



Jadupatua Tribal Folk Painting of Santhal Tribes – A Tribal Treasure Towards Extinction.

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Abstract

The Jadupatua paintings are vertical scroll paintings that were once done on fabric but are now done on paper. The term 'Jadupatua' comes from the words 'Jadu', which refers to the community that creates these paintings, and 'Pat,' which refers to the scroll on which they are created. The scroll paintings were gathered in the Santhal Parganas and were primarily created for Santhal audiences by a particular Hindu painter caste known as Jadupatuas. 'Magic Painters' is the meaning of the word 'Jadupatua.' 'Chitrakars,' which means 'picture-makers,' are the name given to these painters. This tribal folk painting is part of an old storytelling tradition from Dumka, Jharkhand, done on scrolls of paper or fabric illustrating stories about the beginnings of life, life after death, Hindu history and myths, and tribal life, rituals, and festivals, and was painted using natural colors.

Keywords: Chitrakars, Jadupatua, Parganas, Santhal, Scroll paintings.

1. Introduction

In India, folk art takes various forms, but it has only recently gained the respect it deserves. In a country with 35 states, each one's own cultural and traditional character is reflected in the region's folk art. Aside from that, each tribe has its own set of traditions, including tribal art, which is a type of art that is unique to them. The state of West Bengal was among the first to recognize and revitalize its folk and tribal art traditions. In reality, the Eastern area of India, which includes West Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar, is home to various types of folk art. Santhals are India's third largest tribe and are noted for their Santhal Tribal Paintings, a distinctive kind of tribal art.

1.1 History of Santhal Tribe

The Santhal tribe is India's third biggest, with approximately four million members living in tribal areas throughout West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh. Even though history only records their existence from the late 18th century, the Santhals have been identified as having pre-Dravidian origins and a rich and complex cultural identity. The Santhals are ethnically linked to other tribes in the area, such as the Hos, Kharias, and Mundas, and hail from the Austro-Asiatic linguistic group known as the "Mundari" group of languages. The stories of the Santhals and their genesis narrative characterize their past. Their origin tales may be traced back to the fabled countries of Hihiri Pipiri, Khoj Kaman, Harata Mountain, Champa, and finally Chota Nagpur in contemporary history.

Santhal tribes rely on the forests for survival, and their activities - farming, fishing, and hunting - are all centered on the woodlands in which they reside. They retire for the day after a long day at work and find pleasure in music and dance. Santhal fairs and celebrations are characterized by an innate passion of dancing and music. Santhal's paintings are centered on communal life, particularly festivities and rituals. Through charming minimalist imagery in subdued tones, the paintings convey dance, harvest, and merrymaking.

The Santhals' beliefs are founded on the spirits that lie behind all of their inherent strength. The Santhals are the spirits that are responsible for all good and harmful natural force. Their topics are mainly focused on the birth of Santhals, Santhal revolution, social elements, mythology, Chaksudana, and so on. In the Majramura village in Purulia's Kashipore block, there are about 70 Patuas, some of whom create and sing Santhal tales. Santhals are known as the

Magic Painters, or Jadupatuas. The Chakshudana genre paintings they make for the Santhal relatives of the lately departed are the major basis for this appellation.



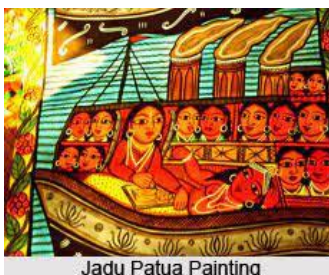
Jadupatua Tribal Folk Paintings of the Santhal Tribes

1.2 History of Jadupatua Paintings

The hamlet of Paitkar is located in the eastern region of Jharkhand and is also known as Amadubi. The traditional artwork of this town is known as 'Paitkar,' and it has been in the village from ancient times. The Paitkar paintings are sometimes referred to as Jharkhand scroll paintings. This style of painting is prominent in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and other Indian states as well. Jharkhand's tribal artisans have cultivated the art of scroll painting, which has long been employed in storytelling and socio-religious rituals. The question of what happens to human life after death runs across all of the works in this genre. This scroll artwork also depicts daily life in Bengal and Jharkhand. Paitkar painting has a long history that can be traced back to a culture linked with West Bengal, although it is presently solely done in Amadubi village. Paitkar painting is a type of Pata painting that is varied. One of India's earliest folk artworks is Pata painting. Pata painting is a variant of Jadopatia painting. Pata painting, also known as patachitra, is a long scroll painting. This scroll artwork has a vertical format. Pata paintings include Paitkar paintings from Jharkhand, Patachitra paintings from West Bengal, and Patachitra paintings from Odisha. The Paitkar painters use palm leaves as a basis for their paintings, while squirrel and goat hair is used to construct the brushes.

Patua refers to the Patachitra-painting communities of West Bengal. In Jharkhand, they are known as Patidar, Patekar, or Paitkar. Paitkar is an abbreviation of the word Patekar. Patachitra's source is Padya. It has its origins in the following: Patchitra > Pada chitra > Padya chitra. A two-line rhyming poetry known as Padya or Pada. Paitkar's narrative scroll style is based on Pandulipi (a natural scroll), which was historically used by monarchs to communicate with other kingdoms.

In the Santhal tribe of Jharkhand, Jadupatua or Paitkar painting is said to have the ability to transport wandering souls to paradise and therefore relieve them of their suffering. The paintings are created by a group of people known as Jadu Patuas, or magic painters, who live in the Santhal Paragana area on the Bengal-Bihar border. The painters are known as magic painters because they employ paint to preserve crops, ward off illnesses, and honor the deceased, among other things. For example, Chakshudaan Pata, an artwork created for a bereaved family, is wrapped in enchantment and mystique. These paintings are vertical scroll paintings that were once done on fabric but are now done on paper. These paintings were also popular in the West Bengal districts of Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bankura, Hooghly, Burdwan, and Midnapore, as well as the Bihar district of Santhal Parganas.



Jadu Patua Painting



Jadupatua Painting of Jharkhand



Paitkar Painting

1.3 History of Jadupatua or Magic Painters



Jadupatua got its name from Nitai Chitrakar, who claimed that *Jadu* means magician and *Patua* means scroll painter. The jadupatuas are members of a tiny community who are linked to potters, barbers, blacksmiths, and sweetmeat manufacturers in terms of social rank. They dwelt in the Santhal Parganas, much like the Patuas of Bengal. They made a living by going from village to village singing the stories represented, earning roughly two annas or rice for a night's performance. They took a bag of scrolls and a bamboo oil jug with them on their journey. The jadupatuas started working when they were 19 years old. The jadupatuas could speak with the Santhals since they spoke a degraded Bengali dialect. The Santhals admired the jadupatuas, and it was for this reason that the caste became recognized in the Santhal Parganas rather than just as patua. The jadupatuas dropped this term in favor of *chitrakar* (painter) in an attempt to climb the social ladder.

The Santa Parganas jadupatuas had another source of revenue. They would paint and bring out a supply of small 'mortuary' drawings portraying men, women, and children of different ages, except that each eye lacked a pupil, whenever they learned of a Santhal's death. There were also little sketches of other items, such as a cow, goat, poultry, brass dishes, jewelry, or money, in addition to the paintings. When the jadupatuas arrived at the deceased person's house, he would inquire about the deceased person and appraise the family's resources before producing an appropriate image. He would then tell the deceased person's relatives that their departed relative is wandering blind in the hereafter and that his sight might be restored if he (the jadupatua) supplied or painted pupils in his blind eyes. He goes on to say

that he would only provide the service in exchange for the items seen in the photo. The Santhals dubbed the painters jadupatuas, or miraculous painters, because of this mystical act of granting sight. The jadupatuas would sit on his heels after receiving his money and unfold his scrolls to sing the proper remark. The jadupatuas argue that by doing so, they will be able to assist mourners in escaping their sadness. Finally, the jadupatua departs, carrying his prizes. In some circumstances, they would demand an additional cost. The deceased's burnt bones are said to be submerged in the hallowed Damodar River, the 'sea' of Santhal folklore. The Santhals would pay the jadupatua to travel to Damodar and perform the ceremonies because it is far away.

Traditionally, Jadupatua painters have been men. Women have always assisted with color preparation, but women have just lately begun to paint.

2. Themes of Jadupatua Paintings

The scroll paintings done by jadupatuas in the Santhal Parganas include seven themes:

1. Life in Death's realm
2. The Santhal celebration of Bahajatras
3. The account of the Santals' genesis as told by Santal tradition
4. Santals' dance gatherings in large groups
6. Personification of Santal clans
6. A tiger or leopard, typically accompanied by a human rider
7. Krishna's milkmaid adventures.

Other than the Chakshudana pata, art historian Mildred Archer recognized unique themes in Jadupatua painting as Death's realm, Baha Porob, Santhal narrative of creation, Thakur Jiu, Satya Pir, and Jatra scrolls.

The paintings' themes include stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as festivals and other rites. However, the most well-known and significant theme is man's (of the Santhal) life after death .

3. Format of Jadupatua Paintings

The text of visual art comprises the medium, canvas and the content.

3.1. Medium



The Jadopatua artists painted their scrolls with water-based color that they received from nature. Chitrakar's color scheme is limited to only a few shades. They only gather primary colors that are found in nature. By blending the three primary colors of red, yellow, and blue, the painters are able to create new colors. Secondary colors are created by combining these fundamental colors. Older Paitkar paintings were dominated by olive green, dark brown, and black. Later, several colors were employed to generate the shift, such as Indigo, Ochre yellow, and others. Red is a popular color in religious and mythical art. To designate the white color, artists frequently leave their paper as "paper white" or "blank" instead of applying white paint.

The following are some regularly used colors and their sources:

Red – Heamatite (Gerua Patthar)

Yellow – Yellow Ochre stone (Haldi Patthar), Turmeric (Haldi)

Black – Lamp Soot (Carbon Black)

Orange – Palash Flowers

Brown – Brown Stone

Green – Bean Leaves (Seem Patta)

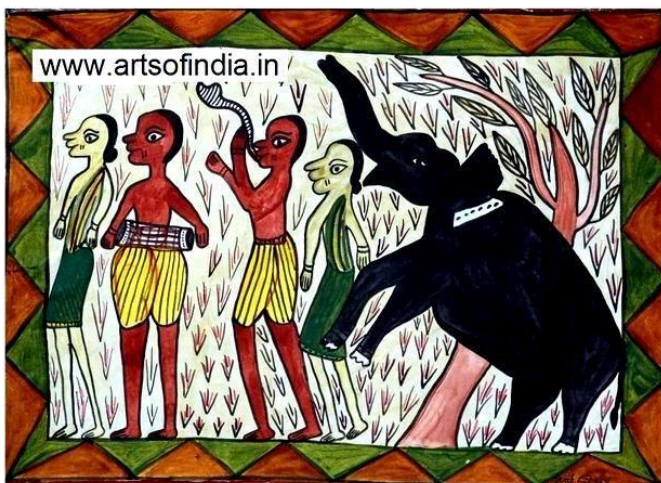
Blue – Indigo

Most Jadupatua painters utilize only natural colors while painting on paper. Along the riverbed, dirt and color stones are numerous, although they are difficult to find. Artists pulverized the leaves or flowers into a paste, then squeezed the mixture to extract the juice to create the colors. After that, the juice is boiled until it reaches the desired consistency. To help the paint last longer on paper, it is mixed with natural gums obtained from the babool tree. The gum also adds a sheen to the paint. To retain the colors created, coconut shells are employed. Previously, the paintings were created using natural colors derived from plant materials or minerals. Colors were offered at bazaars by the 1940s. Thus, some of them started to utilize commercial colors when painting on canvas fabric. The jogendra chitrakars continued to employ soot for black, vermilion for red, and riverbed mud for a deep reddish brown, but also bought blue and yellow from the market. Traditional Jadupatua artists created brushes out of squirrel and goat hairs and strung them on a bamboo pole or porcupine quill with thread. They now utilize brushes that are readily available in stores. The bulk of Jadupatua painters sketch the figures' shapes with a pencil. In most cases, dark outlines are placed towards the conclusion of the painting process.

3.2. Canvas

Palm leaves were used as a drawing canvas. Handmade paper and Canvas cloth have taken the position of palm tree leaves as a drawing medium. The scrolls were created out of sheets of paper that were either glued or sewed together, with an old fabric or calico piece attached to the end to preserve the paper from damage. Sewed round pieces of bamboo were sewn into the two ends of the fabric, one of which served as a roller around which the scroll could be wrapped. Finally, a string was tied to one end of the wound-up scroll to keep it secure. Some scrolls were small, with just two or three panels, while others had fourteen or more. One scroll was retained entire in this collection, while the others were broken into portions and mounted individually. The backing is frequently ancient saris, and the fabric patterns lend aesthetic complexity to the Jadopatia's presentation. Ornate borders divide individual frames, each depicting a different incident from the story. Bengal developed vertical scroll paintings depicting stories in a succession of falling panels.

3.3. Content



A painting of the Santhal Tribe's men and women and an elephant

Some common topics or contents of Jadupatua art are:

1. Santhal fairs and festivals, mythology, and social life,
2. Traditional Hindu epics (such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata),
3. Popular folklore and folk stories
4. Afterlife stories (Yama Pata, Mrityu Pata etc.)

Despite the restricted palette of colors and materials, Jadupatua scrolls from the Santhal Parganas depict a wide range of emotions and treatments, with a continuous adherence to some fundamental principles. Adjacent Jadupatuas were aware of each other's family idioms and subconsciously borrowed from one another. Outside influences might occasionally be seen reflected in the scrolls. All of the Jadupatua families had links to the Bengal Patuas, and their vision of painting was shaped by long-standing traditions. Despite their minor dialects, scrolls contained similar ideals of form and style. All of the scrolls presented figures on a single flat plane and eschewed realism. The stories are told through a sequence of clear-cut photographs separated into panels by horizontal bands. Trees, flowers, and rocks are

shown in simple diagrammatic shapes. The figures are frequently represented with a conventional corrugated line connecting the forehead, nose, lips, and chin, and their eyes have been greatly expanded.

The majority of the painted space is occupied by human beings. These characters can be found in both profile and semi-profile. The eyes are extended, which is a typical feature of Indian painting. The painted face did not appear until the mid-twentieth century. Paitka's spontaneous lines are angular, and anatomical features are not well defined. Santhal ladies are represented as towering figures with straight vertical figures that imitate the beautiful motions of Santal dance. Horizontal and vertical lines are prominent throughout the image, however they are occasionally interrupted by the strong zigzag motions of a jumping drummer or galloping horse. There was a willingness to distort everything for the sake of expressing oneself. Color is passionately employed for dramatic or lyrical effect. Tigers come in a variety of colors, including brilliant yellow, brown, grey, and even blue or green. Their heads are exaggerated, their fangs, claws, and tongues are enlarged, and touches of crimson add to a picture of terrible power and menace. There are blue elephants and crimson horses, which represent riches and opulence. Women who traditionally wear white are shown in a scorching red, with their chocolate complexions transformed into white or yellow. Scrolls from locations where there is the most contact with Hindu civilization (in the sections of Dumka and Jamtara bordering on Bengal) and a certain sophistication may be noticed, which show the most noticeable artistic variations. Full-face figures are presented. Milkmaids are represented with huge veils blowing over their heads and a pale and prissy slimness. Men have curly Bengali hair and dress in Bengali clothing, with a preference for lovely hues like pink and pastel blue.

In his works, Patanjali mentions similar scroll paintings, and in Banudatta's Harshacharita, performers or minstrels, known as yamapattakas, are mentioned. The yamapattakas were shown in scroll paintings, depicting the benefits and punishments meted out by Yama, the God of Death, to souls when they left the mortal world. The artists who painted these scrolls were known as Jadupatuas or Duari Patuas, which literally translated to "magical painters," and their works were called Jadupatua Paintings. Scenes from the Ramayana and Bhaagvata Puarna were depicted in paintings on cloth.

4. The Present State of Jadupatuas and their Paintings



The scrolls are fashioned from scrap paper that had been thrown by stores or government offices due to inability to obtain decent paper. Jadupatua practitioners are dissatisfied with their daily lives. They are unable to live a stable and better life since there are insufficient consumers for their paintings. It also prohibits future generations from continuing the tradition. As a result, unlike their forefathers, the current generation of artists do not rely only on these methods. In the whole Dumka region, there are just a few traditional artists practicing the art form. We only know about Ganpati Chitrakar, Nitai Chitrakar, and Deodhan Chitrakar of Nawasar village in Masalaiya block. The bulk of the artists stopped practicing since it was no longer profitable. There are 40-45 households in Amadubi, and just a handful of them practice Paitkar, despite the fact that the majority of the locals are aware of the art. Only 3 to 4 painters have been noticed practicing this scroll painting technique. Paitkar was abandoned by the majority of Amadubi inhabitants since it was no longer economically feasible. Carpentry, murti-making, tailoring, agricultural labor, mending work, and other vocations have been followed by them.

5. The Future of Jadupatua Art and Artisans



Jadupatua art looks to have a dark and uncertain future. As if the lack of efforts by state governments and private organizations wasn't bad enough, the ongoing Covid-19 scenario has just added to the problems. It's difficult to say how many of the remaining practicing artists will be able to continue working until Covid-19 ends. However, with the correct type of government participation, India's ancient legacy may be maintained. The urgent need is to bring Paitkar art into the mainstream from distant areas, and to find ways for people all throughout the country to have access to these paintings. Thus, to save this artwork from becoming extinct, the government, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and individuals must act immediately.

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