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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### PATUA AND PATACHITRA IN BENGAL SCENARIO: AN ANALYSIS

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#### ABSTRACT:

The ethnic geographical location of the Patuas, spanning from the Indus Valley civilization through the colonial era, including the periods of Buddhism and Jainism, as well as their current status in Bengal. This research paper presents an initiative to showcase the oral tradition of our history through Pata and folk songs of Pata. This research work is primarily focused on the Patua society of West Bengal. The Bengal Patachitra represents a distinguished visual and oral art tradition upheld by the Patuas of West Bengal. The folk songs of the Pata represent a crucial aspect of oral history. Patuas have historically engaged in the practice of traveling from village to village, showcasing scroll artwork that illustrates epic narratives. Patua art is often referred to as the 'singing scrolls.' Patachitra artists are not only painters; they are also lyricists, singers, performers, and true artists. The works created by the Patua artists remain grounded in themes drawn from the sacred texts of Hindu and Muslim traditions, reflecting both historical and mythical inspirations. The objective of the research was to investigate the patua and patachitra in Bengal scenario.

**KEYWORDS:** Patua, Patachitra, Bengal.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

West Bengal's Patachitra, a historic and mythological heritage, conveys a distinct culture through language, embodying both universality and the unique history of a specific people. Bengali artists accompany each patachitra with a song during its unveiling. The language of 'Patua Sangeet' predominantly comprises indigenous ethnic languages from various regions of West Bengal. The indigenous languages of the Patua embody their identity. The patachitra is a fundamental component of this cultural creation, significant not only in West Bengal but across India. Patachitra, renowned for its unique color interplay, is a traditional folk art of Bengal that has persisted for centuries. This is the first attempt to produce films in this genre. Various theories exist on the dates of ancient 'patas;' however, they have been suggested based on historical topics associated with patua songs. [1]

## **METHODOLOGY:**

A research study design is a structured framework comprising methods and procedures employed to gather and analyze data concerning variables defined in a specific research problem. Qualitative research entails the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. This study often uses interviews, focus groups, or observations to gather material that is rich in detail and context. Secondary data refers to information that a researcher has not personally gathered or generated. Secondary data may include a vast array of original and comprehensive studies, featuring some of the most exhaustive and meticulous data collection. This article provides a concise introduction to identifying secondary data sources. The secondary sources included books, journals, e-resources, documentary evidences etc.

In this study, qualitative research design and secondary data was used.

## **OBSERVATION, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

The Patuas both educated and delighted rural audiences by singing mythological narratives and exhibiting pats as they traveled from one hamlet to another. Villagers congregated around the Patuas to listen to their narratives while they unfurled their painted scrolls, revealing one scene after another. Singing with pats was a communal activity of the Patuas, serving as a traditional form of entertainment that signifies their identity, existence, culture, and history. Their pats, which

consisted of a sequence of paintings depicting a religious or mythological story using vegetable or organic dye on handmade paper, served as props for their performance. Typically, we categorize pats into two types: jarano pats, which are rolled canvas scrolls, and chowko pats, which resemble rectangular calendars. [2]

Nevertheless, the increasing intensity of globalization has transformed the lives of rural populations through improved technology, consumer goods, commercial entertainment, hybrid cultures, and mobile capital. Liberalized trade and enhanced mobility undermined their simple rural existence, diminishing opportunities for the Patuas. During this period of instability, the Patuas' traditional village audiences turned their backs on them. The Patuas encountered significant challenges and were unable to compete. Illiteracy rendered them increasingly vulnerable, depleting their artistic soul. Subsequently, the Patuas have endured a life characterized by poverty, neglect, and misery for decades following independence. The cultured urban residents disparaged these country artists, who struggled to secure a safe and respectable position within the confines of the city. The state government has not provided any specific impetus or governmental backing for the Patachitra craft. Over time, around the 1970s, this folk art evolved into a distinctive and unequalled art form called Bengal, appealing to a newly educated metropolitan audience. A significant interest in pats as visual art among urban elites led to the establishment of a platform for the Patuas and a desire to produce an increasing quantity of pats. With the heightened demand for pats, numerous women from Patua families emerged to engage in their manufacture.

Women artisans are also innovating their art on numerous other materials to provide a diverse range of products. Their creativity has significantly increased. Modern apartments encompass both aesthetic appeal and functionality. Women Patuas consistently endeavor to produce distinctive and excellent creations that may garner appreciation from a global clientele. They are currently applying paint to shirts, costumes, outfits, accessories, keychains, cards, vases, decorative pieces, purses, and caps. To satisfy consumer needs, they are progressively applying paint to various items. Pats on vases and pen stands have grown commonplace. People are now creating patachitras on various items such as mobile covers, lampshades, umbrellas, folders, and bookmarks. Patachitra has evolved beyond its traditional forms. [3]

As bards of Bengal, they illustrate the scroll with tales, epics, folklore, and contemporary social issues. Scroll painting is an archaic technique of narrative expression. People frequently refer to Patua art as the "singing scrolls." Patachitra artists are not merely painters; they are also lyricists, singers, entertainers, and genuine artists. Ancient Hindu and Muslim historical and mythological writings serve as the inspiration for the narratives and visuals created by Patua artists. Currently, the scrolls may also illustrate societal concerns, like literacy, health, and environmental challenges. They also portray political themes such as land redistribution, family planning, famine and flood relief, birth control, and ecological awareness.

Patua songs were essential for the Nationalist Movement. The contribution of Patuas to the enhancement of the liberation movement and the rise of nationalism was highly significant. The folk melodies of Patas encapsulate the historical narrative of the freedom movement in Tamluk. The Tamralipta Swadhinata Sangram Itihas Committee released the book 'Pata Chitra-Giti' in 1986. In the context of the Nationalist cause, the Patuas intended to create 100 patas, which they divided into 10 palagans. These lyrical narrative songs were as below:

- Khudiram and Bengal partition Movement (1900-1906)
- Beginning of revolution and Non-cooperation Movement (1909-1920)
- From Non-cooperation to Civil Disobedience (1921-1930)
- Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31)
- Armoury Raid (1931)
- Movement for exemption of Tax
- Individual Satagraha
- Attack on Thanas and tale of the Martyrs
- National Government in Tamluk (1942-44)
- Gandhiji at Mahishadal (1945)

Sushilkumar Dhara authored the first seven compositions. Gopinandan Goswami composed the final three songs. Gopinandan Goswami composed these songs based on the traditional songs of the Patuas. Jill Parvin and Suhrid Bhowmik's pamphlet, 'French Revolution in Patua Song', provides another example to consider. This pamphlet mostly addresses Pata and Patua songs produced to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the French Revolution of 1789. They have

depicted Louis XVI as an autocratic and repressive sovereign. The Pata song *Bharatvager Itikotha* depicts the actions of Indian citizens resisting British oppression. Thus, oral discourse has animated history through various forms and transformations. [4]

The Patuas execute Bengal's scroll narration, a traditional style of audio-visual presentation. The Scroll-Performers, for time immemorial, employ their innate visual-vocabulary skills to engage, educate, and entertain the populace in rural India and the surrounding areas of rural Bengal. They may perform songs and recount the experiences inscribed on the scroll while simultaneously unfolding it, thereby maintaining a vibrant oral tradition that has been developed through visual art. People from rural communities with no formal academic background create pata, which is considered folk art. They inherit their abilities from their forebears. The father educates his boys while the mother instructs her daughters. The narrative artist creates patachitra, or scroll painting, which possesses a rich historical background and significant traditional communicative value. [5]

## **CONCLUSION:**

Patachitra of Bengal is a form that combines movement and storytelling. During the emergence of Brahmanism, they adopted Hinduism; then, at a certain time in the progression of Buddhism, they embraced Buddhism; and once more, during the invasions of Bakhtiyar Khilji and the Mughals, they converted to Islam. Prior to British colonialism and the Islamic invasion, rural traditions in India, such as the 'patuas' and various other art forms, were prevalent in the villages of Bengal, and the practice of patuas had remained largely unaltered for generations. Traditionally, Patuas traveled from village to village, creating paintings of epic narratives on scrolls. In each hamlet, they would perform songs that recounted stories on canvas, showcasing their talents and establishing a vibrant oral tradition. Their paintings primarily depicted religious themes, including both Hindu and Muslim narratives, significant episodes from the Ramayana, and the lives of renowned Islamic saints. During this time, their aim was not to commercialize their creations. Instead, they derived their income from donations for their performances.

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