has made their life stressful.

The painters of *paitkar* painting manage painting manage to go for workshops and exhibition few times round the year but sale of paintings in exhibition is not guaranteed as told by Anil Chitrkar. He has not received payments for few workshops he conducted in Rajnagar near hata by Shushobhit and in village Kala Jharna. Being unwell Anil Chitrkar a renowned *Paitkar* Painter is longing for the payment since one year. His son works as a kuli and doesn't want to continue with his ancestral art because of lack of market and demand and less earning from this art form. These paintings don't have demand in open market so painters have to rely only on exhibitions and workshops. As told by the owner of Crafts and beyond a gift shop in Jamshedpur, few *paitkar* paintings were bought from Anil Chitrkar for sale but one year has passed and not a single painting has been sold. Customers don't recognize the value of paintings. They compare the price of these paintings with printed ones and are not ready to pay high price. This art form lacks advertisement. In today's dynamic society, people value goods which are advertised. *Paitkar* Painting is struggling to survive and is on the verge of extinction. Efforts have been taken by Biponi. Kalamandir, Jharcraft, Tata Steel but the ground reality is that the painters are not able to manage their livelihood only by paintings so has to work as hired labors in agriculture and as vendors and construction sector etc.

Artist Anil Chitrkar was engaged in a school in Jamshedpur to teach this art form to children but the remuneration is too less for his survival. More efforts of such kind should be taken so that painters not only earn money but the art could be spread outside the family as well. It can work as a source and light for an art form which is struggling hard to survive. As told by Anil Chitrkar few *Paitkar* paintings were ordered by Jharcraft but return reasons unknown.

The *Paitkar* Painting needs a commercial approach which the two painter Anil Chitrakar and Vijay Chitrakar are unable to understand. Other *Paitkar* painters have left this art in search of livelihood. Both the *Chitrakars* generally keeps the price high for which sale has become limited. People are not ready to give high price. The life people in Amadubi is not very encouraging and particularly of Anil Citrakar who now is quite old to do much work. The need of the time is to save the art form which seems to get extinct after these two patrons.

A lot has been done by the Kala Mandir, an NGO in Jamshedpur, to revive this Art form. After lot of persuasion, effort, and motivation, Kala Mandir started with 20 people of the village Amadubi to uplift this Art but only two- Anil Chitrakar and Vijay Chitrakar could sustain. Their own Children are not ready this art form.

When interviewed Anil Chitrakar showed many certificates that he got in various trainings, Workshops, exhibitions. He was not very excited to show because according to him if it cannot sustain its life what is its use. As told by him, he got a demand of 50 paintings by Mr. Ram Chandra from Bangalore, he is unable to complete the order in the stipulated time because no one in the family and village now do the painting. Owing to its ill health and old age he is not able to maintain the time limit. If things are not taken care of soon, within no time this art would be a history.

## CONCLUSION

The new emergent Art market gathers a variety of new buyers who demand the scrolls in a minimal size and also in some newer forms according to their own suitable way of carrying them. That might lead the artists to move on a new story in a new size. To maintain their legacy and also to cope with the new audiences' Chitrakar has to compose new themes and perhaps new songs. And besides visiting door to door, the space has also been widened into market place lead them to multiple purposes of doing *Paitkar*.

A lot has been done by different sources to keep the lamp of paitkar painting burning but the outcome is not satisfactory. Chitrakaars are not ready to continue the art as a source of livelihood because it is not able to give them sufficient remuneration for survival. NGO's and government have been trying to promote this art through motivation by instilling confidence and self Esteem among these traditional artisans but the problem lies in the fact that this motivation doesn't stay for long because it is not able to provide them three meals a day for which they have to rely on alternative means of employment. It is very difficult to take this art form as a full time job.

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