

Research Article

A General Analysis of Changes and Problems of Patachitra as a Livelihood

Kanchan Paira^{1*} and Rajaram Majhi²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Hijli college, India

²Student, Master of Philosophy, P.G. Department of Population Studies, Fakir Mohan University, India

Corresponding Author: Kanchan Paira, E-mail: pairakanchan002@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The major obstacle to the economic development of any country is the recession in business of the people of that country. In developing and densely populated country like India where the Government is currently focusing on Make in India products, some rural Pata artisans particularly from Pingla and Chandipur block of West Bengal state are feeling insecure to produce their highly creative and unique folk art due to the lack of market demand, capital investment, Government help, publicity, supply of raw material and other so many factor which is having a significant impact on changing the livelihood in addition to slowing down their socio-economic development. As a result of which the quality of life of Pata artisans and their families is declining and their customs and culture are in extreme danger today. A total of 100 household have been selected purposively and the household engaged fully or partly in Patachitra Art were surveyed through a structured questionnaire. Result revealed that the maximum Patachitra artisans were involved in this business from 11 to 20 years where only about 61percent of the respondent's economic condition has been improved due to this particular business. Respectively 64percent, 59percent and 73percent of positive change has been shown in respondent's life due to the change of design, market knowledge and business strategies. Emphasis has also been put on the solution offered by poor artisans who are perceived to be in danger rather than finding solution in a visual context alone. As a solution offered by the respondent, about 47% of them shake their head for the market creation which helps them monetary support by displaying and selling their items as well as by creating the ground of attraction for their unique works. The study suggests educating the Pata artisans to make them knowledgeable about the values and needs of modern society properly and expertly from the local and state Governments to protect their identity.

Introduction

India is an ancient, historical, traditional and also a diverse country. The backbone of Indian economy greatly depends on primary economic activities of which farming is one of the most important field. But the fear of unfavourable climatic ambience, economic instability of family, risk especially fluctuation of market price are forcing the people of India especially the rural people, to going for any other livelihoods. This is why people pursue various small or medium lucrative works to sustain themselves. In the same way, the people of some remote villages of West and East Midnapore district of West Bengal state have long been associated with a beautiful, creative and unique folk art which is named as Patachitra.

“The word ‘Pata’ is originated from the Sanskrit word ‘Patta’, which means cloth. The artists who paint these scrolls are called ‘Patuas’ and they are actually performance artists who do not only paint but while unscrolling the Pats sing the ‘PaterGaan’ to the listeners. The songs originate from folklore, mythology and tribal rituals to stories based on modern Indian history and

socio-cultural themes. Initially pats were made of natural colours, which were procured from the soil of the surrounding region and local flora-fauna (Chakrabarti, 1972).

“Patachitra has been considered as one of the most musical and illustrious form of folk narrative of Bengal and its adjoining states of Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand” (Palit. S and Datta. D.B, 2016, p-218). It may be rightfully considered a conjoint of various methods of communication which includes visual, oral and musical forms to narrate stories related to society, culture, religion, nature and popular folklore (Chaitanya, 1976). “Through its strong visual and oral medium it preserves the documentation of the society down the ages but it is also a witness to the social transformation and tells stories of the socio-political and religious reflections and changes over the years” (Sengupta, 2012). “Though the origin of Patachitra as a narrative form of folklore cannot be traced exactly, yet various oral form of record dates it back to around 10th -11th century AD in Bengal” (Bajpai, 2015). “The main theme, around which the pats were painted, comprised of stories from the three Mangal Kavyas- the Manasa Mangal Kavya, Chandi Mangal Kavya and Dharma Mangal Kavya, along with epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Beside these the narratives reflected the folklore, socio-political scenario of the time along with religious connotations and beliefs” (Chatterji, 2009). But “the art form presently could not help to sustain the livelihood of the Pata artisans due to failing of demand resulted from the emergence of other forms of mass media and entertainment, so folklore and narrative forms were forced to give way to radio, television, satellite and finally internet. These survival threats forced the Pata Artisans to look for substitute diversification for this performing folk art form, thus finding survival strategies in a more visual form. Diversification of Product was their only mode of survival” (Palit. S and Datta. D.B, 2016, p-218).

Literature Review

Bayen (2013), in his work “A Glimpse of Folk-Art: Various Patachitra” had mentioned that “Patuas are sociologically advanced and enriched with cultural values but they do not believe in gender bias and thinks to be the son of god Viswakarma. They do not have any narrow thoughts towards life and culture and by religion, they follow both Hindu and Muslim customs as they believe in human religion. Bayen also highlighted that Naya a village under Pingla in Paschim Medinipur of West Bengal state is an important place for Patachitra painting known as “Pater Gram” and these “patachitra painting had a noteworthy contribution to our society”.

Palit and Dutta (2016), “Transformation from Performative Art to Demonstrative Art: A Survival strategy for Patachitra”, in Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, Vol. 4, Issue 2, had mentioned “Patachitra as a performative art which involves Art, Narrative and Music has now undergone transformation from its inherent form. Patachitra as a traditional form of folk art has suffered noticeable decline until some NGOs decided to hold hands and uplift them”.

Chatterji (2009), ‘Global Events and Local Narratives: 9/11 and the Picture Storytellers of Bengal’ in Indian Folklore Research Journal had concluded that “the commercialization of crafts through mass production and product diversities appears to be the most effective solution for declining crafts to survive. Patachitra artisans were not exception. With the changing outlook of the modern generation of chitrakars, the art is losing its value as a musical narrative form of entertainment”.

Banik. S and Kundu. U (2018), ‘Patachitra-A Micro Scale Industry: Overview and Challenges’ in Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM), volume 20, Issue 3, had concluded that “Traditionally these patuas had been the backbone of the Indian society, yet today they are the most valuable character in the social and cultural development”. They also point out some major problem such as weak financial power, Illiteracy and absence of organised marketing process which collectively influenced in Pata business.

So, a historical local art and those poor people associated with it are currently facing a deep crisis. Whether the various schemes from the government and NGOs are enough or not enough to bring the tide to their dead shore, is also a matter of doubt. In order to save their art, they are now emphasizing on the use of technology and also on the change of design in their art to match with modern society’s demand. Due to above all, the present study has basically tried to find the answers of two questions such as:

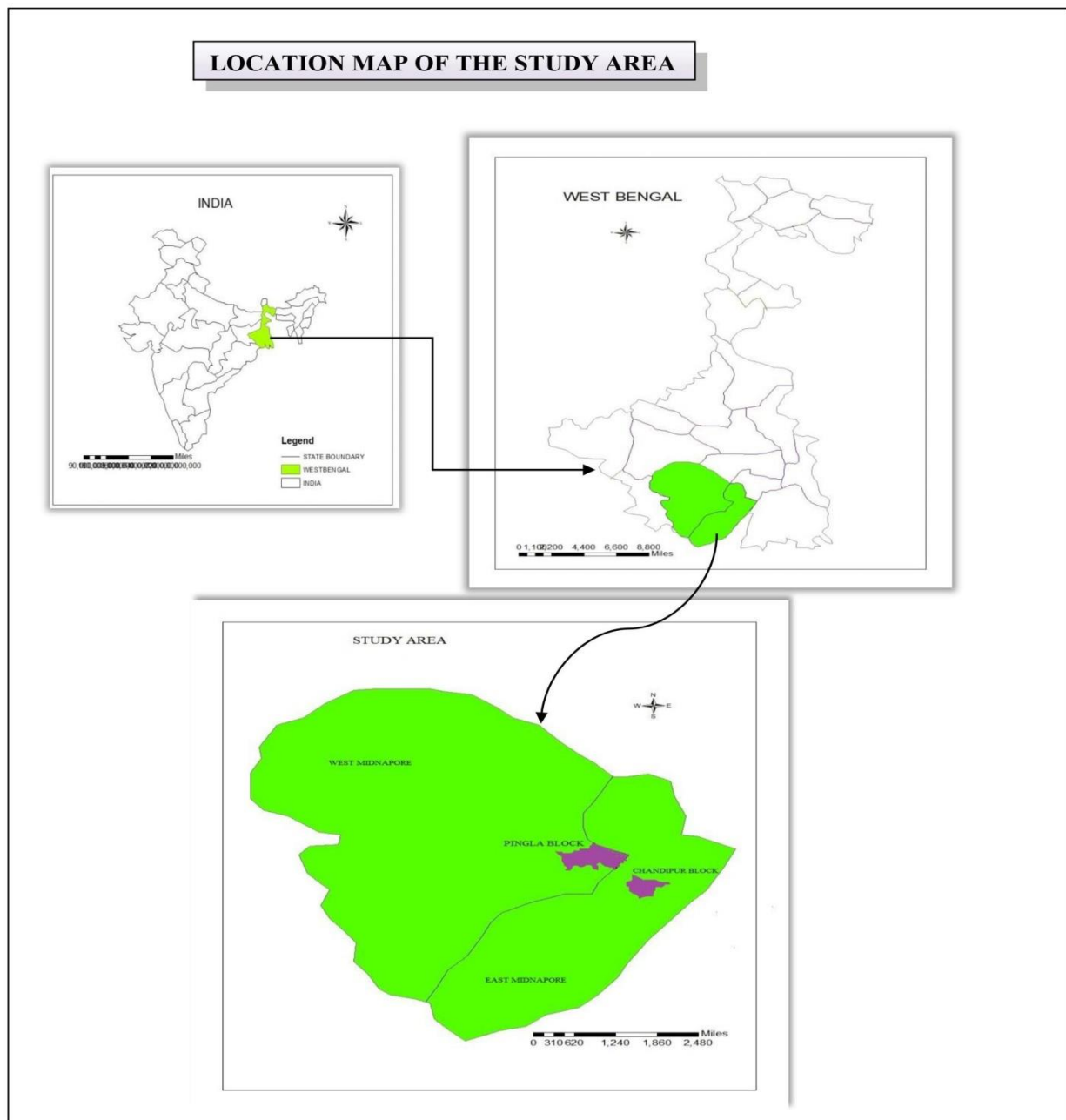
- a. What is the exact status of socio-economic and livelihood condition of the Patua families in recent times?
- b. What problems are they currently facing and what steps are needed to save their Business?

So, based on the above research questions, the present study has been undertaken

- i) To assess the socio-economic and livelihood conditions of the Patachitra painters.
- ii) To investigate the problems faced by the Patachitra painters in recent time.
- iii) To propose some fruitful suggestions against the problematic situations of Patachitra painters.

Methodology

Both the primary and secondary data was used in this study. The study focused the data collection in four villages i.e. village of Habichak, Nankarchak and Muradpur in Chandipur Block of East Midnapore and the village of Naya in Pingla block of West Midnapore. A total of 100 household have been selected purposively and the household engaged fully or partly in Patachitra Art were surveyed through a structured questionnaire which was also administered by face-to-face interviews with each and every respondent to reduce the issue of indecisive response and also to terminate the difficulties encountered in questionnaire. The target respondents were mainly Patachitra painters of each household. No explicit resistance has been expressed by the respondent and inhabitants regarding their participation during the survey. All the data has been collected between the periods of April to December, 2017. Analysis of data is carried out using SPSS software version 21.0. and also Microsoft excels. Secondary data was collected through various e-resources and articles. All the tables and diagrams are based on primary survey.



Results and Discussion

Profile of the respondents

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of respondents. Among the respondent, male (78%) were notably more than the female counterparts. By the marital status, around 82.5% of the respondents were married while the remaining percentages were characterized as unmarried. By the literacy rate among the respondent, about 76.64percent were literate and the remaining percentage were in illiterate group. Here, around 73% of respondents were engaged both in Pata art and Labour, 16% were found to be involved in both Patachitra making and agricultural practice and about 11% were involved only in Patachitra making. Possession of different card by the respondent was examined which was revealed that about 99% of the respondent have their own bank account, 98% have BPL (Below poverty line) ration card, 86% of them have own Job card for 100 days work, 68% have health card, about 97% have Craftsmen identity card but only 48% of them have insurance. Rural to rural migration has been observed in the study area where about 17% of the respondents has migrated from different rural region and lived there permanently with the aim of Patachitra business.

Profile of the households

Table 2 has been prepared to reveal the background characteristics of Patachitra household. By the family type, it was revealed that about 73% of family in the study area is greatly characterised by nuclear (married couples with children) family and only 27% of the family were found to be joint (group of people related to blood) in nature which ultimately helps to gear them towards financial development. Here, the percentage (48%) of families with 4 to 5 members was more compare to other category. By type of house, nearly half of the families were living in semi-pucca house, 31% were living in kutchra house and only 20% were living in pucca house. In the case of toilet, 95% of the household use pit toilet where only about 5% among them has the availability of flush toilet which clearly unfolds the poor quality of life the families was going through daily. By the living room, about 48% of the family has one living room and only 11% has more than two living rooms which imply the pitiful situation prevailed there. Source of drinking water which is one of the major basic necessities for human life shows that 56% of the families was greatly rely on their tube well and the remaining 44% has excerpted their drinking water from the time-call which is implanted under Sajaldhara Prkalpo from the Government of West Bengal. By the sanitation status, about 95% of the family in the area were found to be in unhygienic condition and the remaining 5percent of family were in good hygienic situation that implies that most of the family of Pata artisans were lived there in unhealthy conditions which indirectly affects their life by prevailing of various diseases.

Duration of involvement in Patachitra Making

Figure 1 unfolds the years of involvement of the families in Patachitra art and business. The duration of involvement in years can be categories- below 5 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years and more than 20 years. In the cone diagram the first category holds 9%, the second category hold 39%, the third category holds 46% and the last category holds 6% of the total area. Hence, it can be concluded that the maximum Patachitra artisans are involved in this business from 11 to 20 years.

Transformation of respondent due to involvement in Pata Art

Transformation of respondent's life in respect to economic improvement, change of life style, identity in terms of Pata artisans and others related to quality improvement of households has been examined in this context. The figure shows that about 61% of the respondent's economic condition has been improved due to Patachitra business, 17% of the respondent's life style has been improved than before the participation in Pata art, 11% of the respondent's identity has been prospered, 7% of the respondent's quality of life has been enhanced from before and no change has been observed in the remaining 4% of the respondent. (Figure 2)

Recent changes and their effects in Patachitra Making

Recent Changes in Patachitra making especially technological change like use of painting brushes made up of mouse hair for more work, change in design, and change in market and their effects in patachitra artisans have been analysed. The result of technological changes and effects especially in knowledge about equipments and in the use of modern elements shows that about 60% of positive and only 6% of negative change has been observed in respondent's life due to the increase of knowledge about Pata equipments and the remaining percentages were distributed in neutral (23%) and undecided (11%) where about 59% and 41% of positive and negative effect respectively identified for the use of modern elements in Pata paintings. (table 3)

Patachitra started with spiritual and religious painting of mythological stories. But, with the change of choice and demand, artisans started making motifs like flowers, plants, animals and geomorphologic shapes also. One more change has been observed over the years is that, the earlier paintings used to be less comprehensive and the beautification which is seen today in Patachitra has not exist before. In this study, change of design especially in three aspects such as the change of topics and formats, change in the incorporation of theme based painting and the change in inclusion of abstract art has been examined and the result revealed that respectively 66 percent and 34percent of positive and negative effect respectively in Pata artisan's life has takes place due to the change of topics and formats. By the change of incorporation in theme based painting, around 59% of positive effect, 23% of neutral or no effect and only 4% of negative effect was observed. Here, around 64percent and 36percent of positive and negative effect respectively has been shown due to the change in design particularly in the inclusion of abstract art. (table 3)

Demand, strategy and knowledge about market are part and parcel for any business especially in understanding about other competitive products and in improving of self made products for good supply. Patachitra were traditionally painted on a cotton canvas but in recent times tussar silk has been used for Patachitra which is usually sold as wall hangings. In this context, by the change in business strategy, the study found about 73% of positive and 27% of negative effect respectively for that in respondent's business. 61percent of artisans effected positively, and only 5percent of respondent has affected negatively for the increase of global demand where 23% of them has not affected by the scenario and the remaining 11% of respondent express their motive as undecided. Respondent's Market knowledge especially about different parts of country and world has bring some positive effect (59%) where only 3% of them has faced the problem but nearly 25% of respondent has placed in neutral category implies that they the knowledge about market has not affect their business in either way. (table 3)

Major occupational problems faced by Patachitra makers in recent time

In modern period, every folk art is encircled with several problems and in spite of major contribution in rural economy, Patachitra makers also not exceptional from that. Several problems related to occupation and quality life have been observed among the respondent but the major thirteen has been identified and detailed in this study. The major problem which has been examined here is the supply of raw material. About 86% of respondent has accepted the fact of low supply of raw materials as a genuine problem for them to prepare quality art. 83% of them have claimed that unavailability of market is a matter of great concern to them. Lack of co-operative society to support (75%), Lack of fundamental support or subsidy from the local and state Government (74%), Lack of capital for investment (73%) and Lack of publicity and advertisement (66%) has been emerged in the study as a serious problem to Patachitra artisans for the increment and enhancement of qualitative development of their art and business. Low income (42%) due to insufficient order (51%) and less demand (46%) of Pata art has emerged as big concerns for the artisans who were actively involved in the business. Market problems faced by Pata artisans especially in terms of competitiveness or the availability of similar product at cheaper rate in 23percent, irregular payment in 14percent and rejection of order in 13percent of respondents implied that buyers are now more attracted to other similar products than Pata products. Bank loans have now become a major problem for artisans especially in 34percent of artisan's daily life as the market competition and lack of demand jointly associated in reducing the annual income which can be considered as a major issue for them. (figure 3)

Awareness and beneficiary about various Government schemes

Figure 1 has been made to analyse the respondent awareness about various government schemes and beneficiary status in their family. In most cases it has been found that they benefit less than they are aware of. Lokprasar Prakashan which has started for folk artistes by West Bengal state government shows that about 85.52% of respondent and their family get benefitted by the scheme where the awareness level has reached the percentage of 90.37%. By the Yuvasree Prakashan, which was implemented by West Bengal government to help the unemployment person, around 1.05% of people get benefitted out of 15.65% awareness level among the families. Swasthyasathi Prakashan which was officially launched by the West Bengal government in 2016 to give the basic health cover insurance to all the family of the state shows that 67.55% of families get benefitted by the scheme out of 69.72%. It has been shown that the beneficiary status (only 2.5%) in case of Gitanjali Prakashan which was initiated to provide proper shelters, free of cost to the poor found to be very low compare to the awareness level (59.75%). Fasal Bima by the central government which has been launched in 2016 to offer more insurance with less premium shows that both beneficiaries (8.32%) and the awareness level (22.72%) among the respondent and their family member was found to be not up to the mark. Old age Pension scheme, which has been implemented by the State Government to provide financial assistance of rupees 750per month to the senior citizen unfolds that only 2.07% get benefitted out of 13.4% aware families. Atal pension scheme (Swavalamban Yojana) by Central Government also highlighted

that about only 2.07% of citizen in the study household get the benefits while the awareness level (14.85%) was high than that. (figure 4)

Solution offered by the respondents

Pata art and Pata business are now in a critical stage and threatened by a lot of problems which was mentioned earlier in this study. There are so many occupational problems detected by the respondent. This way of solution is authentic because these are uttered by the respondents themselves to rejuvenate their local art form. Hence, the solutions offered by the respondents have been recorded where demands of Governmental help, infrastructural improvement of training centre, market creation especially for folk arts, tourism centre formation and above all educational upliftment has come to the surface.

Here, about 47% of respondent shake their head for the market creation which helps them monetary support by displaying and selling their items as well as by creating the ground of attraction for their unique works. By the Government schemes, about 21percent of the respondents' demands for more people inclusion under the umbrella of Govt. schemes which are already exist there. Education which will make them knowledgeable about other products and culture, only 13percent of them raised their hands for that. Eleven percent of respondents' demand for some training centre which perfectly can train them about modern art form and also helps them to survive the tough challenge by modifying their products. Some people (8%) opine that the formation of tourism centre close to their home will reduced their problems by increasing the traveller's mobility in their area. (figure 5)

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyse the livelihood condition of the Pata artisans and also to investigate the problems they are facing in recent time. Several aspects has been examined in this study which revealed that Pata art, which at one time played an undeniable role in improving the quality of Pata artisans life is now facing some major challenge to meet the changing needs of modern society. Most of the major problems were due to inferiority of government support, lack of capital investment, lack of publicity and lack of support from co-operative society but unavailability of suitable market and lack of raw material has also been recognised as a cause of concern. These problems collectively have become a barrier to their income. As a result of which the quality of life of artisans and families is declining and their customs and culture are in extreme danger today. Emphasis has also been put on the solution offered by poor artisans who are perceived to be in danger rather than finding solution in a visual context alone. Hence, the study also suggests that from this period, it is important to educate the Pata artisans to make them knowledgeable about the values and needs of modern society properly and expertly from the local and state Governments to protect their identity. Otherwise, the life of Pata artisans will inevitably deteriorate and above all, a traditional folk art of India will gradually lose its existence and the also the cultural glory of a diverse India will continue to fade.

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About the Authors

Kanchan Paira is a member of Asian Population Association and an affiliate of the Department of Geography of Hijli College, Kharagpur, India. With a specialization in Urban and regional planning, his interests encompass the demography, health and population, poverty, environmental studies, human geography, rural and cultural studies.

Rajaram Majhi is a student of Master of philosophy in P.G. Department of Population Studies under Fakir Mohan University. With a specialization in Population geography, his interests encompass the social issues, environmental studies, human and culture studies.

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Appendices

Table 1: Percentage distribution of Respondent characteristics, 2017

Characteristics	%	n
<i>Sex of the respondent</i>		
Male	78	100
Female	22	
<i>Marital status of respondents</i>		
Married	82.5	100
Unmarried	17.5	
<i>Literacy</i>		
Literate	76.64	100
Illiterate	23.36	
<i>Respondent's occupation</i>		
Only Pata artisan	11	100
Pata artisan and cultivation	16	
Pata artisan and labourer	73	
<i>Possession of different card by the respondent</i>		
Insurance	48	100
Bank A/C	99	
ATM	89	
Ration card (BPL)	98	
Job card	86	
Health card	68	
Craftsmen Identity card	97	
<i>Migration Status</i>		
Migrant	17	100
Native	83	
<i>Annual Income from only Patachitra business (in Rupees)</i>		
<18000	31	100
18000-36000	43	
36000-54000	19	
>54000	7	

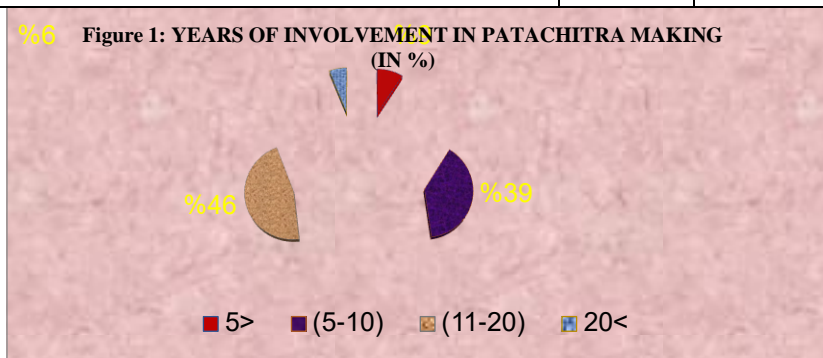
Table 2: Percentage distribution of household characteristics, 2017

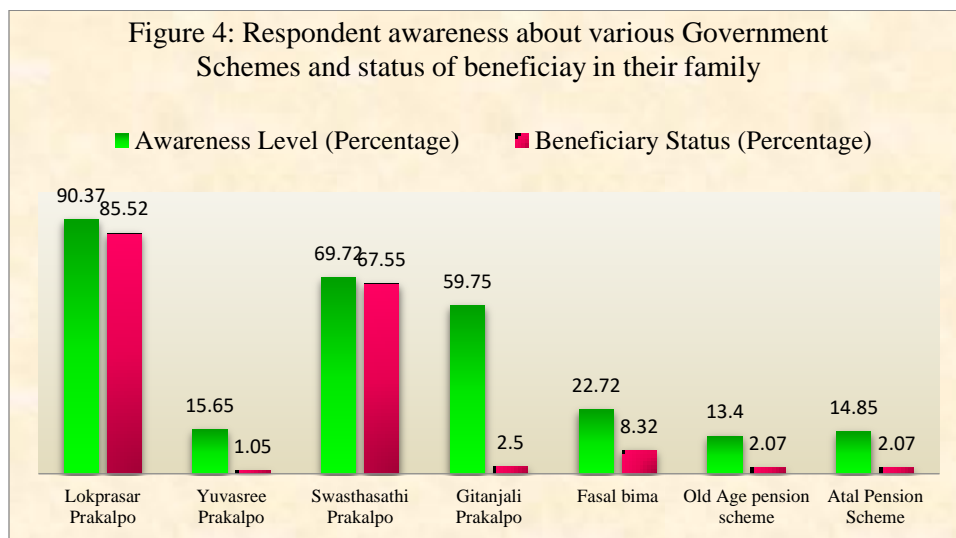
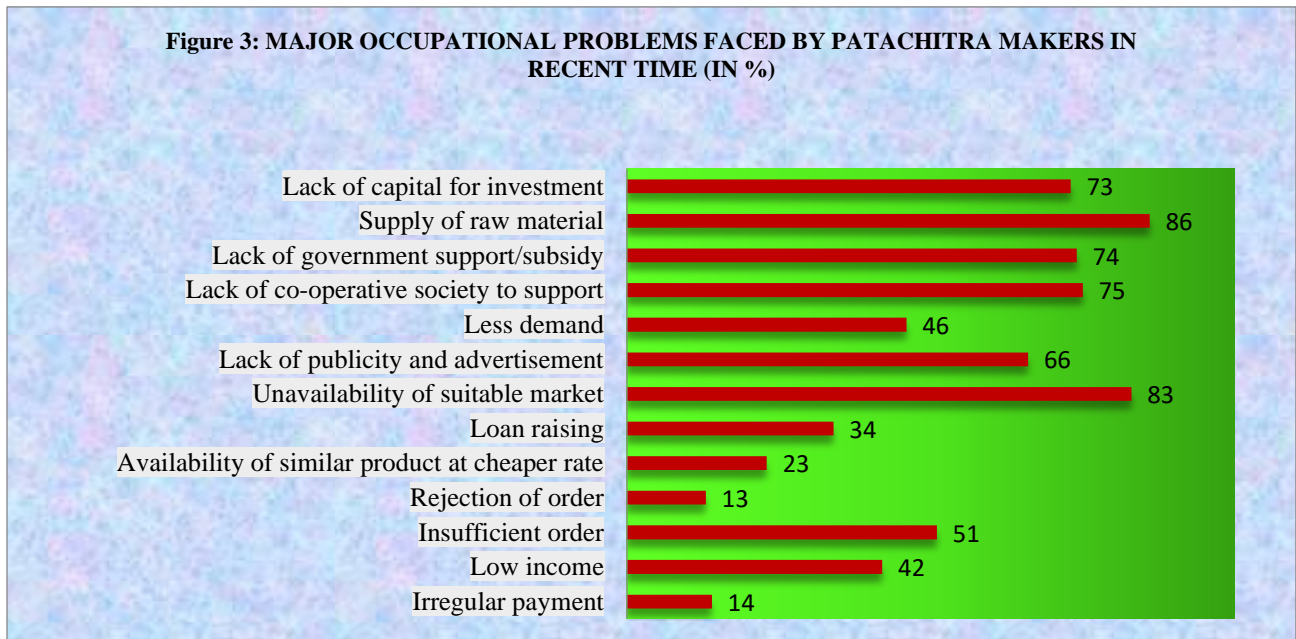
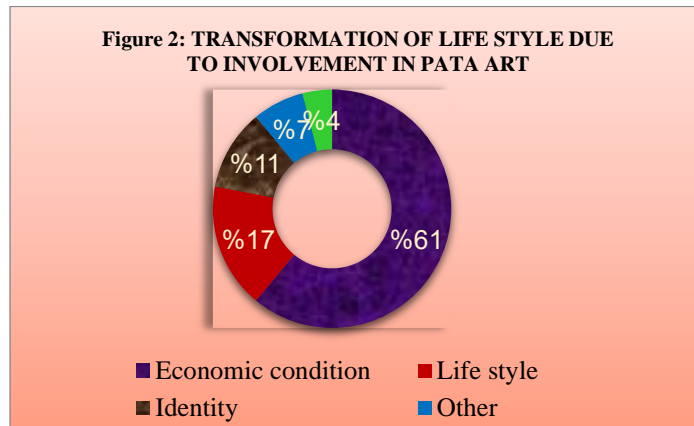
Characteristics	%	n
<i>Family type</i>		
Nuclear	73	100
Joint	27	
<i>Household size (Members)</i>		
3 or <3	20	100
4-5	48	
6-7	21	
8 or >8	11	

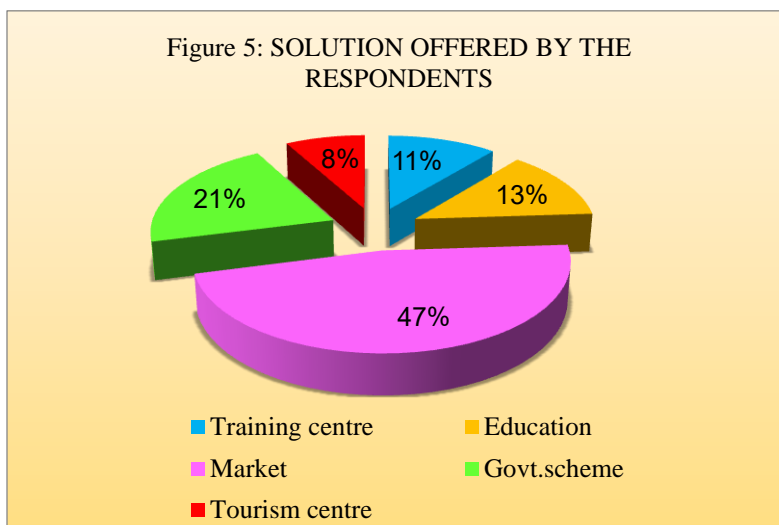
<i>House type</i> Kutchra Semi-pucca Pucca	31 49 20	100
<i>Toilet</i> Pit toilet Flush toilet	95 5	
<i>Living room</i> One Two More than two	48 41 11	
<i>Source of drinking water</i> Tube well Pipe	56 44	
<i>Sanitation status</i> Unhygienic Good hygienic	95 5	

Table 3: Recent changes and effects in Patachitra Making

Changes	Effect (in %)			
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Undecided
<i>Technological changes</i>				
Knowledge about equipments	60	06	23	11
Use of modern elements	59	41	00	00
<i>Change in design</i>				
Change in topics and formats	66	34	00	00
Incorporation of theme based painting	59	04	23	14
Inclusion of abstract art	64	36	00	00
<i>Change in market</i>				
Change in business strategy	73	27	00	00
Increasing in global demand	61	05	23	11
Knowledge about markets in other parts of the country and world	59	03	25	13







Appendix1: Links about various Government schemes mentioned in figure 1.

Scheme name	Links
Shilpi Vata	http://wblpp.in
Yuvasree Prakolpa	https://employmentbankwb.gov.in
Swasthyasathi Prakolpa	https://swasthyasathi.gov.in
Gitanjali Prakolpa	www.wbhousing.gov.in
Fasal Bima	www.agricoop.nic.in and www.agri-insurance.gov.in
Old age pension scheme	https://wbspension.gov.in
Atal Pension scheme	www.jansuraksha.gov.in

Appendix 2: Patachitra and Pata Artists

