

**Folk and Minor Art in India**  
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**Lecture – 23**  
**Sohari Painters and their Art**

We are going to speak about some very fascinating aspect of a Patachitra in Bengal. That are found in 19th, 20th Century and even before, where as we see in today's context that the stylistic differences are very limited still it is full of variety, but still has compare to the previous older one, we see that the differences are much minimum because of many reasons. Because of the deviation between the societies fortunately is reducing, though it is a very generalized statement that I am making on the basis of fewer facts, but still there is some indication in the direction.

So, I will talk about two three difference styles from the districts of West Bengal those are situated very close by and they are the joining district in a small state. So, it is very interesting to see how different district it is not only the difference states of a country, but even different districts have different styles of their own which is very distinctive in their visual identity. I am picking up a common topic like Ramayan and I am using that as the example to understand the phenomenon.

In fact, let me just express the quite a few thing before we go to the examples; that there are quite a few common features that are found in most of the cases where the practices are not so wide spreaded right now it is concentrated in a fewer sentence, but it is happening in a higher form. So, we cannot say that the practice is I mean like under some limitation it is happening in a very different order that though they are taking place and fewer centers, but the quality of the art work and also the vaguer that is going on in the art work is having a different dimension all together.

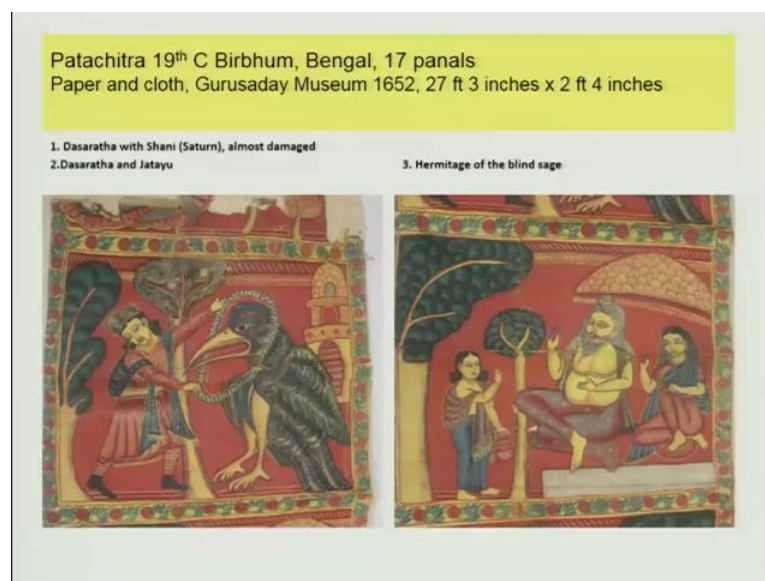
So, let us talk about the stylistic features that are generally found in West Bengal that is the context of our discussion right now. So, the portraits in the Patachitra of the district call Birbhum are either in three fourth views; that is a profile view it is either in three fourth views or full frontal with joint eye brows. An Indian red ground a compulsory

frame or border, flower, fruits or just dots to decorate them. In Bankura that is another district what we see that faces are in profile, the drapes of the (Refer Time: 03:37) are embedded with floral motives. One can also observe here that the noted and plate like line and the patterns that are in Indian red color that is always there in the base.

Also the Patachitras of Hooghly district that is a small district has a dark brown based with execution in linear pattern that is known as Rekhamandala Bala. So, it is a combination of lines Rekha is lines, so painting of Manhon show a confined place that the piece of it is restricted frontal approach with impressions of deep Indian red, white and yellow color that is predominant over there. The Santhal Pargana that is another region the colors are usually green, blue, yellow; salutes are on white based and the majors have a child like rendering with study spontaneity and two dimensional motives are also seen there.

Now, let us move to the Ramayan of Birbhum from 19th Century Bengal which is a 17 panel Patachitra, it is a painted scroll that have chosen for my topic that is the medium is paper and cloth together and I have done the documentation in those are the museum the scroll number is 1652 2 feet and 4 inches is a size of the art work. So, let see that and I will show the images and also explain you the thematic meaning of that.

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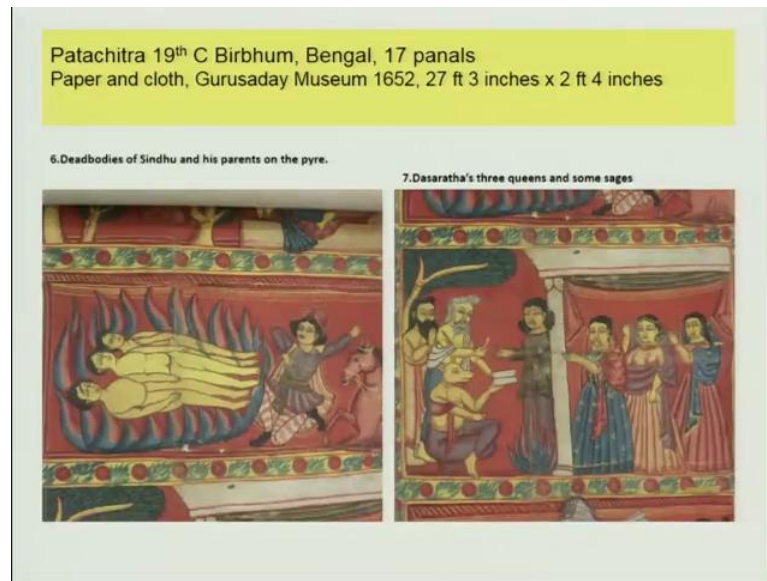
So, the first frame you see Dasharatha with Shani the Saturn, this part is almost damaged so it is partially shown on top of the frame that it is in a damaged condition. So, what we see in the plate are the beginning it is Dasharatha and Jatayu and then the hermitage of the blind sage.

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Dasharatha kills Sindhu. The king brings the corpse to the hermitage.

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Dead bodies of Sindhu and his parents on the pyre; Dasharathas 3 queens and some sages.

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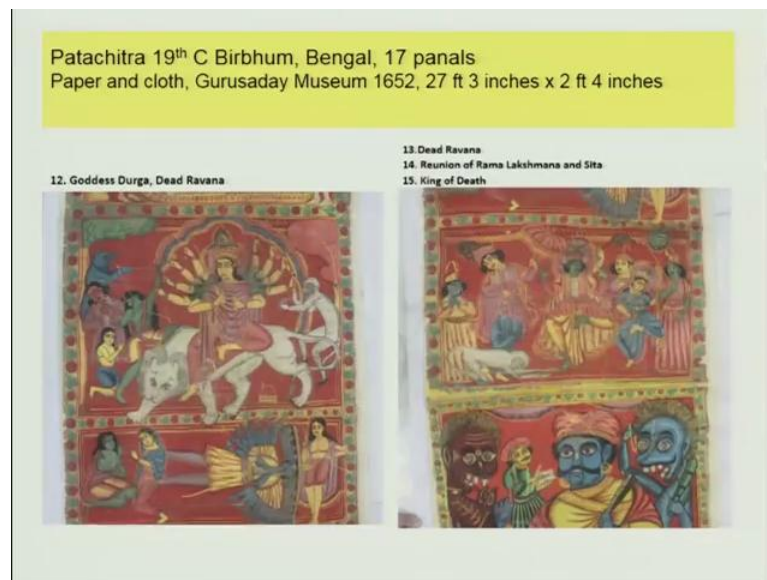
Scene of sacrifice for a birth of a son - Goddess Manasa, the snake Goddess.

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Goddess Kali, Goddess Durga.

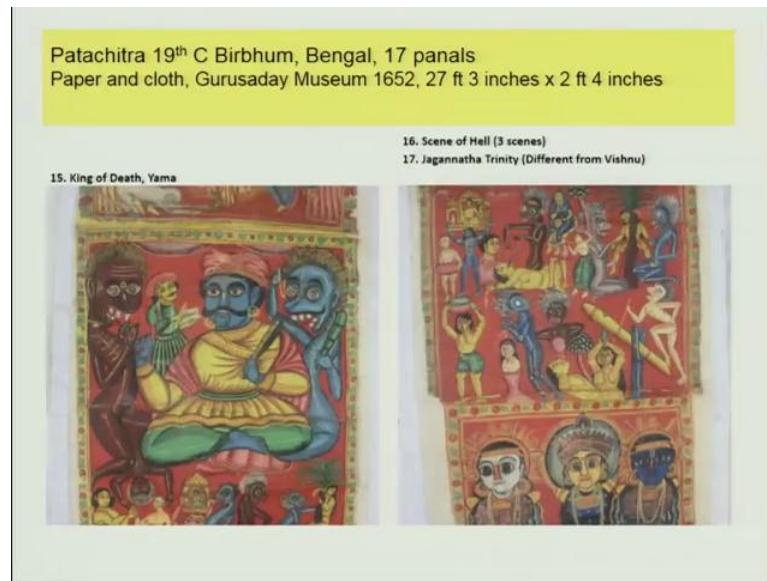
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Goddess Durga and dead Ravana. Reunion of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, King of Death.

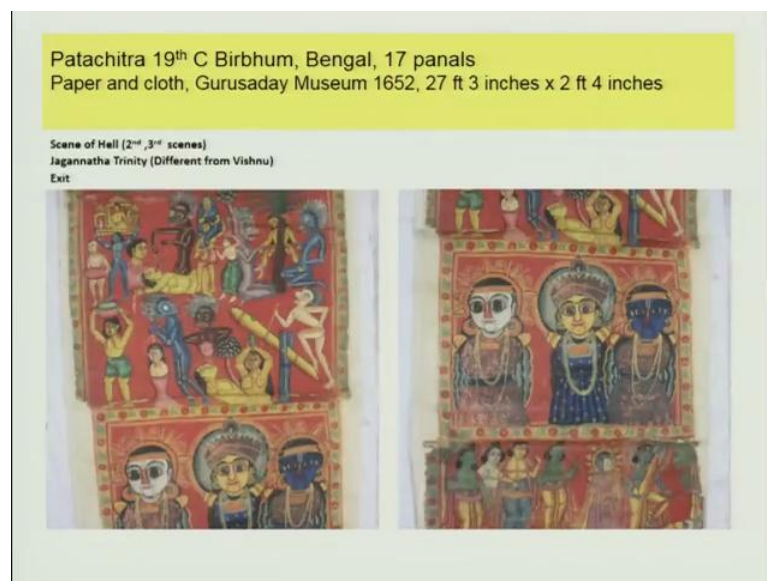


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The continuation of the 14th section the King of Death, Yama; then a hell scene in three sections; and then the last frame with Jagannatha trinity which is different from Vishnu and I will show a detail of that in the next slide.

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So, the here scene and Jagannatha trinity and then the departure or the exit of all the characters; that is how it ends, so what we observed in this scroll of Ramayan that it has the typical feature of Birbhums Patachithra where the faces are either in three quote of view has I explained in the beginning or it is totally frontal, it is roundish, it also have joint eye brows that is a very typical feature of Birbhums Patachithra. It has a base which is quite flat made of Indian red color. It is also true that there are lots of overlapping that is taking place, but there is no ground made a such it is all made it is almost like cut collage sort of images that are cut and paste in that form on the flat Indian red ground throughout.

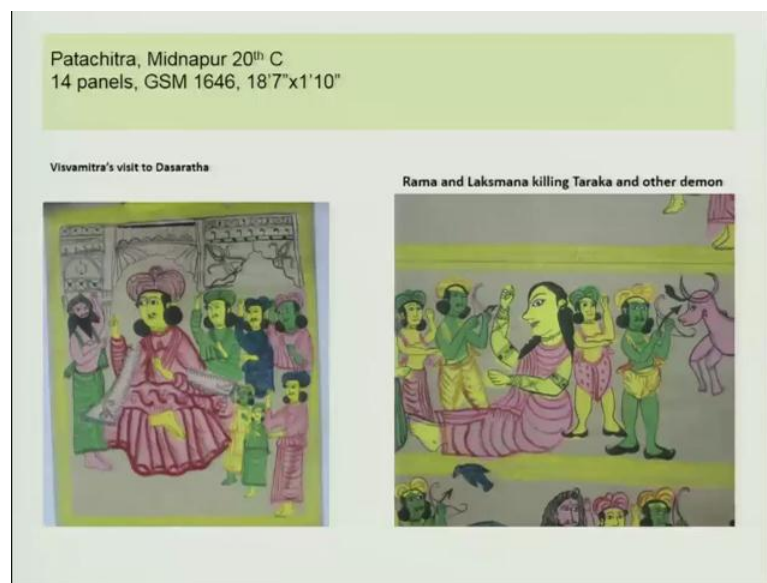
At the same time there are amazing treatment to create volume on the faces and other limbs and that to it is not very recent. The kind of art work the term using as example they are form the old Patachithra; the traditional ones. And what we see here is a use of volume that is quite sophisticated and it is rendering. And the borders are having dots, flowers, etcetera and that is almost mandatory factor here. Each of those seventeen frames had frames a net. So, they were confined at the same time because of the similar figurations and repetitive motive and specifically for the continuation in the motives in the border their putting them together and gives it a sense of vertical continuity that gives a story going.

This is also very important to remember that a story like Ramayana does not need too many friends because it is assumed that the story is known to everybody. When somebody is showing certain image or they are trying to illustrate certain idea it is already known that the images there in the mind of the audiences, so they have chosen the key frames from the long epic. And this is also another observations that we must make here that the stories are not just there it is its already like known that they had been one oration that was that came with it, but even without the oration or the story telling the stories can survive or that could stand as individual images. And their lies the self sufficient and complete nature of this kind of Patachithras.

So, you see the next row of painting from another district and that is a most interesting here. If we pick up the Patachithras of Midnapore another distinct situated in West Bengal. We see that the individual characteristics are completely change there and it has

a clear and distinctive identity that can be very easily figured out, anybody can make it out that this belongs to a different region, it is coming with a different visual style. Keeping in mind that the story is again and it is based on the same textual reference that is Ramayana. So, the Ramayana story is depicted in a complete different visual identity in another district in Birbhum within that is a Midnapore and that is very different from med home.

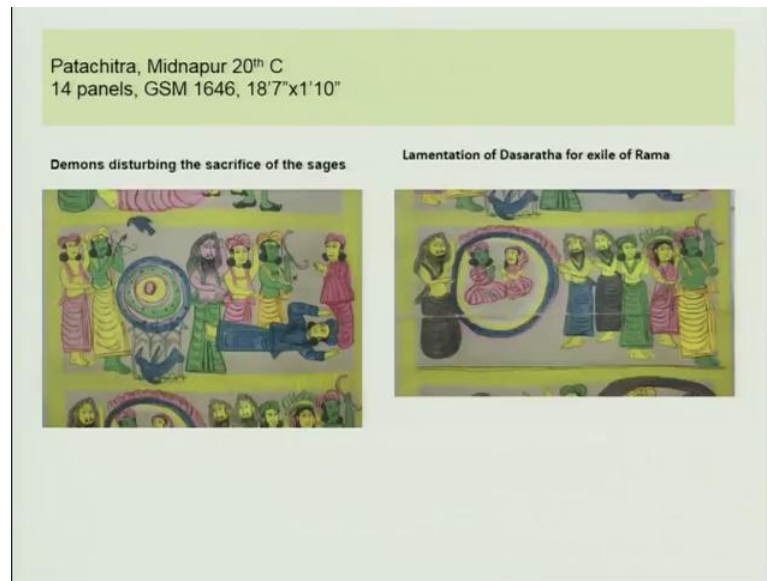
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In the first frame what we see that Visvamithra's visit to Dasharatha and Rama and Lakshmana killing Taraka and other demon. The picture is again it is a 20th Century Patachitra with 14 panels from the same museum the gurus are the museum. The number of the scroll is 1614 and it is 18 feet 7 inches by 1 feet 10 inches in size. It starts with the frame where Visvamithra visits Dasharatha and not before that; Ramayana Laxmana killing Taraka and other demon demons.



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Disturbing the sacrifice of the sages, lamentation of Dasharatha for exile of Rama.

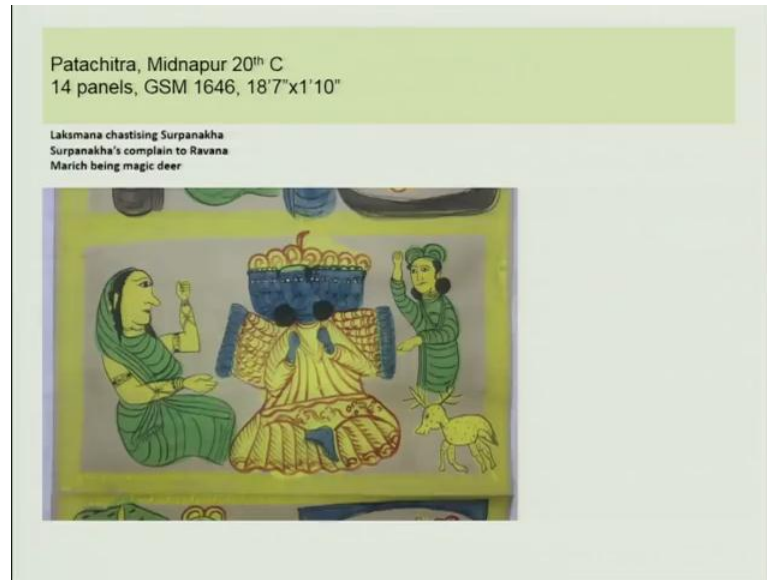
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Sages greeting Rama Sita and Lakshmana, Rama on the way to the forest with Sita and Lakshmana, Rama and Sita engaged in conversation. And see how simply they have separated the space where two people are sitting in isolation and the other things are

happening just outside. The amazing spontaneity and simplicity in the art works are making it very expressionistic.

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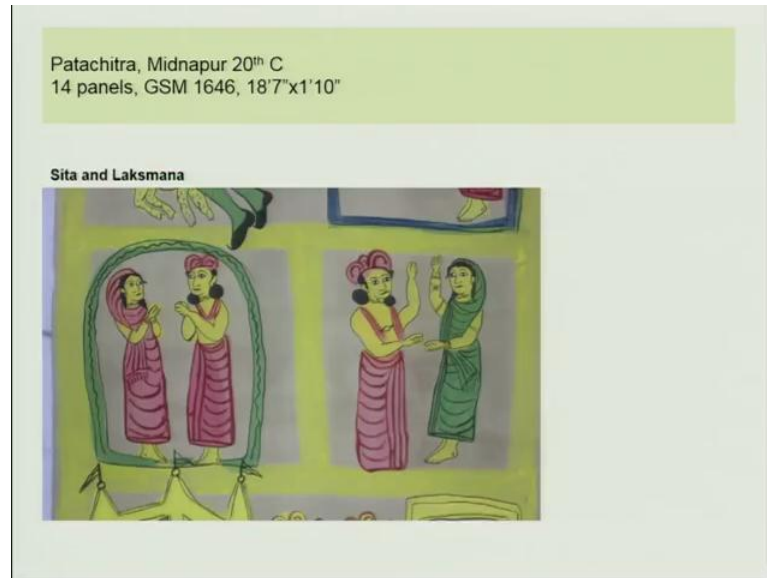
Lakshmana chastising Surpanakha; Surpanakha is complained to Ravana, Marich being magic deer that is are the right corner of the frame.

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So, demine in the disguise of the deer; Rama killing the magic deer the maya-mriga  
Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in the cottage.

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Sita and Lakshmana in conversation again.

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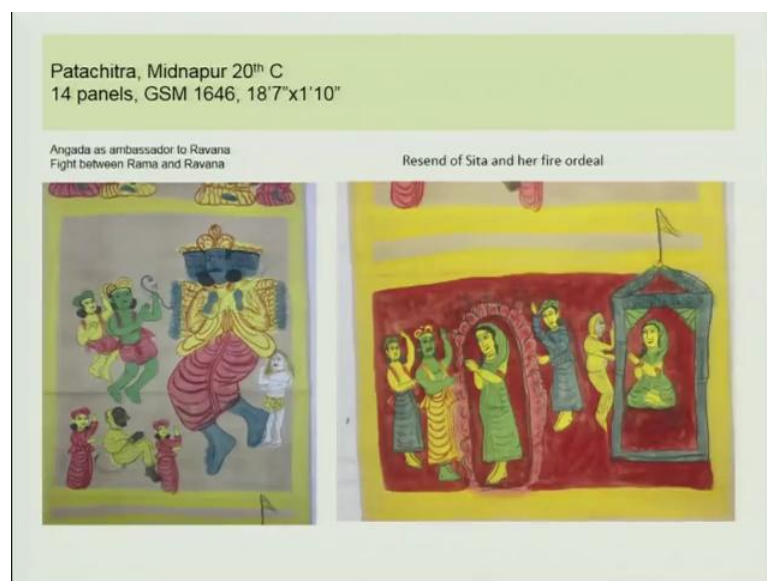
Sita and Ravana ask alms to her Rama's collapse.

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Suparsva attempting to draught the chariot of Ravana, Jatayu relating story of abduction of Sita to Rama. The monkey army of Rama at the gate of Sanaka.

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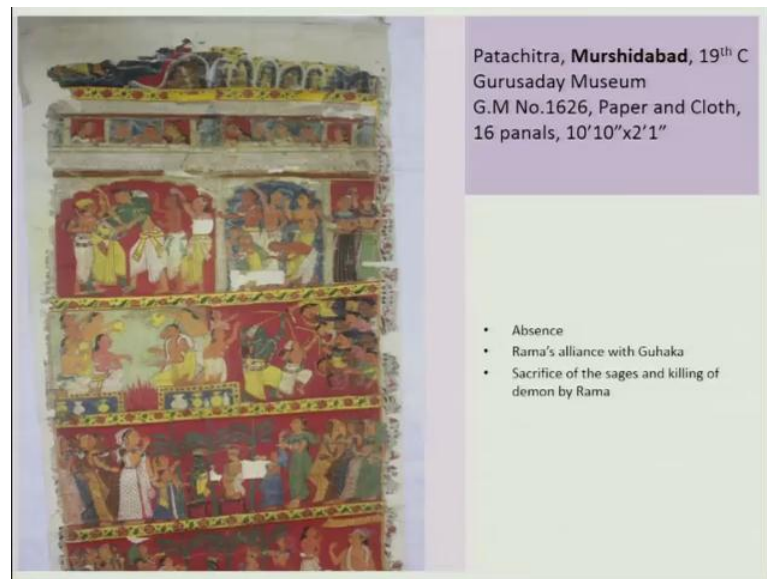


Angada as ambassador to Ravana. Fight between Rama and Ravana resend of Sita and her fire ordeal. All the Midnapore has become the center now; the village named a Nayagram is the place where the entire attention is going in today's time and they are evolved in terms of the figuration the subject matters and the ductility of new subject matters new sensibilities; that is the core of folk card. That it should be in a constant mode of change and it is with a same energy and no stiffness from any side it is flourishing like anything.

So, that was a very old form of the same region where they use that they are keeping up with the same amount of spontaneity the kind of yellow the florescent yellow that we have seen in the previous pictures, as well as the figuration the line the kind of spontaneity and the study it spontaneity that it shown in the pictures are quite significant in that regard. So, I would like you to spend some more time and see the images so that you can make out that how different they are stylistically. And I am picking up the art works of purpose fully chosen the art works which are very distinctive when their stylistic identity, they can stand out as visual identities of particular region which are quite closed by.

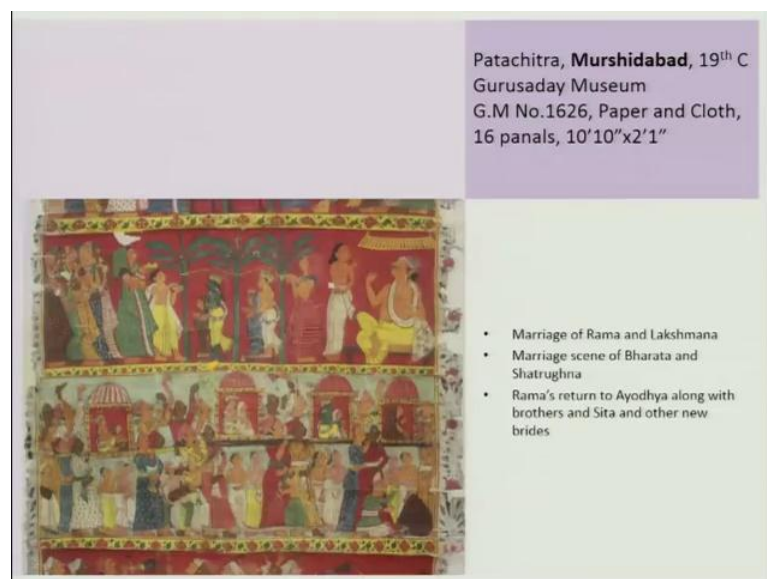
So, next we are going to see the Patachitra with a same theme again of Ramayana from another district which is also very closed by that is Murshidabad. And this Patachitra is also collected by Gurusaday Dutt in 19th Century and it is made a 19th Century.

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So, that is the let us see it is a 16 panel image which is 10 feet 10 inches by 2 feet 1 inch. So, what we see in the frame that is the beginning we see the absence Rama's alliance to Guhaka sacrifice of the sages and killing of demon by Rama.

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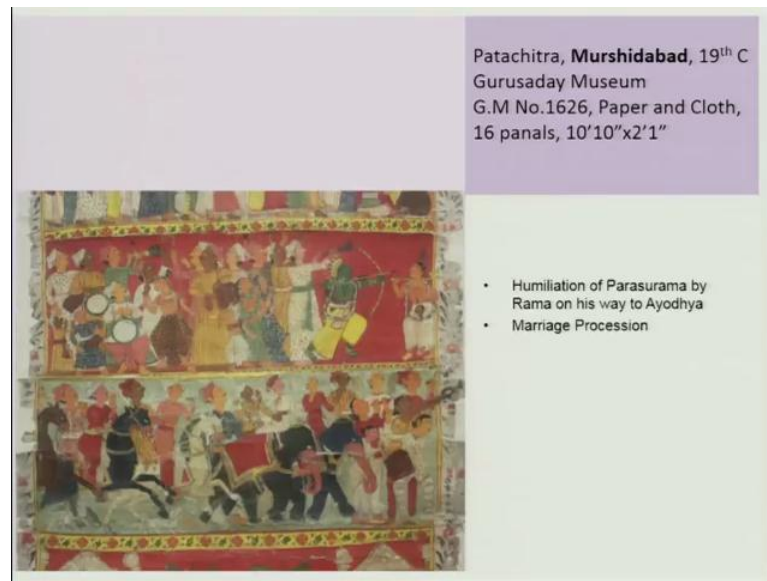
Marriage of Rama and Lakshmana. Marriage seen of Bharata and Shatrughna; the four brothers. Rama's return to Ayodhya along with brothers and Sita and other new brides, I mentioned this in some previous comments, but now this is the example that I would like you to see for a longer time. But the Dasharath image here and also the draperies the other characters they have a strong regional identity.

The kind of costumes they are wearing the typical of that region which is the Bengali cast terms and rituals that are added here. And it is so makes them style that we also see a strong Western Indian influence in the figuration the kind of sophistication that is found in this art works are there it is very different from the earlier one that we have seen from Midnapore or even from Berbhum.

So, what we see here is again the flat colored base which is also made in Indian red. And the figures are all going in one direction in a symmetrical order which provides it with the lot of dynamism. And it is also there that the figurations the well defined contours are filled up with flat colors and by creating contrast the figures are mostly made, but this is also true that the kind of figurations are extremely influenced by the 5th Century narrative panels of Ajanta and I think it has come here through the Western Indian Rajasthan in nature paintings because Murshidabad was the center of the ruling authorities. And they commissioned many artists from the Western India especially from Rajasthan.

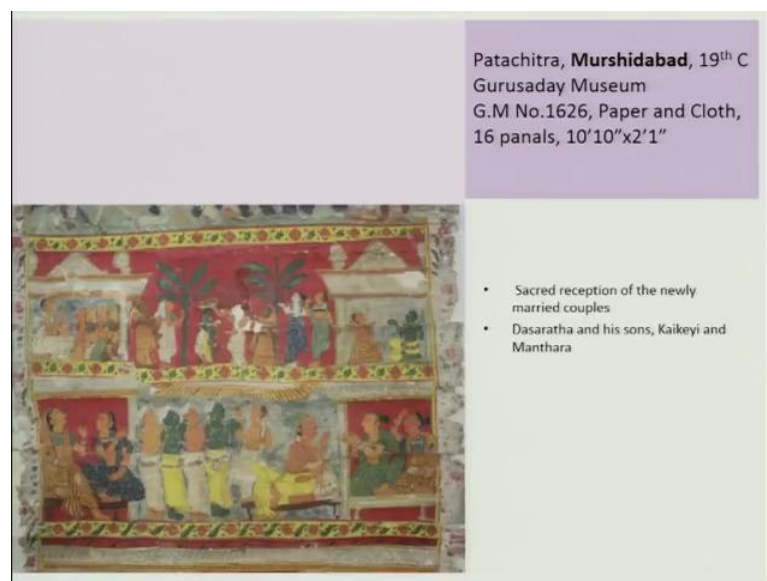
So, their art perhaps some influence from that side which is come through the coat painters and that give it this kind of a sophistication and also in the border of the painting we see that things are much more naturalistic and also idealistic as compare to the Patachitras of the same subject that we have seen from Berbhum and Midnapore previously.

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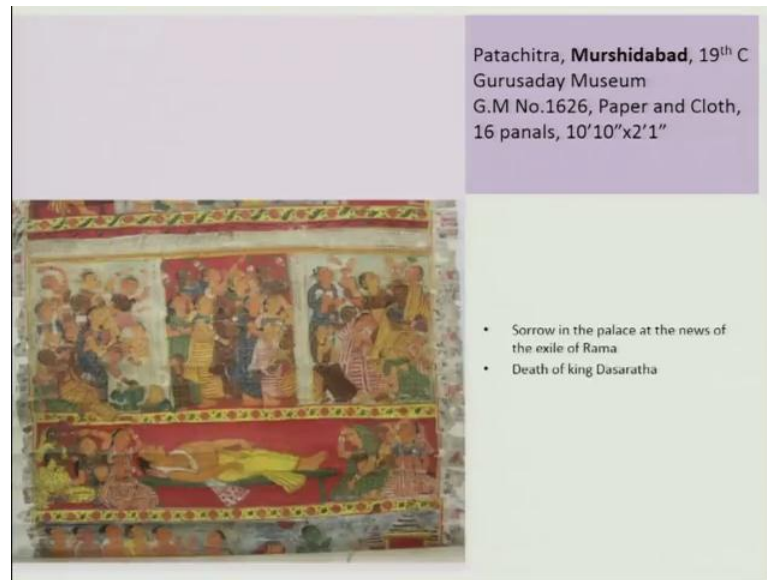
In the next frame the humiliation of Parasurama by Rama on his way to Ayodhya then the marriage procession. See the dynamism and the symmetry in the character it is very forceful there are overlapping with minimum sense of death.

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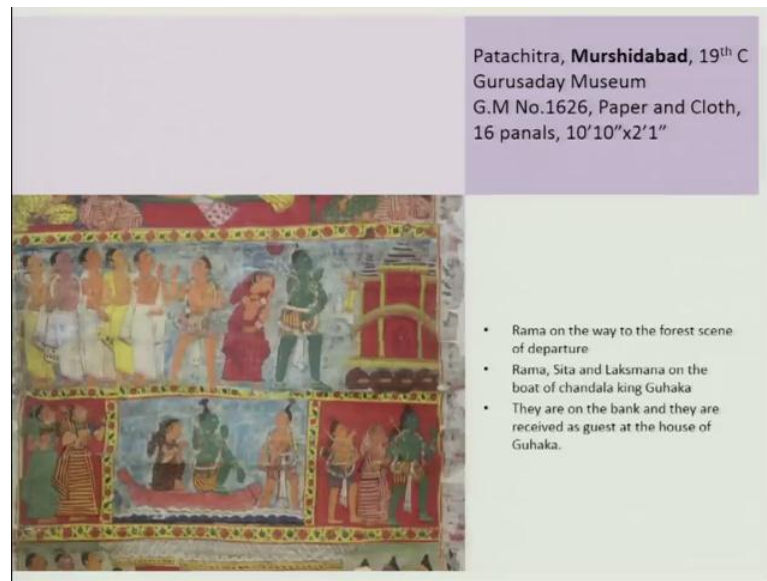
The sacred reception of the newly married couples, Dasharatha and his son Kaikeyi and Manthara same in the picture; that textiles in many places have resemblance with the local woven cloths of Bengal at that time.

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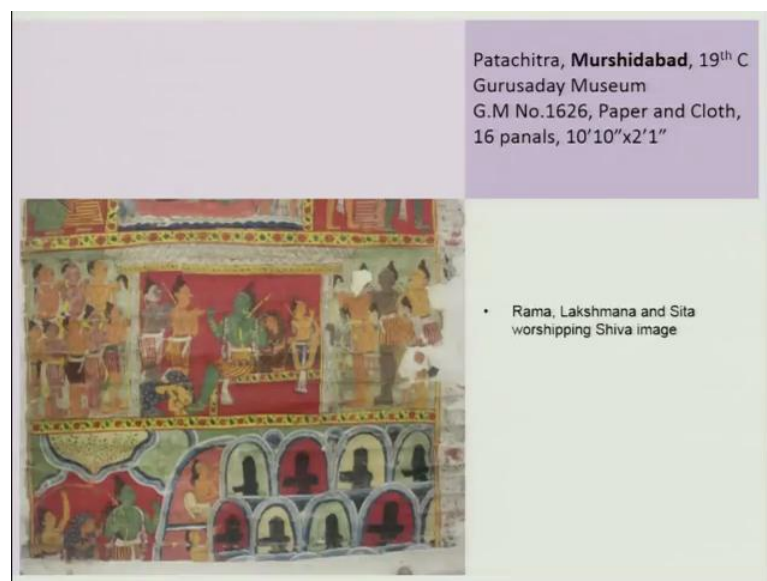
Sorrow in the palace at the news of the exile of Ramam, Death of King Dasharatha and everybody lamenting all around.

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Rama on the way to the forest scene that is the scene of departure; Rama, Sita and Lakshmana on the boat of chandala King Guhaka; they are on the bank and they have received as guest at the house of Guhaka.

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Rama Lakshmana and Sita worshipping Shiva image and the scroll end here.

So, what we have seen in the images significant for a point that we must also see that the area wise divisions are much more limited here they had been some restriction perhaps in all those zones to maintain the identity, so they preserved their cultural identity in all those small little zones, whereas right now it is spreaded and it is evolving in a very rapid way. We get to see that there is incorporation of newer elements in the art works which are not often very religious like in terms of the subject matter.

So with that in the next lecture we are going to see another tradition just to realize how they were restricted. To understand all those things I am again taking help of k study that is done in Raghurajpur Orissa in our next lecture.