

**FOLK ART AT THE CROSSROADS OF
TRADITION AND MODERNITY:
A STUDY OF *PATTA* PAINTING IN ORISSA**

MAMATA TRIPATHY

PATTA painting, or *patta chitra*, is one of the typical regional arts of the coastal state of Orissa in eastern India. Like any other form of painting, irrespective of time and space, it possesses its own set of meanings and purposes. In particular, it expresses some of the religious and mythological aspects of Oriya culture, focusing on the Hindu epics in general, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and the Jagannath cult in particular.

Patta painting is of linear design, vegetable pigments being applied to a specially prepared cloth using a brush. Although overtly religious, it does not simply express a set of religious ideas or values and is much more than a merely visual art to be looked at and be appreciated: it expresses a whole set of beliefs and practices relating to life and death held by the artisans themselves. Traditionally it was practised only by the Chitrakara caste as their caste occupation. However, although it has retained its basic characteristics, it has been affected by the advent of science and technology as well as other aspects of modernization in the twentieth century. This has had an impact in terms of technology, the materials used, commercialization, and the use of the craft. To some extent, therefore, *patta* painting is at the

crossroads of tradition and modernity, a situation that heralds a uncertain future for the craft. My paper is a brief discussion of this situation.¹

Although Chitrakaras are found at many places in Orissa, like Sonepur, Parlakhemundi and Cuttack, their major concentration is at Raghurajpur and Puri. I have taken Raghurajpur as my study area. This hamlet, in Malatipatpur *gram-panchayat* of Puri Sadar *tehsil* in the district of Puri, 13 km away from the nearest bus stop at Chandanpur and 46 km from the state capital, Bhubaneswar, along state highway 8, has 106 Chitrakaras, that is, 21.41% of the local population. The data used in my paper were collected empirically through observation, interviews, group discussions, and case-study methods.

Patta Painting

Patta painting is done on a piece of primed paper or cloth called a *patta*. The term has other meanings. According to the artists themselves, in the remote past painting was done with a brush prepared from locally available screw-pine wood called *patta*. Others say that the style of painting was traditionally done on a piece of wood called a *patta*. However, the first explanation seems more authentic and is universally accepted by both artists and commentators. The use of cloth as the base on which the painting is carried out dates mythologically back to a period long in the past, the age of Dwapara, when Radha drew a picture on her letter to Krishna. Yet others argue that this style of painting is only as old as the introduction of paper in the world. In this view, in the remote past walls were the only medium of painting, on which were depicted various Hindu or tribal gods and goddesses. With the introduction of paper, however, these paintings were transcribed on to it, which the artists carried from place to place. These paintings were called *patta chitras*, and the groups who adopted this form of painting as their caste occupation became known as Chitrakaras.

Ritual Aspects of *Patta* Painting

In Orissa, *patta* painting owes its popularity to the Jagannath cult, with which it has long been intimately associated. The image of Jagannath is carved out of *margosa* wood and painted by members of the Chitrakara caste, who were brought to Puri from various places as the servants of Jagannath. Besides painting the walls and images, they also provide various other paintings, also called *patta*, for the temple on various occasions. Since it is believed that all the thirty-six crore (360

¹ Editorial note: a companion article on appliqué work in Orissa appeared in an earlier issue of *JASO*; see Samal 1998.

million) deities of the Hindus are worshipped in the Jagannath temple complex at Puri, the number of festivals celebrated there is very considerable.

Patta paintings of different deities are worshipped on a number of occasions in the Jagannath temple complex. One popular type of *patta* painting is the *anasara patti*. From the celestial bath on Snana Purnima (the full-moon day in the month of *jyestha* (May–June) until the day of the famous Ratha Yatra, the Car festival (held on the new-moon day in the month of *ashadha* (June–July), the supreme triad (Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra) are believed to suffer from fever and are ‘treated’ in a separate room called the *anasara ghara*. During this celestial bath, 108 pots of water are poured over each deity. As a result, the painted colours on the images are washed away, so that the images are kept in the *anasara ghara* for repainting for fifteen days. During this period, when the images are absent from the *ratna singhasana* (the inner sanctuary), three large *patta* paintings of the trinity are kept inside the main shrine, as proxies of them which can be worshipped. These paintings are called *anasara patti*.

Besides the *anasara patti*, other *patta* paintings worshipped in the temple on various occasions include the *krishna patti*, *patta* paintings of Krishna worshipped on his birthday, the twelfth day of ‘dark fortnight’ in the month of *bhadrav* (August–September); the *bamana patti*, a painting of Bamana, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, worshipped on his birthday, the twelfth day of dark fortnight in the month of *bhadrav* (August–September); and the *kandarpa patti*, paintings of Kandarpa worshipped on the twelfth and thirteen days of the bright fortnight in the month of *chaitra* (March–April) for the welfare of the state. Thus, *patta* painting is an important part of the Jagannath cult and is required in one form or other for temple rituals throughout the year. Other *patta* paintings, like *yama patti*, a painting of Yama, the god of death, and *usha kothi*, depicting the story of the Goddess Mangala, are worshipped by Hindu women at other places in Orissa on the occasion of Sabitri Amabasya, the new-moon day in the month of *jyestha* (May–June), and Mangala Puja, on each Thursday of the dark fortnight of *aswina* (September–October) respectively. This shows that the tradition of *patta* painting is general to the religious traditions of Orissa, even though its origin can be traced back to the Jagannath cult specifically.

The main colours used in *patta* painting are same as those used for painting the trinity, namely *sankha* (white), *hengula* (red), *neli* (blue), *pocha* (green), *haritala* (yellow), *kala* (black), and *geru* (ochre). The sequence and technique involved in the application of colours are the same for both the trinity and *patta* paintings.

The paintings are usually based on myths in chronological order. The theme of the painting is usually dominated by Jagannath in his different postures in the Jagannath temple at Puri or Krishna and his different sacred activities. In case of the *jatripattis*, which are the earliest form of *patta* painting, the motifs associated with the trinity always occur at the centre of the smaller paintings, while the trinity

themselves are found inside the temple in comparatively larger paintings. Apart from the *jatripattis*, there are also other paintings showing Vishnu in his various incarnations, Shiva and Ganesha, the goddesses Durga and Kali, etc. Sometimes episodes from the *Ramayana* are also painted. However, the most popular motif found in *patta* painting is Krishna in his different postures and in different activities and episodes from his life, usually accompanied by his fiancée Radha in the smaller paintings. Krishna is also painted as a child, called Bala Gopala or Bala Krishna. Smaller paintings also depict different incarnations of Vishnu (of whom Krishna is himself actually one) and episodes from the *Mahabharata* and another popular sacred text, the *Gita*. These details show that *patta* painting is largely associated with the god Vishnu.

The Sociocultural Context: The Chitrakaras as a Caste

Mythologically the Chitrakaras are believed to be the descendants of Biswakarma, the celestial architect of the Hindus, as described in the *Bramhavaibarta Purana*. They are put in the Shudra category in another Sanskrit text, the *Jatibhaskara*, which describes the Hindu caste system. While Sterling (1846: 305–38) puts Chitrakaras under the Shudra *varna*, Dasa (1982) says that even among Shudras they hold a low position. The Chitrakaras place themselves fourth in the local caste hierarchy. Being closely associated with the Jagannath cult, the Chitrakara population is found all over the 24 Godjats (feudatory states) of Orissa, wherever there is a Jagannath temple. Apart from Sonepur, Cuttack, Athagarh, Chikiti, and Parlakhemundi, the highest concentrations of Chitrakaras are at Raghurajpur and Puri. According to the Jagannath temple chronicle, they were first brought to Puri by the emperor Anangabhimha Deva II to carry out all the painting required for the temple, which gave Chitrakara families tax-free lands. In addition, they also earn their livelihood by selling *patta* paintings of different sizes depicting the trinity of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra to devotees and tourists visiting Puri. Apart from its association with the Jagannath cult, the style and artistic expression of *patta* painting is fostered and maintained by the social and cultural environment of the Chitrakaras. There exists a strong nexus between the social life of the Chitrakaras and their caste occupation of *patta* painting. The craft pervades all the aspects of their lives, to such an extent that the social system of the caste group is very much dependent on the craft.

Patta painting, being religious in origin and the main source of the caste's livelihood, is fundamental in terms of caste solidarity. Traditionally the artists used to collect raw materials in nearby forests in groups, for protection as well as for mutual support in doing the work. Caste activities among the women act to ensure solidarity and as a medium for circulating news inside and outside the village. Women rely on men to learn about different episodes from the various epics, partly because they do not have access to the temple itself. The marketing of the

craft also calls for group co-operation. In the past, due to poor communications, the artists used to take their products to far-off places either by bullock cart or carried on the head. In the case of the bullock cart, usually one cart was shared by a group of artisans to transport their products. While going by foot with head-loads of paintings too, they preferred to go in groups. Thus, *patta* painting has always been a collective effort.

Chitrakara society is subdivided into three groups or *badas* named after the deities of the trinity: Jagannath *bada*, Balabhadra or Badathakura (meaning 'eldest deity') *bada*, and Subhadra *bada*. The members of each group, under a separate chief, shoulder the responsibility for taking care of their respective deities by, for example, supplying the respective *anasara pattis*, colouring the images and their cars on the occasion of the Car festival, and painting the deities throughout the year as necessary. Marriage in Chitrakara society is also directly governed by the craft. In the past, in order to safeguard the religious sanctity of the craft, marriage was not allowed outside Puri town. In course of time, even though marriage ties have been formed outside Puri, knowledge of *patta* painting was considered one of the major criteria for selecting a spouse. One of the main features informing the uniqueness of the craft is that *patta* painting is a family or household craft. All of the procedures involved in *patta* painting are carried out by different members of the same household. Every member of the Chitrakara family, irrespective of sex, contributes to the painting work under the guidance of the family head or senior adult male member. All the major prerequisites for the painting, like the canvas, colour, brushes etc., were traditionally prepared within the Chitrakara family.

Canvas

In the remote past, primed paper was used as the base of the painting. Then paintings of different sizes were produced, which were basically meant for the devotees or *jatris* coming from far and wide, who used to take these paintings back with them as souvenirs of the pilgrimage. They also used to worship these at home as representatives of the trinity. These paintings are called *jatri pattis* (from *jatri* 'pilgrim', plus *patti* 'painting').

In course of time, the Chitrakaras used primed cloth as the base or canvas for the painting work. This canvas was prepared by applying tamarind glue (prepared from tamarind seeds) and chalk solution on clean cotton saris or dhotis in two or three layers. The preparation of such canvases requires skilled knowledge.

The process has the following four stages: (1) preparation of glue from tamarind seed; (2) preparation of chalk power solution; (3) application of glue and chalk powder over the cloth; and (4) polishing the surface of the primed cloth by rubbing it with a stone, which makes it very smooth for painting.

In order to prepare the canvas further, a clean cotton sari or cloth about 5–5.5 metres in length is taken and the thin borders cut off. Then the sari or cloth is cut

into two equal halves and spread lengthways over a plain mat. Tamarind glue is thickly and uniformly applied to the cloth with the help of another piece of cloth. The other half is then spread over the first by two people. Utmost care is taken so that no crease is left between the two layers of cloth. Another thick coat of tamarind glue is applied on this second layer and left to dry. After it has dried thoroughly, the cloth is gently taken away from the mat. This primed cloth, locally called a *patti*, is kept under the sun for a day or two to dry better. Sometimes three layers of cloth are used to make the *patti* stronger and more durable. Once the *patti* has dried thoroughly, a solution of chalk powder is applied on both the sides with a piece of cloth and left to dry. Two or three such coatings of chalk solution are applied, with an interval for drying each time, to make the canvas more perfect and thus reduce the amount of colour consumed in painting.

After this the last phase of preparation begins, that is, smoothing the canvas, which is locally called a *pattighasa*. The canvas or *patti* with chalk solution on it has a white but rough surface which needs polishing properly to be rendered suitable for being painted. For this the canvas is spread on the cleaned floor and rubbed in two phases, first with a rough surfaced stone called *bagada barada*, and then with a comparatively smooth and polished stone called *chikkana barada*, till the surface of the canvas becomes completely polished and fit to be painted. A small amount of chalk-powder solution is applied with tamarind glue to give the *patti* a more glazed effect. This preparation of the canvas takes quite a long time and is carried out by both male and female members of the Chitrakara family. Preparation of the tamarind glue and the chalk-powder solution, as well as smoothing the surface, are usually done by the women, while the preparation of the canvas itself, that is, the application of tamarind glue and chalk-powder solution to the cotton cloth, is carried out by the men.

In preparing the tamarind glue, insect-free, good-quality seeds are soaked in water overnight and are then made into pulp by grinding. The pulp is then mixed with water in a 1:2 ratio and is kept on the hearth for 30–45 minutes until it becomes sticky and semi-solid. In preparing the chalk solution, a white chalk locally called *khadi pathara* is ground to a fine powder and mixed well with water in a 1:2 ratio. To make it sticky 400 gm of tamarind glue is mixed together with 1 kg of chalk powder.

Colour

The colours used in *patta* painting have their own symbolic associations. All the basic colours are prepared by the artisans themselves at their home. Since *patta* painting was traditionally exclusively sacred in nature and owes its birth to the Jagannath cult, there seems to be a coherent correlation between the colour scheme used in *patta* painting and the colours used for the Jagannath trinity. The way the Chitrakaras analyse the colours centred round the Jagannath cult. Instead of the

three primary colours in the scientific sense, namely red, blue, and yellow, there are six in the tradition of *patta* painting, which are directly used for the supreme triad. These are (i) white (*sankha*), (ii) black (*kola*), (iii) cinnabar (*hengula*), (iv) yellow (*haritala*), (v) ochre (*geru*), and (vi) green (*pacha*).

These colours are all prepared at home from natural resources, like conch shells, leaves, or mineral stones, following processing. White is prepared from conch shells, which are ground into very tiny pieces and soaked with water. This pulp is then boiled twice or more to obtain the white colour. Black is prepared by mixing the soot of a kerosene lamp with locally available *polanga* or coconut oil. Cinnabar, yellow, and ochre are prepared from different minerals, which are ground to fine powder before water is added, along with a little extract from the elephant-apple tree in different proportions for the different colours, the whole being mixed well until it becomes even and uniform. All these colours are stored in the form of capsules. Apart from these six basic colours, all the compound colours are prepared by mixing the basic colours in specific proportions.

Application of Colour

Chitrakarars strictly follow the Hindu *sastras* and *puranas* while applying colours to the motifs of gods and goddesses. Generally, all goddesses are painted yellow, while the gods are painted white. However, in an individual painting, i.e. a painting depicting only one god or goddess, he or she is coloured according to the descriptions given by the Hindu scriptures. For example, Krishna is always painted blue, Ramachandra white or light blue, Ganesha white or off-white, and the goddess Saraswati white. Balabhadra, Jagannath, Devi Subhadra, and the goddesses Lakshmi and Sabitri are always painted white, while the goddesses Mangala, Radha, and sometimes Sita are painted yellow, which represents their fairness.

Regarding the colour of the garments worn by the deities, the artist is free to exercise his discretion in colour schemes, barring a few provisions. For example, the clothes of *rishis* and *sanyasis* who have renounced the material world is usually ochre or orange. The yellow cloth or *pitta basana* is always associated with Krishna. Since, like Krishna, Ramachandra is considered to be another incarnation of Vishnu, the usual colour used for his garment is also yellow. Similarly, as, according to Hindu scriptures, Shiva used a tiger's skin for his attire, his garment is dark yellow with dark brown or black spots.

The colour of the garments of Brahma and Vishnu is usually white. However, in Hindu mythology, all male deities are painted with the upper half of their bodies bare except for the long folded cloth on their shoulder called *uttari*. There is no strict colour scheme for the *uttari*, except those of Brahma and Vishnu, who are never painted without an *uttari*. The dress colour of almost all court attendants in a court scene is usually found to be white.

Except for Saraswati, who is always attired in white, the Chitrakara displays his artistry by painting the sari and blouse of female deities or figures in various bright colours. Usually, to make paintings attractive and colourful, deep red is used with any brightly coloured border in painting these saris. Red saris with a gold or other bright colour print over it wrapped round the yellow body of female figures are used, as well as other bright colours, like maroon, yellow, green, or blue—but never black—to paint the attire of any female figures. Deep yellow is used to paint various ornaments of both male and female figures. Colours like red and green are used to represent precious stones in their ornaments. Traditionally cinnabar was the usual colour for the background.

As the number of colours was limited and the Chitrakaras were less exposed to Hindu scriptures as well as to the outer world, due to their lack of education and difficulties of communication, there was little variation in the colour schemes of *patta* painting. Traditional *patta* paintings exhibit a high degree of homogeneity in their colour schemes.

Brushes

Unlike other paintings, *patta* painting is done with a special kind of brush. Traditionally the brushes were made by crushing a portion of the root of the screw-pine, locally called *kia kathi*. The body hair of different animals, like the buffalo, mongoose, and farm rat, was also used. The body hairs of the buffalo are used for thick brushes, while those of the mongoose and farm rat are used for thin brushes. First of all hairs 2.5–3 inches long are collected from the body of animals, from the ears or the end of the tail of the buffalo, and from the back of farm rats or field rats and mongooses, where the hairs are smoother. After cleaning the hairs thoroughly, the required quantity, i.e. 30–40 for thick brushes and 8–10 for thin brushes, are tied with thread at one end. A very little tamarind glue is applied to the hairs to make them strong. Then one bamboo stick is split up to 1.5 inches of its length and the tied end of the hairs inserted into it. The bamboo stick is then tied up tightly by thread from the outside so that the hairs are held tightly inside the bamboo. To make the whole more tight and permanent, the outer part of the stick is coated with glue from the elephant-apple tree.

The brush tips are placed carefully in fire to sharpen them. Different brushes are used for different colours and purposes. For example, a thick brush is used to colour the background of the canvas and body of the figures. Thin brushes are used for ornamentation, primary thick black lining etc. The thinnest brush, made of five or six hairs of the farm rat, is used for the final black thin lining. It is difficult to handle the latter type, which requires much expertise.

Traditionally the brushes were kept inside a bamboo container, locally called a *nala*. This was prepared from a hollow bamboo stem. A section from a bamboo

tree, open only at one end, is collected and dried for nearly a week. Then the outside is polished and it is used as a brush container.

Traditional Items and Types of *Patta* Painting

Jatripatti (painting meant exclusively for pilgrims)

In the past the only form of *patta* painting available on the market were *jatripattis*, painted on both primed paper and cloth of various shapes and sizes. It basically depicts the trinity in different postures and the architecture of the Jagannath temple at Puri.

These *jatripattis* are named differently according to their shape and size, for example, *anguthi* (circular shape of finger-tip size), *gola* (circular type), *pancha mandiria* (depicting five temples), and *sankhanavi* (depicting the temple's architecture on a conch-shell painting).

Ganjapa

These are circular paintings 1.2–2 cm in diameter, used as playing cards in earlier times. They were first adopted exclusively by royal or aristocratic families but later became very popular among rural people.

One set of *ganjapa* usually consists of 96 cards, sometimes 108 or 112. Each card is an original creation, with lively and diverse illustrations and motifs, which are supposedly never repeated.

Jautuka pedi (dowry box)

In earlier times, brides were given various household items and clothes at the time of their departure from their parents after the marriage ceremony. All these things were placed in an wooden box called a *jautuka* (dowry) *pedi* (box), painted with *patta* paintings. It was customary among the Chitrakaras to give such boxes of various sizes to their brides. It was also popular among other people, though not customary. *Patta* paintings of small size with single figures of gods and goddess were also common. Large paintings depicting various mythological stories were usually acquired by kings, emperors, and *zamindars* (landlords).

Marketing

Traditionally, the marketing of *patta* paintings was exclusively under the control of the adult or elderly male members of the Chitrakara family, who dealt with orders and fixed prices. In those days they had to go to the main road to Puri or to the Jagannath temple to sell their products to the pilgrims, and sometimes to people's homes. Sometimes they also used to sell the paintings in nearby *mela* (religious fairs) or markets. In the past, they used to go from place to place on foot or

by bullock cart, staying for days on end, selling their products. However, since then the craft has become modernized in almost all respects.

Modernity in Patta Painting

Nowadays canvases do not always have to be prepared at home, as they are available in the market or from other artisans. Chitrakaras now also use various other materials for the base of the *patta* painting, to widen their appeal to their customers. *Patta* painting these days takes different forms, and different items are produced for different purposes. The most commonly used bases are:

Tassar cloth. This is one of the most popular alternatives for traditional primed cloth and refers to the painting base. The cloth is prepared from silk cocoons by weavers and is very costly. The same stories are painted in the same patterns as in the traditional primed cloth, and in different sizes. The cloth is first fixed tightly and evenly on a wooden slate or slab with the help of glue around its border, after which it is painted. On completion, two narrow wooden rods are sometimes fixed to both sides of the painting to hang it onto walls. *Tassar* paintings are lighter and occupy comparatively less space than traditional *patta* paintings on primed cloth, making them easier to carry from place to place.

Wood and conch shells. These are also used as base on which *patta* paintings are made. Such articles take the form of various modern appliances, such as pen-stands, letter-stands, ashtrays, glass- and cup-covers, paperweights, etc., whether of wood or conch shells. In the case of both wood and conch shells, one or two coatings of chalk-powder solution are first applied to make the surface fit for painting. As the pieces are small, either small single motifs or floral motifs are painted.

Paper. Traditionally primed paper was used only for *jatripattis* (one of the crude forms of traditional *patta* paintings meant for pilgrims), but nowadays paper bases are used in a different way. Painting is done on sheets of different sizes in the form of greeting cards and invitation cards, which have a great demand and value in the modern market. Large pieces of cardboard are also painted for use in fashionable hotels and restaurants as decorative partitions.

Coconuts. Artists have also started to paint on coconuts, both skinned and unskinned, because of their durability. In the case of skinned coconuts, all the coir is carefully removed from the outer cover and made smooth enough to apply the colour. For both skinned and unskinned coconuts, the inside is first dried out by leaving them out in the sun, after which the painting process may start. The mode of painting and application of colours follow the same procedures as those used in traditional *patta* painting.

Colours are no longer prepared at home, since the traditional methods of preparing colours are very time-consuming. Artists now prefer to use the large variety

of modern colours (enamels or watercolours), which have also increased the range of colour schemes used in *patta* painting. However, paints bought in the market are sometimes mixed at home, increasing the range available still further. Education and increased access to printed and other media has also had an impact in providing a better understanding of the meaning and symbolism of the different colours. Accordingly artists have begun to use different colours for different situations, depending on their own understanding of them. For example, previously the sari of the goddess Sita (the wife of Ramachandra) was usually painted in a number of bright colours. But nowadays she is sometimes painted white to represent Sita in her sorrowful days of separation at Ashoka Bana (the forest where the demon king Ravana kept her after her abduction). Similarly, traditionally the body colour of Ganesh varied from off-white to white. Nowadays he is sometimes painted pink or light pink instead, an idea apparently borrowed from south Indian painting.

Finally, customer demands are another source of change. Traditionally *patta* painting was exclusively connected with the religious traditions of Orissa and was appreciated only by devotees and pilgrims, in the days when paintings were the only means of representing the deity apart from the images themselves. Besides the pilgrims, the devotees usually began their day's work by worshipping them in their homes. Nowadays, however, the number of tourists exceeds that of pilgrims. At the same time, the range of customers for *patta* painting has changed from lower and lower-middle income groups (pilgrims) to upper-middle or upper income groups (tourists), who value the paintings exclusively from an artistic, not a religious point of view, treating them as ethnic decoration for their homes. They are also generally willing to pay a higher price for them, which increases artists' incomes. Gradually many artists almost ceased painting *jatripattis* and started satisfying tourists' demands, which influence, among other things, the use of colour. Nowadays colours like light blue, pink, light green, and blue etc. are used as background instead of the traditional cinnabar, and whereas the borders were formerly painted black, white, ochre, or blue, nowadays black and white have largely given way to yellow, green, red, or maroon in order to attract the new type of customer. Changes are also noticeable in the colours used for the garments of the figures, which sometimes deviate from those described in the Hindu scriptures. For example, the figure of Krishna is not always decorated with yellow cloth, nor Ganesh with his usual white cloth: these can vary according to the choice and demand of the customers. The traditional polished coconut shell has also practically disappeared as a colour container, no longer being needed, as paints are now produced commercially, and bought, in tins. The use of a home-made brush has also become rare. Instead, synthetic or machine-made brushes of different sizes are used, according to purpose. The brush container or *nala*, which was previously made of bamboo, has also been replaced by any tin or plastic container that is available on the market.

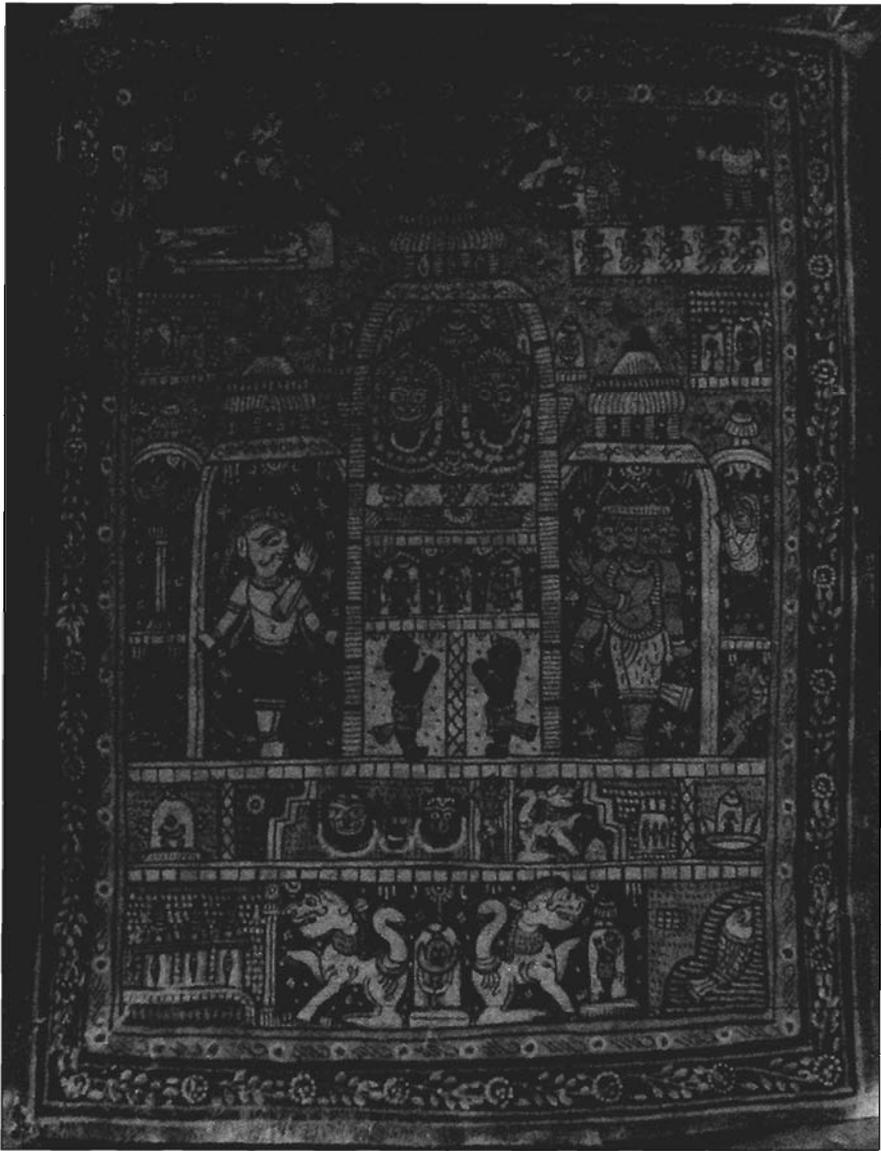


FIG. 1 Panchamandira, a Traditional *Jatripatti*

Types of Painting

Some of the traditional items like *jatripattis* (paintings for pilgrims), *ganjapa*, and the dowry box are now disappearing from the market. On the other hand a large number of new paintings and items have been added to this type of art. Paintings

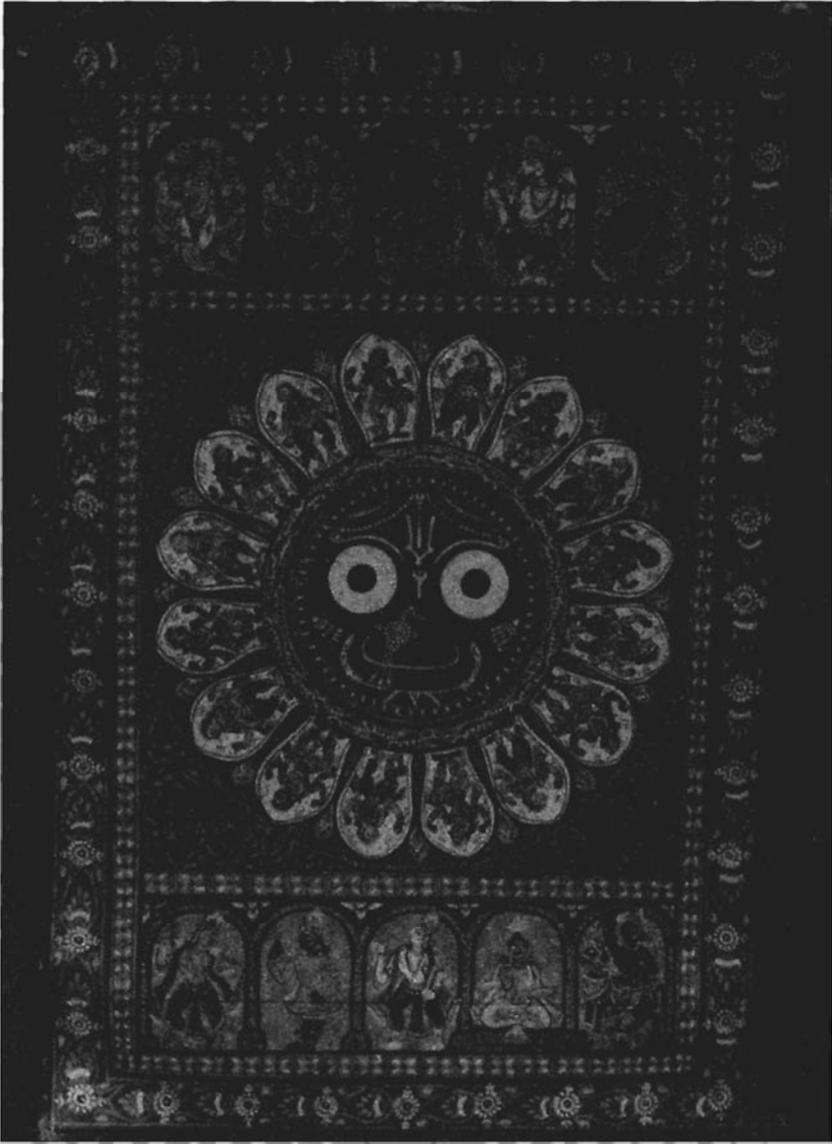


FIG. 2 Lord Jagannath: A Modern Painting

of various scenes from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* now dominate. Now the figures of all the gods and goddesses may be painted, even in new designs. For example, Ganesh was traditionally painted with four hands in a sitting or standing posture. Now he is often painted with six or eight hands in various postures and colours. Participation in a number of training and workshop programmes and a

sharing of ideas with other Chitrakara and artisans from other states have helped enrich skill and knowledge and obtain new design ideas.

Marketing

Modernization has opened a wide door for the marketing of the paintings. Modern communications means being able to sell them easily in more remote places, as well as obtaining market information through the mass media. Both the union and state governments have aided marketing by organizing various exhibition-cum-sales programmes, both inside and outside the state, sponsoring artisans to go to different exhibitions outside the state, procuring products from artisans and selling them to outsiders, and organizing co-operative societies both at block and district levels. The change in the trend of production and use has also influenced the marketing of the paintings by increasing both the extent of the market and price levels.

Over the years, *patta* painting has gained in popularity around the world. Demand has exceeded supply, which opened the door for members of other castes to enter the field of production to bridge the gap. In fact the number of non-Chitrakara practising the craft as a source of livelihood is more than twice the number of Chitrakara. Besides the Chitrakara, other caste groups practising the craft at Raghurajpur now include Padhana (cultivators), Khandayat (warriors), Bania (goldsmiths), Badhei (carpenters), Siala (toddy-tappers), Teli (oilmen), and Brahmans. Gradually production has come to exceed demand. As a result, competition has developed between artisans, both within and outside the Chitrakara, and middlemen have become involved, often to the disadvantage of the artisans.

Changes in Sociocultural Context

The sociocultural setting of the craft has also been influenced by modernization. The availability of modern ingredients in respect of colour, brushes, etc., the improved education system, and the changed mode of marketing have had a great impact on the social life of the Chitrakaras. They no longer need to go far for the collection of raw materials: instead they buy colours and brushes from nearby markets individually (not in groups) and at their own convenience. And as customers come to them to buy their products, they need not go to far-off places. Improved education also enables artists to go through books and magazines to enrich their knowledge of Hindu mythology and other information required for painting. The modern competitive market increases competition and thus tensions among Chitrakaras as well as with respect to artists in other caste groups, which has an effect on their social relationships. Nor is marriage among Chitrakaras any longer restricted to the boundary of Puri town. Since members of other castes have also taken up the craft, there is less homogeneity in the style and presentation of present-day paintings.

But in spite of all this, other artists are very reluctant to lose the skills of the traditional type of painting and are not interested in adapting to a purely modern style of painting. Despite the opportunities provided them, they still try to collect and make the traditional raw materials and equipment used for painting the *ana-sara patti*, which is worshipped in the inner sanctum during the absence of the trinity. This indicates that the traditional values are still followed in part.

Conclusion

The age-old tradition of painting has entered a transitional phase, where it is experiencing the existence of both traditional and modern trends. Although the preparation of basic equipment and materials, like the canvas, paints, and brushes, are now greatly influenced by modern technology, the overall context of the style is still the Hindu religious tradition. Not a single painting, irrespective of its use, can be seen as 'modern art'. Paintings continue to be embellished with myths referring to Rama Yatra, Ratha Yatra, etc. and to depict mainly themes from Hindu mythological epics, reflecting Hindu religious philosophy and traditional Hindu social structure in their cultural setting. *Patta* paintings were undertaken by the Chitrakararas with a view to preserving the cultural and religious tradition of the society, which is not the same at the present day. The artists now regard their work as a source of income rather than a pious way to exhibit their artistic skills or preach the Hindu religion. Quality and durability, which were not compromised earlier, no longer entirely prevail in the face of the opportunities to earn money. And with the striking increase in the popularity of the craft, there has been an influx of other enterprising castes, who, in picking it up, have opened the door further to a customer-oriented market. As a result, to keep pace, the traditional artists have had to compromise with the original colour combination and quality. The quality and durability of the painting are continually becoming diluted, while use, demand, and popularity among a different public are increasing.

However, as we saw, although the craft is much influenced by modernization, some of the traditional characteristics are still deeply rooted in it. This makes for a somewhat uncertain future.

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