

Pattachitra paintings

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In news : Recently, the Prime Minister praised Odisha 'pattachitra' artist in Mann Ki Baat

A brief note Pattachitra Painting

- Pattachitra style of painting is one of the oldest and most popular art forms of Odisha & West Bengal.
- The name Pattachitra has evolved from the Sanskrit words patta, meaning canvas, and chitra, meaning picture.
- Pattachitra is thus a painting done on canvas, and is manifested by rich colourful application, creative motifs and designs, and portrayal of simple themes, mostly mythological in depiction.
- Pattachitra artform is known for its intricate details as well as mythological narratives
- Pattachitra is one of the ancient artworks of Odisha, originally created for ritual use and as souvenirs for pilgrims to Puri, as well as other temples in Odisha
- The painting 'pattachitra' resembles the old murals of Odisha especially religious centres of Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar region, dating back to the 5th century BC. The best work is found in and around Puri, especially in the village of Raghurajpur

Popular themes

Pattachitra (of Odisha) have mainly the design of Lord Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra

Some of the other popular themes represented through this art form are

- **Thia Badhia** – depiction of the temple of Jagannath
- **Krishna Lila** – enactment of Jagannath as Lord Krishna displaying his powers as a child

- **Dasavatara Patti** – the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu
- **Panchamukhi** – depiction of Lord Ganesh as a five-headed deity.

How are these paintings made?

- **Making the patta is the first thing** that comes in the agenda, and the painters, also called chitrakars, go about their work in **preparing a tamarind paste**, which is made by soaking tamarind seeds in water for three days.
- The seeds are later pounded with a crusher, mixed with water, and heated in an earthen pot to turn it into a paste, which is called niryas kalpa.
- The paste is then used to hold two pieces of cloth together with it, and coated with a powder of soft clay stone a couple of times till it becomes firm.
- Soon as the cloth becomes dry, the final touch of polishing it with a rough stone and then a smooth stone or wood is given, until the surface becomes smooth and leathery, and is all ready as a canvas to be painted on.
- The gum of the kaitha tree is the chief ingredient, and is used as a base for making different pigments, on which diverse raw materials are mixed for diverse colours.
- Powdered conch shells, for instance, are used for making a white pigment, while lamp soot is used for a black pigment.
- The root of the keya plant is usually used for making the common brush, while mouse hair is used on the requirement of finer brushes, to be attached to wooden handles.
- **The creation of the Pattachitra paintings is a disciplined art form, and the chitrakars maintain rigidity in their use of colours and patterns**, restricting the colours to a single tone.
- Limiting themselves within the boundaries of some rules, the chitrakars come up with such remarkable paintings

depicting stark emotional expressions that it is a surprise shading of colours is a taboo.

- In fact, it is this display of emotions of the figures expressed in the paintings, which is the crème de la crème of the art form, and the chitrakars put in their best to bring out the most through their rich colourful motifs.