

# Patachitra

## Narrative Visuals



**Rural Craft Hub**

**Pingla**

**Pashchim Medinipur**

Supported by  
Department of MSME&T  
Government of West Bengal



# Index

the location

the craft

the artists

the raw materials

the process

the products

heritage education

exchange & collaboration

the festival

the folk art centre

directory

The Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises & Textiles, Government of West Bengal in collaboration with UNESCO has developed a hub of Patachitra at Naya, Pingla in Paschim Medinipur.



# 1. the location

## **Naya Village, Pingla Block, Paschim Medinipur**

Naya is the village of singing painters who practise the art of Patachitra painting. A visitor to the village is taken away by the wonderfully decorated walls of the village houses. An intricate tapestry of music and visual art is what makes Naya of Pingla more than just a village.

### **Getting there:**

**By Train:** The nearest railway station is Balichak and frequent local trains are available from Howrah. Balichak is about half an hour's drive from the village.

**By Road:** Naya is about 120 kms from Kolkata and takes about 3.5 hrs by road.

**By Air:** Kolkata is the nearest airport.

### **Accommodation:**

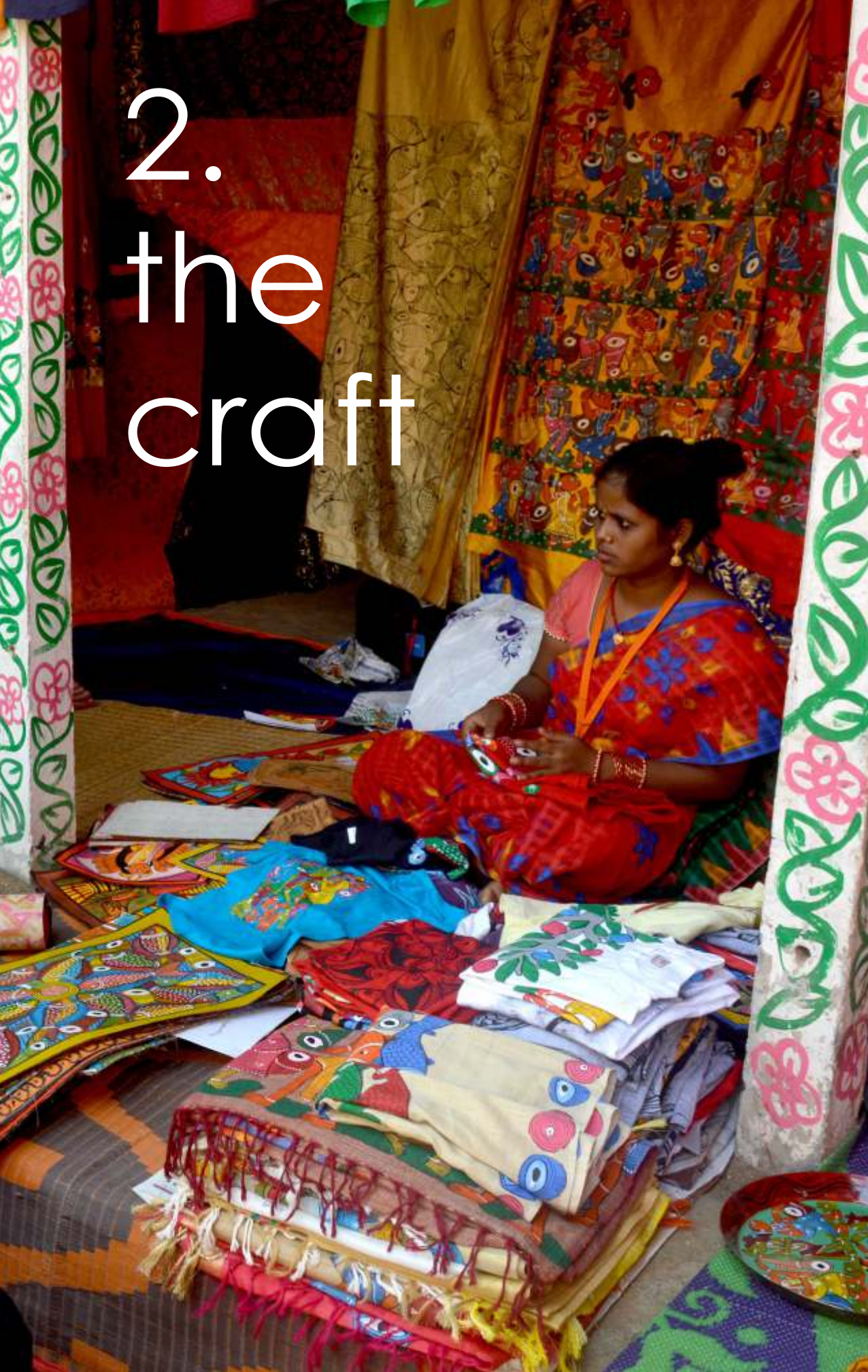
One can stay at the artists' home, folk art centre or in a guest house in Pingla. There are hotels in Balichak as well.

### **Nearby places of interest:**

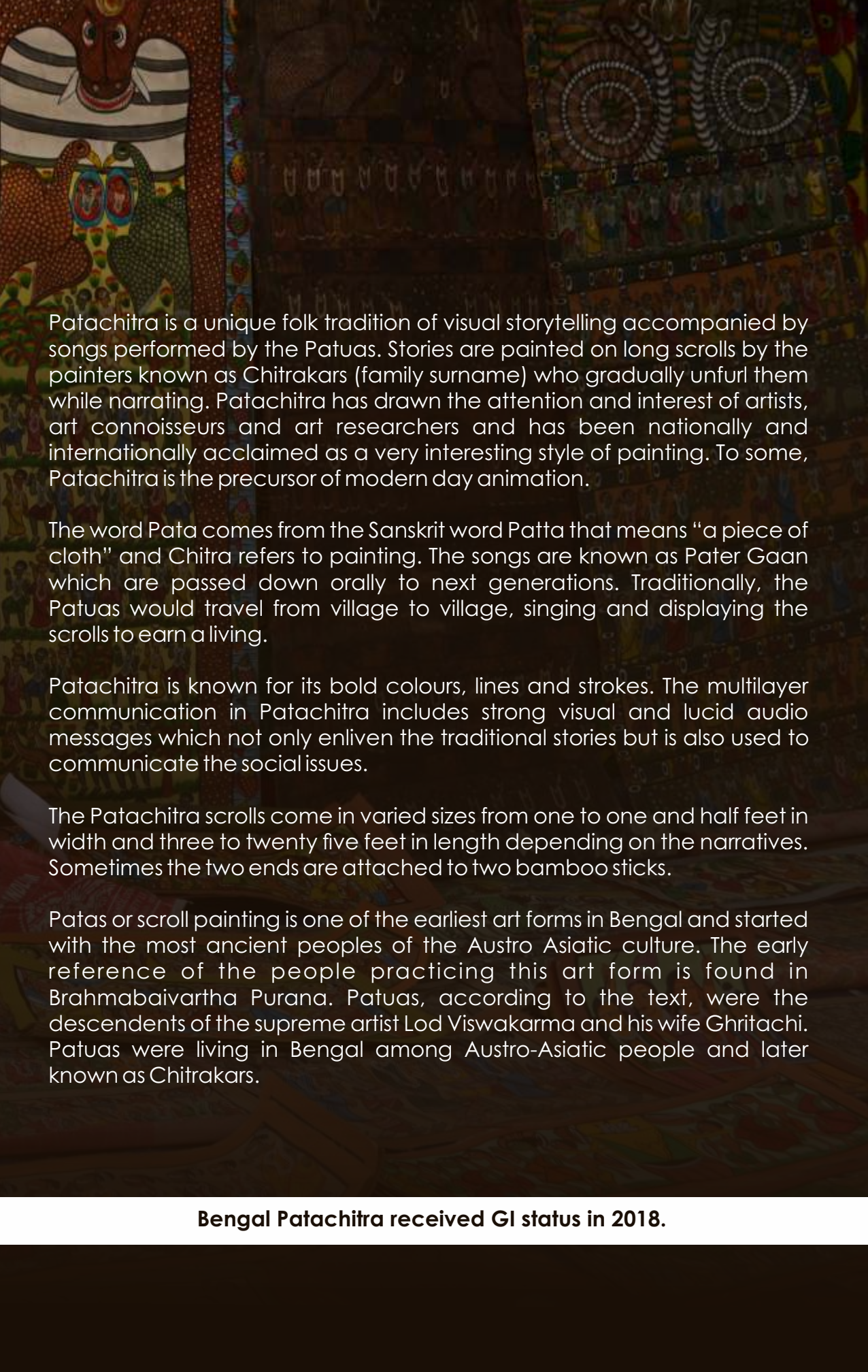
- Sabang, famous for its marvellous madurkathi weaves is 15 kms away.



# 2. the craft







Patachitra is a unique folk tradition of visual storytelling accompanied by songs performed by the Patuas. Stories are painted on long scrolls by the painters known as Chitrakars (family surname) who gradually unfurl them while narrating. Patachitra has drawn the attention and interest of artists, art connoisseurs and art researchers and has been nationally and internationally acclaimed as a very interesting style of painting. To some, Patachitra is the precursor of modern day animation.

The word Pata comes from the Sanskrit word Patta that means "a piece of cloth" and Chitra refers to painting. The songs are known as Pater Gaan which are passed down orally to next generations. Traditionally, the Patuas would travel from village to village, singing and displaying the scrolls to earn a living.

Patachitra is known for its bold colours, lines and strokes. The multilayer communication in Patachitra includes strong visual and lucid audio messages which not only enliven the traditional stories but is also used to communicate the social issues.

The Patachitra scrolls come in varied sizes from one to one and half feet in width and three to twenty five feet in length depending on the narratives. Sometimes the two ends are attached to two bamboo sticks.

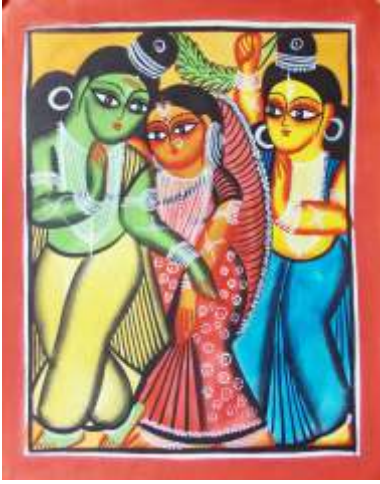
Patas or scroll painting is one of the earliest art forms in Bengal and started with the most ancient peoples of the Austro Asiatic culture. The early reference of the people practicing this art form is found in Brahmabaivartha Purana. Patuas, according to the text, were the descendents of the supreme artist Lod Viswakarma and his wife Ghritachi. Patuas were living in Bengal among Austro-Asiatic people and later known as Chitrakars.

**Bengal Patachitra received GI status in 2018.**

# The Themes

Patachitras are usually based on different themes like mythological tales, historical events and contemporary issues, social issues etc.

## Mythological Patas



The traditional mythological Patas depict stories related to Indian mythology based on Ramayana, Mahabharata, Mangal Kavyas etc.



The fateful stories of Savitri-Satyavan, divine love of Radha-Krishna, mourning of Sita during her abduction by Ravana have an immense power of captivating and entertaining a large audience. The stories deeply rooted in our culture are living through this visual and oral narratives from generation to generation.

## Historical and Contemporary Patas



Patuas also paint Patas on various historical events and contemporary issues. Different historical incidents like independence of India, partition of Bengal, Indigo revolution and other happenings like global war against terrorism, horrors of nuclear war etc. find expressions in their paintings. Biographies and contributions of great personalities like Rabindranath Tagore, Vidyasagar, Rammohan Roy among others are also common themes.



## Patachitra on Social Issues

The idea of using Patachitra and Pater Gaan as a communication tool is gaining popularity. Use of this creative art form as Communication for Development (C4D) creates ways for improving health, nutrition and other key social issues.

The artists are commissioned to paint wide range of topics on women rights, child rights, health, literacy and environment conservation to name a few.



## The Formats

Three original formats are generally seen among the Patachitras in Bengal.



**Jarano or Gutano Pata** - These are scroll Patas. The picture frames are painted vertically and consists ten to fifteen frames. Patuas used scroll Patas to sing the stories and earn their living.



**Arelatai Pata** - Here the picture frames are arranged horizontally - bound in two ends by two wooden sticks to enable the Patuas to unroll the Pata as he gradually displayed it in front of an audience. This are comparatively smaller with 3-6 frames together.



**Chauka Pata** - These square and rectangle Patas are used for painting one particular deity or mythical or social subject etc. The typical example of these kinds are Kalighat Patas which were mainly developed for sale.





# 3. the artists

**A**rtists at Naya have formed a cluster by the name of “**Chitrataru**”. Chitrataru takes an active role in finding opportunities for sale, training of young crafts persons, organizing festival of Patuas and maintaining connections with buyers etc.

GP	Village	# of households	# of artists	# of women
Maligram	Naya	70	254	124

Leading artists like late Gurupada Chitrakar and Anwar Chitrakar have won National award. Amit Chitrakar, Rahim Chitrakar, Ruma Chitrakar, Jhuma Chitrakar, Ajay Chitrakar, Rupban (Swarna) Chitrakar, Sambhu Chitrakar, Chandan Chitrakar, Putul Chitrakar, Jahuran Chitrakar, Hajera Chitrakar, Meena Chitrakar and many other artists have won state level award.

Swarna Chitrakar, Manu Chitrakar, Monimala Chitrakar, Rahim Chitrakar, Moyna Chitrakar, Jaba Chitrakar, Suman Chitrakar, Rupsana Chitrakar, Sonali Chitrakar, Mamoni Chitrakar, Hajera Chitrakar, Sonia Chitrakar, Yakub Chitrakar, Sushama Chitrakar have travelled to places like UK, France, USA, Italy, Lithuania, China, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark to showcase their art from.



4.  
the  
raw  
material



The raw materials used to make a piece of traditional Patachitra paintings are: papers, cloths, adhesive and natural colour extracted from fruits, flowers, vegetable, leaves and mud. The artists extract red colour from Saffron, blue from Aparajita, White from Kusum Mati, green from runner beans or brown from Teak leaves. Gum from wood apple is extracted in a coconut shell and mixed with natural colours and kept in the bright sunlight to darken.

## Some of the natural colours and their origin

<p><b>Black (soot)</b> Previously a source of black soot was from oil lamps, cooking fires, burnt rice grains or burning bamboo. Now a more modern method is from scraping the soot out of dirty lorry exhaust pipes with a stick. The soot is collected in a plastic bag.</p>	
<p><b>Red (Segun/Teak)</b> The new leaves of Segun tree are selected and plucked.</p>	
<p><b>Red – Jafran/ Lotkon</b> The seeds are used to extract colour. The seeds grow in spiky pods which grow in clusters at the top of the tree.</p>	
<p><b>Blue (Aparajita)</b> The blue flower whose name means 'Lady who cannot be defeated' grows prolifically as a creeper and the petals are plucked.</p>	
<p><b>Brown (Teak/Segun)</b> The matured leaves of Segun are collected.</p>	
<p><b>White (Kusum Mati)</b> Kusum Mati is a special type of clay and only the whiter stones are used in order to produce the white colour.</p>	
<p><b>Red (Pan/betel leaf, Churi/lime, Khayer/Catec hu)</b> These are mostly bought from the market to make a red colour. The ingredients are crushed together and the colour extracted.</p>	
<p><b>Green (Kundri)</b> The leaves of Kurdri are used to make the green paint. The leaves are collected and crushed by a pestle.</p>	
<p><b>Yellow (Turmeric)</b> Turmeric is a plant in the ginger family. Its roots are the source of a bright yellow spice and dye. The Patuas use this plant to produce the yellow colour.</p>	





# 5. the process





1. Outlines of the paintings are directly drawn on paper with paint and brush.

2. the line drawings are filled in with colour.



3. A layer of recycled soft fabric is pasted on the reverse side of the paper to make the scroll stronger.

4. The paintings are dried naturally.







# 6. the product

**P**atachitra in its original form is painted on paper scrolls. With design interventions in recent times the paintings are done not only for narrative purposes but also for decoration on various products. These include apparels, fashion accessories, lifestyle items, furniture, jewellery etc.















# 7. heritage education



Schools from district and cities visit Naya as part of their field tours, learning about the history, process and natural colour making. International students, scholars and professors also visit the hub. The artists also take part in heritage education at district and state level schools. Renowned Patua Swarna Chitrakar has also taken part in heritage education programme with students of Grinnell College, Ohio, USA.





# 8. exchange- collaboration

Exchange and collaboration with international institutions/ artists gave excellent exposure to the Patachitra artists. The artists have also traveled to different countries of Europe, South Asia and USA.







# 9. the festival



The artists of Pingla celebrate their annual 3-day festival "POT Maya" since 2010 in the 3rd weekend of November. House in the village transforms into an art gallery. Visitors can interact with the artists, get to know about the stories behind their paintings, learn about the ways to extract natural colours and paint and collect some marvellous art works.

While in Pingla, one can visit the Folk Art Centre built with the support of West Bengal Khadi & Village Industries Board, which houses the award winning artefacts from the hub and know more about the craft of Patachitra.



# 10. the Folk Art Centre

A community museum displaying the Patachitras created by local artists has been developed with infrastructural support from West Bengal Khadi & Village Industries Board in Naya, Pingla. The museum is managed by the local community and designed to preserve the traditional art form and to make visitors aware of the origin, process, different themes and formats of this folk art.









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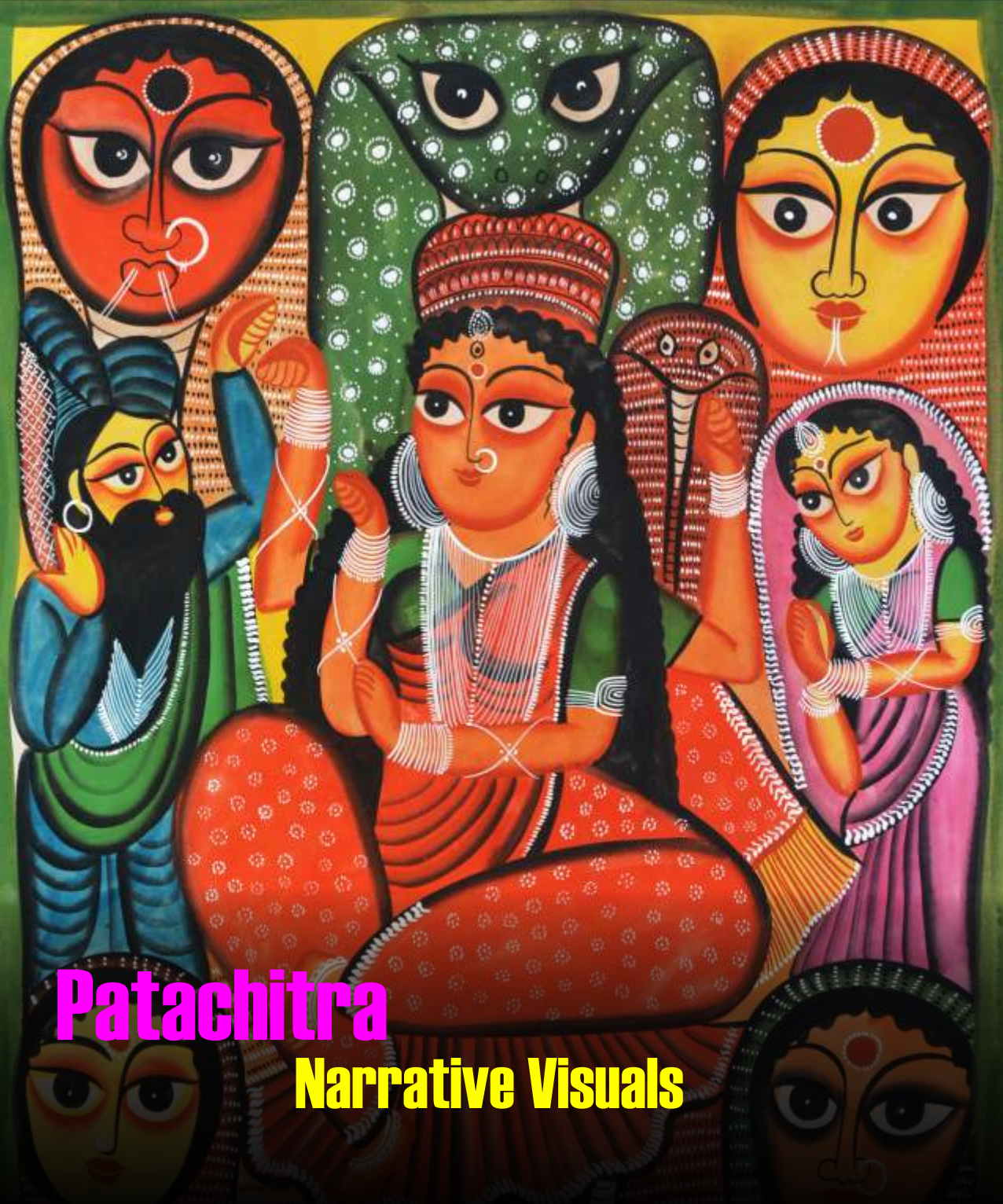
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### Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs

An initiative of Department of MSME&T, Government of West Bengal  
in collaboration with UNESCO, New Delhi Office

