

## **Analytical Study on Linearity of Indian Folk Paintings**

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### **Abstract**

Folk painting has evolved over time thanks to the efforts of rural painters from various parts of India. In general, folk painting is still practiced in distant rural areas. These artworks are mostly seen on mud and home walls and flooring. However, it is now being replaced by paper and textiles. Artisans employ locally sourced materials and produce their own paints and brushes. Folk art is described as anything helpful created utilizing traditional methods and basic approaches that sometimes need group effort. The study investigates and concludes that without folk painting, there is no cultural identity in human life, and occasions will be incomplete. Anyone who wishes to understand the country must first understand its roots. Folk art is a simple kind of art

created by ordinary people. Its solitary consumer is man, who is both its creator and its sole consumer. Folk art pulsates with human existence as an artistic manifestation of folk culture. Folk art is renowned for its captivating design elements, which include bold contour lines, shaded lines, calligraphic strokes, flat colour application, simplified forms characterized by bending lines, and expansive areas of unmixed colour. These features collectively define the distinctive style of Kalighat art. In all types of folk art from eastern India, floral forms are based on flowers, fruits, and plants. Folk art is very indigenous in style and technique. They make its colour with natural ingredients. Handmade brushes are used to create the line. Smooth lines, according to artist brushes available on the market, are not suited. As a result, they remake it in their own image in order to make it useful. A piece of linen is wrapped around the tips of the twigs to create broad lines.

**Key Words: Linearity, Indian, Folk Paintings, Indian Subcontinent, Artists.**

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### **Introduction**

Every nation possesses a distinct history, set of traditions, and culture, each deeply rooted in social, political, economic, and artistic

domains. In terms of art, India boasts a rich and unique cultural heritage. Within India, two distinct artistic traditions flourish. One is deeply intertwined with religious practices and thrives under the patronage of affluent and royal figures, predominantly executed by male artists. The other is anchored in women's folk tradition as it is practiced in everyday life ([www.indianart.com](http://www.indianart.com)). It is vital to understand the indigenous roots of Indian art in order to determine its genesis. Our indigenous roots, according to certain literary texts, are based on folk art. Folk paintings serve as poignant expressions of both human suffering and happiness, facilitating profound interactions within society. Additionally, these artworks represent a significant component of our civilization. Indigenous folk art and Indian classical paintings have an intimate interaction.

The term 'folk' (folk) refers to the whole population of towns and villages, not just a single habitation or hamlet. These folks live an uncomplicated and uncomplicated existence. Because it is the reflection of ordinary people's experiences, its shape and style are founded on feeling and traditions (Sharma: 2004). Folk artists typically lack formal academic training in their craft; instead, their art is cultivated from an innate

sense of beauty within themselves and their communities. Folk paintings are created on the floor, wall, ceiling, paper, pots, and other surfaces to depict mythology, special festivals, and unique events. Folk art is concerned with societal philosophy, rural life, and realism. It lacks a sharp mechanism and has a penurious appearance. To create their composition, the painters used several categories of lines and colours, as well as other themes. From time to time, some folk artists strive to experiment with new forms in order to establish a unique style of folk art. Within the original framework, these artists build a new style. The Madhubani art theme, Kantha pattern, and Kalighat Patachitra are examples of these inventions (Dutta: 1993).

### **Folk Paintings and Linearity in Indian Subcontinent**

India, a nation boasting over 2000 distinct ethnic groups, presents a rich array of visual art genres, with exhibitions spanning across each of its states. The majority of rural Indians create appealing artistic pieces with the most basic and primitive materials readily available to them. From Kanyakumari to Kashmir, Maharashtra to the Northeast, India boasts a rich heritage of folk and traditional art forms. Folk art is a beautiful part of our

cultural history. These depict its socio-religious and philosophical dimensions, which are integrated artistically and aesthetically into a life experience and presented in a unique and creative way. India is home to a plethora of folk and traditional arts. Due to its intrinsic aesthetic sensibility and authenticity, Indian folk art presents significant potential in the global market. The rural folk paintings of India boast distinct and vibrant designs adorned with religious and mystical motifs. Folk art traces its roots back to primitive societal art, with its resilience evident in the continued presence of Indian tribal communities preserving their unique cultural identities amidst today's sophisticated Hindu population (Jahan, 2008). Madhubani paintings from Bihar, patachitra paintings from Orissa and Bengal, Nirmal paintings from Andhra Pradesh, Phad from Rajasthan, and other folk-art traditions are among the most well-known in India (Mago:2007). Folk art, on the other hand, is not limited to paintings; it also includes ceramics, home decorations, ornaments, and cloth-making, among other things. In fact, because of their ethnic and traditional beauty, the potteries of several Indian districts are highly famous among foreign tourists. Furthermore, regional dances in India, Various forms of folk art from different

regions of India, such as Punjab's Bhangra, Gujarat's Dandiya, Assam's Bihu, among others, showcase the rich cultural heritage of their respective areas. These art forms stand out as prominent contenders in the realm of Indian folk art as a consequence, the Indian government, along with various institutions and associations, has exerted significant efforts to foster these art forms, which are deeply intertwined with India's cultural identity. For both eastern and western painters, folk art, which is noted for its basic, strong, symbolic, and elemental forms, became the finest source for abstraction. Jamini Roy and Nandalal Bose were the first to use this resource in India. India boasts a rich diversity of folk paintings, including scroll paintings, murals, miniatures, manuscripts, wall paintings, floor decorations, patachitra, and more, originating from different regions. Despite any potential shortcomings in formal grace or technical precision, these paintings exude warmth and inviting simplicity, captivating viewers with their unique charm. In some ways, it is the pervasive penetration of folk vernacular into courtly traditions that has been the distinguishing feature of Indian art, giving it its distinct flavour.

## **Linearity in Indian Painting**

### **(A) Ancient Indian Painting**

Berenguer claims that "Primitive cave paintings from the Neolithic period were the earliest works of visual art made on Indian locations.' In the caverns, there are multiple line paintings of animal, bird, and human figures in various positions. The pigments used are entirely natural mineral colours, and they solely employ geometrical lines to produce pictures. On the cave, the individuals drew their interpretations of what they had witnessed in nature. The Gupta paintings, which are regarded the ancient gallery of Indian art, made a significant contribution to Indian art history. However, the majority of the paintings at Ajanta date from later periods, mostly from 460 to 480 AD. Murals at Ajanta are world-famous and depict stories from Buddha's life as well as other storylines typical of Buddhist art. According to famous experts such as Ferguson, Percy Brown, A.K. Kumarswami, and Lourence Binyon, Ajanta painting is primarily characterized by strong lines and contour designs (Mitra:1996).

### **(B) Lines in Mughal and Rajput Paintings**

With Persian influence in their art work, the Mughals brought a radical transformation in the area of Indian painting from the 16th to the 18th centuries. During the Mughal empire, a new art style arose, combining Hindu, Persian, and European influences. Aerial perspective, strong and sharp line, and warm colour were utilized by artists during this time period

They not only portrayed the religious, political, and social landscapes in their paintings but also captured various facets of life during that period from multiple perspectives.

The Mughal style features exquisite brushwork advancements, as well as quieter compositions and less dramatic movement. Miniature paintings of the Mughals have added a new depth to Indian art history. The contour sketching of the body in portrait portrayal appears rigid rather than natural. The majority of Mughal school portraits were done in profile, which is a common feature of Indian folk art. The figure is depicted on a pale pink backdrop with a narrow outline in the portrait "Princess wearing a turban"

(Plate1.3). Although some designs are formed by colourful lines, every feature of the image is beautifully portrayed by black lines. The Mughal miniature painting is modest in size and features excellent brushwork. A real atmosphere is created by the decorative handling of colourful brush lines and the detailed study of Mughal lady's clothing and jewellery. Sharp and narrow lines take the role of Ajanta's modelling lines.

## **The Paintings of Modern Indian Artists**

Under the guidance of Abanindranath Tagore, the Bengal school emerged as the focal point of the revivalist style during the early twentieth century. Bengal school painters primarily adhered to traditional Indian art traditions and eastern painting styles. In Abanindranath's paintings, the generalization of line's character is broad and welcoming. In several of his works, the text was rendered in calligraphy with a beautiful border. He tweaked his design and painted a thin, attenuated figure, meticulously working out detail with delicate linear treatment. The figure in his Anandamangal and Krishamangal series of paintings is depicted as a dramatic motion. The shapes are very simple and highly sculpted with thick lines

(Dasgupta: 1993). The Bengal School attempted to reconcile individual creative variations by making works in Abanindranth's artistic tradition, with prominent outliers being Nandalal and Venkatappa, who used flat colours with strong edges. George Keyt (1901-1993), a Ceylonese artist, reached artistic maturity in the 1920s and 1930s. George Keyt combined the diverse elements of traditional Indian art and mythology, cubism, and Sinhalese art, as did other painters of the period, to produce dramatic imagery in which his figures take on an expressive grandeur and strong feeling. He employed line to represent forms, multiple planes on the surface (foreground, middle ground, and background), movement, and as a decorative theme. George's unadorned, strong simplicity reflected his admiration for the human form, particularly the feminine form. His work was lyrical in nature and influenced by temple sculptures. Harmonious lines and colour, a crimson backdrop to symbolize desire, a reduction of the forehead and nose to a straight line, and the purposeful use of magnified eyes evocative of Mewar and Basholi miniatures were among his emblems. Jamini Roy is a well-known artist who has made a significant contribution to Indian modern art. Through popular folk idiom, he offered Indian art a new depth. Folk

art had a major effect on him as one of the pioneers. Jaminy Roy's style is purposefully inspired by the Kalighat pata, which has sweeping brush strokes used to form individuals against monochrome backdrops (Appaswamy: 1968). His paintings are characterized by flat application with brilliant colour, powerful and refined linearity, and simplicity of form with black contour. For example, in Krishna and Yashoda (Plate 1.2), he employed a black outline with fresh colour to give the figure a huge quality. His line is incredibly sleek and his shape is really sturdy. The broad calligraphy line of the Kalighat tale telling scrolls, the design of alpana, the pattern of needlework kanthas, and so on were all sources of inspiration.

#### **(D) Line Drawing in Eastern Indian Folk Paintings**

Folk art in eastern India is categorized into several distinct styles. Manuscript painting originating from Assam, Kalighat painting from Bengal, Patachitra from Orissa, and Madhubani from Bihar represent four significant folk painting traditions celebrated for their intricate lines and vibrant colour palettes. The line drawing in Eastern Indian painting is the emphasis of this study, as folk paintings are mostly centered on line drawing

rather than colour. They produce mathematical, religious, and natural symbolism in a variety of free hand linear designs. Manuscript paintings began in Assam around the period of Shankardeva. The traditional artwork of medieval Assam is known as Assamese Manuscript painting. These manuscripts were written on either sachi-pat (sachi tree bark) or tula-pat (tula tree bark) (handmade paper). The paintings of Assamese and Tai Manuscripts have a variety of folk motifs. Those Manuscript paintings, Namghor or personal procession, which are currently conserved in several institutions. In Assam, there exist various illustrated manuscripts, including Hastividya, Gita-govindha, Chitra-bhagawat, Anadi-patan, Ananda-laha, kirtana, and more. The earliest documented instance of the Satriya School style can be traced back to the Chitra-bhagavata from the 17th century, which stands as one of the oldest Assamese manuscripts known. Within this manuscript, the artist's work is prominently featured at the centre of each page, complemented by detailed descriptions of the artwork filling the surrounding space. Only palm leaves were used to write the Bible. Another way in which the Satriya School's spontaneous line became bold and emphatic in the Ahom court style. Anadi-

paintings patana's likewise follow this style. In the picture, figural shapes appear to be elegant. Animal shapes are extremely lifelike, and movement is unrestricted. The figures' outline is wiry, moving with the energy to create dynamic shapes. In the manuscript drawings, heavy strong white lines showed clouds, rain beautiful themes of trees, vegetation, and other features. Here, stylized trees and white ornamental lines take the stage.

## **Bengal Patachitra**

Bengal pata, also known as manuscript cover art, traces its roots back to the Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts dating from the Pala Sena period (9th-12th century A.D). The folk style of Bengali rural artists gained popularity in the 15th century. In 1592 A.D., Moni Sing, the king of Jaipur, invaded Bengal and was subsequently appointed Subandar of Bengal and Bihar by Akbar (Basu: 2007). As a result, there was a cultural exchange between Rajasthan and Bengal. Land lords, officers, traders, painters, and sculptors from Rajasthan and other parts of northern and eastern India flocked to Bengal at the time. As a result, painters carrying Rajasthani, Pahari, and Mughal styles of painting fused with Bengali art. The narrative scroll

painting, or patachitra, is the most spectacular of the living painting traditions. Patachitra is an essential mix of music and movement. Pata is a result of a traditional society with a culture based on village life. Picture showmen were referred to in Sanskrit literature as yama pattikas ("carriers of the yamas scroll of death"), who showed hell-punishments. Pata, which denotes cloth in Sanskrit, and chitra, which implies painting, come together in the form of patachitra. A patachitra from Kashmir, believed to have been acquired in the early 17th century, is now housed in the Chester Batty Library. This particular patachitra, dating back to the 15th century, depicts the tale of Bhagavata Purana. Historically, patachitras have been categorized into two types based on their shapes: jarano and chauka. The jarano type is one that can be stretched both vertically and horizontally. It is wrapped around a stick and is meant to be opened panel by panel to narrate the story sequentially. Chauka, on the other hand, is a single-panel representation that can be square or rectangular (Dutta, 1990).

Patas are categorized into two distinct groups based on their themes: religious and secular. Religious patas typically revolve around mythical narratives drawn from various

religions, whereas secular patas predominantly explore subjects pertaining to people's socio-cultural and political realities.

. Villagers may make money by displaying patachitras such as Chandi pat, Durga pat (Plates 2.1 and 2.2), Manasha pat, Krishna-lila pat, Rash-lila pat, Ram-lila pat (Plate.2.3), Gajir pat, Shib-pat, Dashabatar-pat, and so on. Through their songs, the artists have endeavoured to clarify and illustrate the inner meaning of photographic sequences. As a result, early Buddhist literatures are sometimes referred to as pictorial showmen. The management of pata is primarily influenced by the idea that empty or void space does not exist. Therefore, the figures are arranged to be visible whether at close or distant sight, and all are typically constructed in standard sizes unless a figure in the narrative holds particular significance. Finishing lines were generally created in black in pata paintings, which is the final and most essential component of the painting. Several lines of different contrasting colours are offered before painting this final black line. To draw out features of ornaments and costumes, red lines are painted over yellow surfaces. Every piece of their work reflects their passion and sincerity to their craft. Patachitra painting is characterized by its

simplicity of expression and careful craftsmanship, which allows for angularity in the delineation of figures defined by forceful contour. Patachitra painting employs spontaneity and a lively line. In the picture, figural forms appear to be graceful. The figures' outline is wiry, moving with the energies to create lively forms. Clouds, rain, decorative motifs of trees, plants, and other features were conveyed by thick white lines. Generally, the figures are painted in tempera with flat colours and a firm brush line.

### **(A) Midnapur is Depicted in This Painting Pata.**

Midnapur is renowned for its rich heritage of indigenous art forms. Within its borders thrives a historic caste society of artisans referred to as patuas, who specialize in the creation of vibrant scrolls. These scrolls, adorned with a plethora of hues, serve as a testament to the region's intricate tapestry of historical narratives, contemporary insights, religious motifs, and cultural expressions. The artists used vibrant colours to pique the audience's curiosity. These were created using natural components such as plant and vegetable extracts.



The cloth was traditionally covered with cow dung to smooth the surface, then white washed and used for painting. Midnapur paintings have a smooth and plastic aspect to their lines. The quality of line in the pata, which is normally straight linear construction, sometimes exhibits sculpted features, which could be a relic of Bengal miniature art (Dutta: 1993). According to Singh, Midnapur patuas created scrolls based on the Ramayana, Krishna lila, and mangal kavyas, or medieval Bengali epics that honour local Goddesses. "The scroll from Midnapur, the most 'folkish' style, had a multitude of simple figures filling the field, with little reference to architectural or backdrop element?" she goes on to say.

The figure of Ramayana pata shows the use of diagonal lines. The ability to delineate figures in detail using line and colour has been nicely merged with the traditional Indian manner of portraying continuous time. In the Indian Buddhist storytelling schools of Sachi, Amarabati, and Mathura, this type of figure can be found.

### **(B) Murshidabad Pata**

Murshidabad's Patua painters drew inspiration from India's ancient painting styles, incorporating elements from both the

Sultanate court's aesthetics and the regional flair of Rajasthan. Their scroll drawings, known as Pata, portray narratives from the Ramayana and Bhagavata Purana, along with other revered Hindu mythological tales, contributing significantly to the oral transmission of tradition. Additionally, their artwork often features depictions of birds, animals, snakes, and fish. The Murshidabad Pata paintings are noted for their harmonious compositions, reflecting a meticulous attention to balance. The majority of the figures are in profile. The human figure of Murshidabad pata is characterized by a broad forehead, stable eyebrows, sharp nose, small chin, and lengthened finger tips. The figure of Rama is painted in green in the patachitra, while Sita, Laxmana, and Ravana are portrayed in red, yellow, and blue, respectively. Finally, in the painting, outlines are painted to produce a delicate and steady form. Dutta explains that the red and white borders in the painting are occasionally alternated. The black sloping lines are occasionally utilized. The border lines are sometimes made in red and yellow and run parallel to each other, with red flower and lead patterns (1993).

## **Folk Paintings of Orissa**

### **(A) Patachitra of Orissa**

The patachitra paintings in Orissa are painted over a piece of cloth called a pata, which is initially painted with a chalk or gum mixture. Then a colourful and elaborate depiction of many Gods and Goddesses, as well as a legendary landscape with adornment of flowers, trees, and animals, is painted over the prepared surface. The character of the lines is bold, crisp, angular, and sharp. Landscapes, perspectives, and distant views are absent from these works. All of the incidents are shown in close proximity. Mughal influences are evident in the clothing depicted in the artwork. The background against which the figures are portrayed features intricate floral and foliage designs, predominantly painted in red. Orissa patachitra painting is renowned for its ornate decorative borders. The entire picture is planned as a design on a specific canvas. Painters, also known as Chitrakaras, are primarily located in the Puri district, notably in Raghurajpur, a crafts hamlet. Patachitra's tradition is intertwined with Lord Jagannath's worship, as well as stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The patachitra painting depicts three deities who are also

depicted in the inner shrine of the Jagannath temple in Puri (Plate.2.6). The main deity, Jagannath, is on the right, his brother Balabhadra is on the left, and his sister Subhadra is in the centre. The patas, made of silk or cotton, were made through a complex procedure that took at least 5 days for the ladies to finish. It entailed applying a mixture of tamarind seeds and powdered clay on the pata multiple times, drying it, and then polishing it with stone. The painting itself is done in a methodical manner. All four sides of the artwork are initially bordered. The figures are then highlighted in white. Body colours are added, and delicate brush strokes are used to design clothing. The photos are enhanced by the use of white and yellow. Thick black lines are used to create more distinct themes. Other floral and geometrical elements can be found throughout the picture. Surprisingly, the chitrakar uses vivid colours to begin and end his painting. Although most Patachitras are painted in a variety of colours, there are some excellent black and white works. White, black, red, yellow, green, and blue, all obtained from natural sources, make up the artist's palette.

## **(B) Tasser Painting**

Tasser painting is an Orissa style of painting done on tasser silk material. According to Raghurajpur painters, tasser painting is a much simpler method than pata painting. Tasser cloth is a type of silk fabric made by weavers in Orissa. In the Orissa region, this style of textile is readily accessible. Pata painting, according to artists, takes far longer than tasser painting. The tasser silk is first adhered to a board using gum, and then the image is sketched with a pencil. The drawing is then painted with homemade colours, and the outline of the objects is redrawn and decorated with a fine brush. The painting's border is an essential component. They begin by completing the border design. The border is embellished with a variety of flora and wildlife decorative patterns. Like patachitra painting, double lines are employed on the border. The border has a simple linear style as well. Figures are sketched on a thin line and then coloured in brilliant colours. White is used to draw decorative motifs. The painting's dimensional appeal is enhanced by this colourful linear design. They employ a lot of vibrant colours. Fine lines are used to adorn the costume and ornament. Sometimes lines are drawn vertically, while other times they are drawn horizontally.

## **(C) Painting with Palm Leaves**

Palm leaf painting (Plate.2.8), one of Orissa's most prominent art forms, is still practiced in the village of Raghurajpur today. Raghurajpur, Orissa, painters burnish the dried palm leaf before cutting it into large strips. These are sewn together to make a rectangular surface that is flat and vertically orientated. Artists use their iron tools to sketch their desired image on the prepared leaf strips (iron pen). Within lines, etching is done. Lines are rubbed with ink, then wiped or rinsed away. This artwork uses both vegetable and mineral colours, however the most of the work is done in black. The engravings depicted in Plate 2.9 encompass various themes such as the narrative of Krishna, scenes from the Ramayana, and depictions of Hindu gods and goddesses, all drawn from Hindu religious epics. These artworks also incorporate elements of nature, including flowers, animals, and birds, alongside diverse flora and fauna. The cult of Jagannath is a prominent motif in these paintings, along with scenes from both the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Additionally, these engravings are available in both colour and black-and-white renditions.

## **Bihar Folk Paintings**

### **(A) Madhubani Paintings**

Madhubani Painting stands out as one of India's most exquisite art forms, deeply rooted in the diverse cultural heritage of the nation. Originating from the Mithila region and its surrounding villages within Bihar's Madhubani district, this art form has captivated the attention of artists, aficionados, and historians worldwide. Its rich history dates back to ancient times, with its origins believed to trace back to the era of the Ramayana.

In the past, this particular skill was predominantly performed by women within village communities. However, nowadays, both men and women engage in these art forms. These paintings are utilized by women to embellish the walls of their residences and huts during various festivals or ceremonial occasions. Different communities produce these paintings in a variety of styles and patterns. The Brahmins get their ideas from ancient texts depicting Krishna, Rama, Shiva, and Durga in vibrant colours. Similar scenes are painted by the Kayastha, but exclusively in black and red. The pictorial styles of the Brahmins and Kayasthas are referred to as

"Madhubani or Mithila painting." The version from Dusadh is the third style. Tattoo or Godna painting (Plate. 2.10) (Takur: 1982) is the name given to their style. The Godna art is marked by line drawings in multiple horizontal borders and looks to be repetitive and simplistic in design. With its intricate designs in monochrome or select primary hues, it exudes innate elegance and sophistication. Cloth, handmade paper, and canvas now substitute the conventional base of freshly plastered mud walls found in huts. Bihar's Maithili painting prominently showcases Hindu deities including Krishna, Rama, Lakshmi, Shiva, Durga, and Saraswati. In those paintings, natural motifs like as the Sun, Moon, and the holy plant Tulsi are employed ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)). According to Takur, "conventionalized flora and fauna, circles in series, spiral or curve linear devises, series of small lines, footprint of fragmentary pictures portraying legends and stories, giving glimpses of environmental and natural life" are among the motifs or patterns.

### **(B) Godna Painting**

Another popular item of Mithila traditional art is Godna painting. This type of painting is thought to be done by Mithila's lower caste

inhabitants. Tattoo painting is another name for it. It is performed not just on the human body, but also on paper (Plate.2.12). The painting's medium is diluted cow poo. Erica Moser, a German filmmaker and folklorist, came to Madhubani's Jitwarpur village to see their work. She was blown away by these paintings and recommended them to re-create them on paper. Handmade papers are currently used as a canvas by Jitwarpur artisans. Natural colours are commonly used by folk artists. The primary sources of colour are bark, leaves, plant seeds, and flowers. Goat milk is blended with powdered synthetic colours. The paintings incorporate a variety of linear themes and symbols, including fish, lotus, flora, the sun and moon, as well as human and animal characters.

### **(C) Floor Painting of Mithila**

Floor paintings are popular in Mithila, as they are in other parts of India. In Bihar's Mithila region, floor paintings are known as aripana painting. According to Takur, there isn't a single house in Mithila where aripana isn't used for celebrations. Linearity and mythological symbols are the two fundamental qualities of aripana painting. Aripana painting with white rice paste on the floor, based on line drawing (Plate.2.16).

Currently, artists use a variety of colours such as red, green, yellow, blue, and others. Tantric cult is also linked to Aripana paintings. In Mithila, this aripana painting is particularly well-known and auspicious. It is performed on auspicious occasions such as brata, puja, and marriage ceremonies.

### **Manuscript Painting of Assam**

Before the arrival of paper in India, the palm-leaf manuscript, known as puthi, was an early book form in the Indian subcontinent. It had a long and narrow horizontal format, rarely exceeding 60 cm in length and 6 cm in height. Miniature representations of deities to whom the work was dedicated were illuminated on manuscripts. Fine line designs are etched with a steel stylus on rectangular strips of palm leaves that are painstakingly strung together in this delicate and sophisticated art form. Before the widespread use of paper, these texts served as standard books (Neog: 2004). Assamese manuscript painting is a centuries-old practice. Assamese manuscript art is considered traditional Assamese painting from the Middle Ages. The art of manuscript illumination flourished in medieval Assam, with the emergence of three major independent schools of painting. The

three schools are: (1) Tai-Ahom, (2) Satriya, and (3) Ahom court style/ Royal school.

During the medieval Assam period, manuscripts were crafted on sachi-pat (sachitree bark) and tula-pat (handmade paper). Srimanta Sankardeva is credited as the progenitor of the Satriya painting style, marking its inception as the inaugural indigenous school of painting in Assam. Observably, the paintings exhibit influences from Mughal, Rajput, and Pahari styles.

In Assam, there exists a rich variety of illustrated manuscripts, encompassing works such as Hastividya, Gita-govindha, Bhagavata-purana, Anadi-patana, Anandalahari, Kirtana, and more. These manuscripts depict prominent Hindu texts like the Bhagavata, Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, along with other epics. Within these manuscripts, numerous illustrations portray Lord Vishnu and his avatars, in accordance with Hindu beliefs.

This assortment comprises a vast array of illuminated and illustrated manuscripts originating from diverse schools. Many of these manuscripts are renowned for their exquisite calligraphy, intricate lines, sophisticated compositions, and captivating colour palettes.

Each image typically consists of two main sections. The background consistently appears as a plain red, devoid of any intricate detailing, while the remainder of the "alekhya-sthana" is painted in a flat green or alternative colour, serving as the canvas for the primary painting. Notably, figures, whether human, animal, or otherwise, are consistently depicted in profile, lending a distinctive characteristic to these miniatures. As noted by Barua (2011),

"If the panel is longer, the top half of the background is always uneven in shape, following the contour of the arch or sequence of arches. By changing the hues of the foreground, background, and horizon, or by including symbolic and significant motifs like grass, plants, or clouds, the complete space is never broken into foreground, backdrop, or horizon. All other views are absent in this piece, which appears to be in eye level view ". In the manuscript picture, there are also magnificent images of clothes. The dhoti and scarf, which are generally worn by masculine figures, have been painted. Female clothing embellished with beautiful linear work include the mekhala, sari, and riha.

### (A) Kirtana Manuscripts

Kirtana Manuscripts paintings are distinguished by their precise drawings, powerful brush strokes, lyrical draughtsmanship, and opulent rhythm, along with an extensive graphic language. Within the entirety of Satriya paintings, the artists demonstrate exceptional skill in the treatment of lines. Border brush strokes on the sash and garland, as well as the dhoti's border, have given Krishna's shape more movement in space. The sweeping flowing arches with uniformly sized lines contrast with the sash once more (Kalita: 2009).

The figures in the painting are shown at a very small scale. Those have a squat and corpulent appearance. The style depicts the shabby draughtsmanship of a deteriorated brush from the peasant generation of the twentieth century. The picture (Plate 2.21) represents Vishnu's two incarnations as matsya and kurma, as well as the birth of Brahma from Vishnu's navel lotus. King Satyabrata is also seen here, sitting on a calpita. Except for Brahma, every figure is a profile. On the right edge of the image, there is a dark devil standing behind a devotee seated. Every figure has distinct outline. To accentuate the figures, they added a black

outline. The three-sided border pattern is well-organized. Flowers and leaf motifs can be found here. The artist demonstrates his mastery of line and tone in this work. Vishnu is seated in padmasana mudra, holding the shankha, chakra, gada, and padma. Except for Vishnu, all of the figurines are shown in profile. The artwork features a crimson background adorned with intricate patterns. Positioned in the upper corner are two majestic peacocks, each meticulously adorned with delicate linear designs. Kalita remarked, "In manuscript painting, line is very important. In the contours, lines form in and out depth. The artist in question uses his brush in an unsteady and harsh manner. Rather, he uses his brush in a hurried manner". All of these properties of lines are reflected prominently in kirtana's paintings (2009). Mahesha and a garden landscape are depicted in Plate 2.19. Here you can view a variety of linear motifs. The artist used white paint to emphasize the painting's linear style. The outline of trees may be seen plainly here. The artist has focused on the narrative qualities of linear themes such as trees, birds, and vegetation.

## (B) Anadi-Patana Manuscripts

The Anadi-patana style was followed by the Satriya style. The character of figural forms is really exquisite. Naturalistic animal forms are used, and painters display a lot of movement. According to Kalita, the figures in Anadip Atana's artwork are wiry and flowing with the energies to produce some lively forms. The human figure's circular eyes are identical to those in the Ratnabali collection of paintings, which were created between 1683 and 1732 AD.

Thematically, Anadi-patana exhibits the same angularity of draughtsmanship as the drawings of Chitra-bhagavata and other late-17th-century manuscripts. The Anadi Patana manuscript is a hybrid of two styles. In this context, Kalita stated that the artist grows new conventions to provide to his own by dismissing some of the older period's conventions.

Mount Meru (Plate 2.20), a folio from the Anadi-patana manuscript, appears to be a schematically defined water sprout. The oceans are semi-circular in shape and have a similar schematic form (Kalita: 2009). Each character is represented with a sharp pointed nose and a hand gesture in which he extends his solitary arm towards space. The figures

are depicted in a stooped and swaying posture, suggesting a sense of hunched-over demeanour. Within the overall visual presentation, the compositions exude a languid quality, largely due to the perfunctory nature of the drawing. Architecture, along with other elements of the artwork, held significance in manuscript painting. The architectural motifs within the compositions occasionally echo the distinctive features of Mughal architecture, hinting at potential influence from Mughal painting on the manuscript's creator. In this regard, Kalita claims that the architectural framework is reasonable. Only a few architectural chambers resemble a khatala, having magara patterns on both ends of the horizontal bar. These various painting techniques evolved from older folk art.



Plate 1

Durga Patachitra of Bengal



## Conclusion

After examining folk paintings from the Indian subcontinent, it was observed that various elements such as mythological narratives, geometric patterns, and floral designs significantly influenced the work of folk painters. These artists drew inspiration from a wide array of sources including stories from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as scriptures like the Puranas and the Gita-govinda. They also depicted various deities such as Shiva, Durga, Ganesh, Kali, Saraswati, and Jagannatha, alongside scenes from everyday human life.

Additionally, folk painters frequently incorporated representations of birds and animals into their artwork. Notably, these artists often utilized organic or naturally occurring pigments sourced from their local environment to create their vibrant compositions. Natural sources of colour include lamp soot, leaves from various trees, flowers, and so on. Tamarind seeds, be/fruit, are utilized to bond the colours together. Indians are well-known for their varied festivals and events. During the occasion, Indians create a series of linear designs on the floor that include a variety of religious and



Plate-2 Durga, Patachitra of Bengal



Plate-3 Patachitra of Orissa, Kaliya Demon

stylized natural symbols. Village women are particularly skilled at this style of floor painting. The basic elements of these paintings are line and colour. As a painting medium, rice paste and powdered colours are employed. They brush with their fingers. Folk art is an art form made by rural people for rural people, focusing around various types of rituals, traditions, and festivals, according to a detailed examination of the social, historical, and cultural remnants of the Indian subcontinent. Folk art does not rely on grammatical understanding established by ancient authors of folk art and culture. Instead, it is an art form developed spontaneously by rural artists using natural colours and ingredients in the simplest feasible way. Every region of India has its own distinct style of folk art, with vivid colours and bold lines being common characteristics. However, it's important to note that not all folk-art features sharp or smooth lines. For instance, Orissa's Patachitras and Bihar's Madhubani paintings are renowned for their flawless linearity, while shaded lines are prominent in Kalighat paintings. Folk painters typically do not use light and shade, resulting in a two-dimensional quality in their work. In Assamese manuscripts, male and female figures are typically depicted conventionally,

with all figures drawn in profile except for Brahma. Artists often portray masculine attire by painting a dhoti and a scarf hanging from the neck, with both ends loosely falling over the shoulders on either side. The female clothes are draped with (mekha/a), which is Assamese women's traditional attire. Animal and bird depictions are both traditional and naturalistic in nature. In their works, manuscript painters used red, green, and blue colours.

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