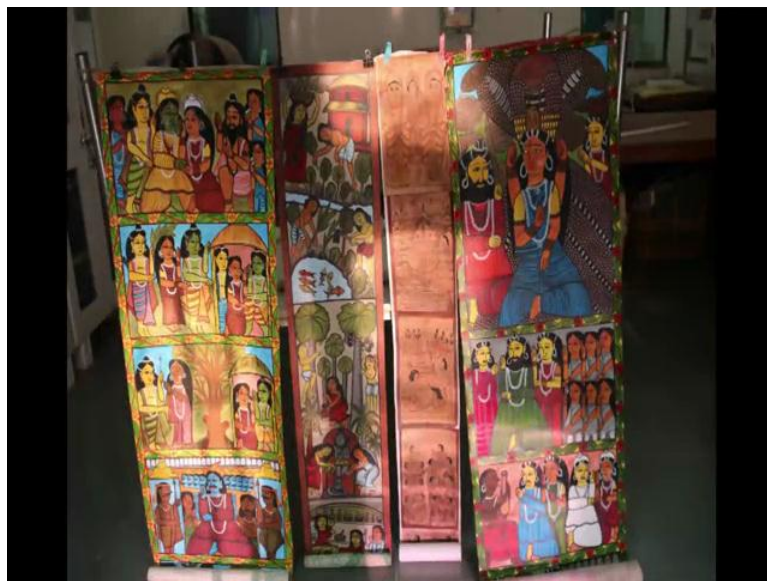


Folk and Minor Art in India
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Lecture - 29
Case study-2: Bengal Pattachitra

Hello. Welcome to the second case study of the course folk and minor art in India. Now this case study is about the Pattachitra addition of West Bengal. In the first part of this lecture I will give an overall look at the tradition, and the second part will deal with works of two particular artists. Now Pattachitra scroll painting which is a form of folk art which comes from the eastern part of India, mainly from the states of West Bengal and Orissa. The Bengalis scroll tradition is an ancient one, featuring single image paintings or long vertical multi paneled scrolls which are known as pats.

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Now, painted parts of rural Bengal are one of the few genuine narrative pictorial folk arts which has survived down to the present century. Now the Patua the artist he is kind of minstrel a religious preacher who employs these paintings as means to propagate his religion.

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And also to earn livelihood as a wandering story teller. Patuas are a community of itinerant scroll painters and singers residing in West Bengal. In the districts of Murshidabad, (Refer Time: 02:01), Bankura, Hooghly, Bardhaman and Magnipur district. A scroll painter is known in West Bengal as Patua, Chitrakar, Pratikar or Patidar.

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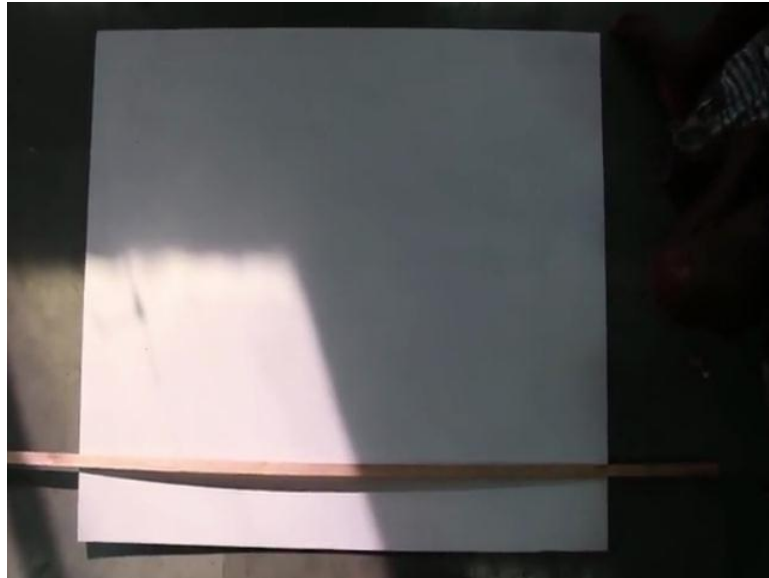
Now, scroll painting has also been in an important device through which both oral and written epics are narrated.

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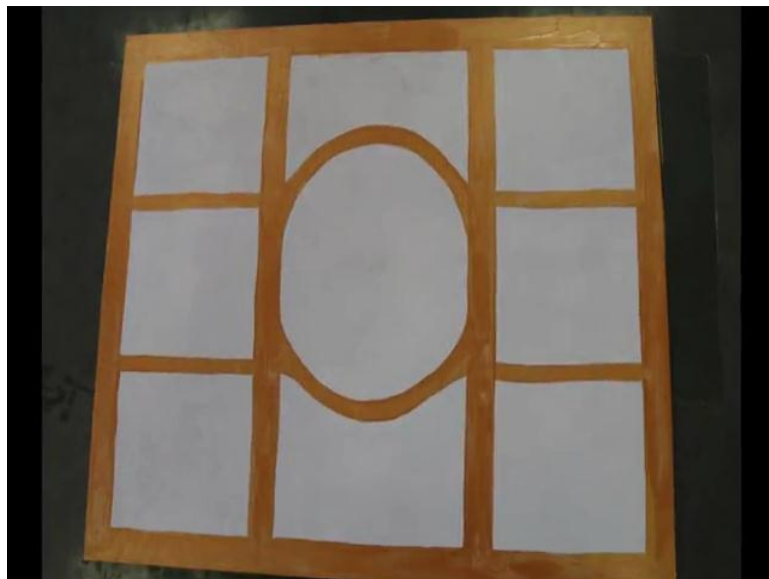
He grows from village to village carrying these scrolls from door to door and depending on peoples request particular stories would be narrated for a small feed. Now this is how the tradition has continued over the centuries.

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The scrolls are done on sheets of paper which assume together and are sometimes stuck on canvas or cloth. This craft is made on a cloth which is treated with cow dung, lack or black earth.

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Now this treatment what it does is that it makes the cloth thick, thereby making it easy to

work upon and also giving it longevity and stability. The width of a Patua of a pat can go from 4 to 14 inches, and the length which often is seen to be around 3 feet also be can also exceed 15 feet.

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The subjects painted by the Patuas in West Bengal are extremely varied. The themes are often inspired by the secret texts of Hindu religion. They also portray political subjects which are given to them by the local authorities like the re-groupings of the lands or a certain current government initiatives like family planning.

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The outlines of the figures in Bengal pat are generally made in black, which are derived from lamp black and red.

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The scroll paintings are then painted using vegetable colors which not only make the paintings very bright, but also add life to the scroll paintings.

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These paintings are therefore bright and vibrant even if they are 50 or 60 years old. The subjects of these scroll paintings are religious and stories also taken from everyday life as mentioned before. And the Pattachitra trad practitioners have a unique style of presenting. Their craft the Patidas they go to different villages and convey the stories of these paintings with songs and music.

The scroll paintings often illustrate scenes from Ramayana and Bhagwat Puran and other popular Hindu mythological stories which play an important part in the oral transmission of tradition. And nowadays stud stories featuring birds, animals, snakes and fishes also very common. In the past as was the general practice at fairs or at weekly bazaars or the hearts the vendors displayed the pats and sang songs to describe the story described in the scroll to attract buyers. Such a display of song and narrative story telling entertain the common people many of whom then buy the painters scrolls to decorate their homes in and also having religious references a part of it.

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The practice still continues though the community of these is gifted artists is a shrinking one as a result of economic heart shape. As nowadays story telling is not a popular form of entertainment anymore even in rural areas and also due to lack of patronage.

Ramayana is still the most popular of the continuing older traditions and still occupies an important part of the Repatua, both in terms of the paintings as well as the performances regardless of the religious affiliations of the artist. Ramayana in pat is sung by displaying the paintings of the characters and singing their stories. For example, Vanvas and Seeta haran are the most popular among the stories which are painted in some. And Jatayu is also quoted as an important character.

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Now, moving on to the second part of this lecture which deals with the art and life of two specific artists who recently work in IIT Kanpur campus, they were Farid Chitrakar and Shiraj Chitrakar cousin brothers who belonged from a community of Patua artists from district Midnapore from West Bengal.

Now discussions in interviews with them, revealed interesting insides into the life of a folk artist. They learn this craft as a family activity as both male and female child of every family of the community is taught the art of making Patachitra.

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And though belonging to Midnapore this community paints in different styles of Patachitra paintings like Santhal style, Kalighat style, Shakuntala style, Murshidabad style. Now with the advent of time and modernism a different styles are being lost and only a few major ones like that of Kalighat and Midnapore are surviving.

Now, Farid and Shiraj they often paint stories from the lives of anthropomorphic, fishes and animals.

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For example, fish marriages were seen as subject from in one of the paintings. Other major subjects are they portrait include stories from a Ramayana Mahabharata stories from life of Durga or Mahisha Devi, and usage of symbols of birds and symbol as metaphor for real life. Now new stories are being depicted like life of a fish or life of a tree and also other topics like tribal dancers, festivals, and ceremonies like marriages. Now these depictions of new ideas and elements and stories are driven by market, market demand as it sells more so it is painted more.

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Like for an example Sankal marriage, was depicted in our painting which was painted in the style of Sankal tradition; it was a scene of celebration when the newly married couple is taken to the home in a Palankin while in the background people belonging to all age groups are seen drinking, singing, and dancing, and celebrating the marriage festival. Nowadays because of market demand and the buyers getting more aware subjects from current of year are also taken. For example, a big events like September 11 or (Refer Time: 10:54) in nearby areas like Nandigram Fightings are also being depicted in the as painted stories.

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Now, interestingly these two Chitrakar's they belong to Muslim community, but they draw Hindu Gods and Goddesses and stories of them, as they believe in worship of all Gods. Now this is specific to Bengal Patachitra tradition as during the 18th Century Mughal rule a large number of farmers embraced Islam as Muslim rulers had put the in famous tax which was known as Jizya on certain Non-Muslim communities of farmers. Now to avoid that tax a large number of Hindu farmers became Muslim. But their way of life did not undergo any change. So, in West Bengal and in Bangladesh there is a huge number of Muslim farmers having this history.

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Now the families of Farid and Shiraj they have been making Patachitra since the last 7 generations. And often vegetable colors are used which are very vibrant and also have very long life

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One example of that is deriving of yellow colors from which is made from haldi powder

and they paint on a paper which is stuck on a cloth to make it steady and more stable which then can live on for decades. And this particular Midnapore tradition their business on market is majorly in Kolkata. There is also a yearly Shilp Mela in Kolkata in which five thousands or so artists of and different crafts men from different art and craft addition together and sell crafts like bamboo craft and clothes flow, mat, mats, etcetera.

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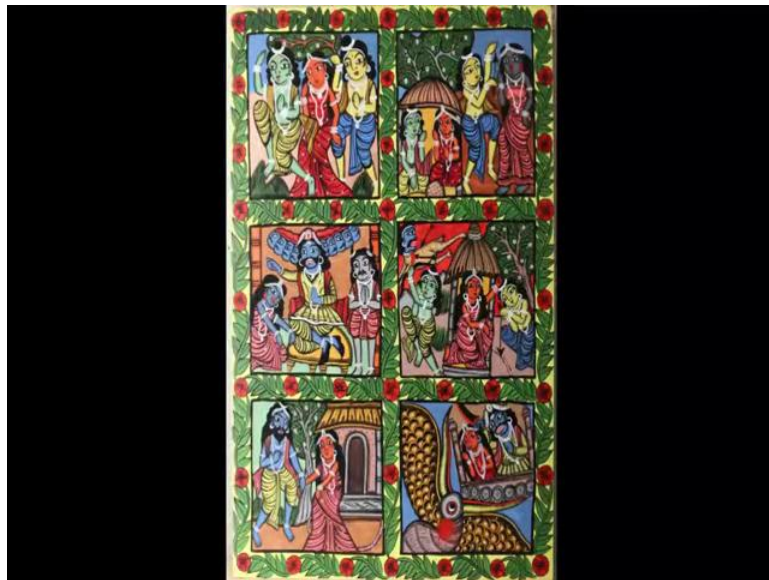
And now this community after having discussions from NGOs and who are working for the promotion of folk art forms are expanding into making a decorated variables like kurtas, sarees and t-shirts.

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And other items of use are also being painted upon like umbrellas or shoulder bags.

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So, in conclusion Bengal Patachitra folk art form is flourishing as it still has a large number of practicing artists. They are selling their works in good number, but sustenance based only on creating art is no longer ascertain on a viable option as it used in the past

when rural areas dint have other forms of entertainment like mobile phones or television. So, government done private (Refer Time: 14:07) still a requirement for proper sustenance and continuation of these very art forms.

Thank you.