The study of a particular object, belief and custom attached to any aspect of a society calls for study of everything connected to it. Even the aspects of life have a process. Everything has a background and a story behind its creation. The beliefs, the customs and the objects used in them are all interrelated. To understand the evidence a holistic approach is needed. Games are no exception to this proposition.

Games are of two kinds, one does not take the help of any tool or object to play with and the other uses objects for playing such as gamesmen, cards, dice and many other such games. The advantage for object-based games is that they can have varieties of games using the same objects. They are used in different permutations and combinations and put under different sets of rules. The number of players could change from game to game.

However, the role of these objects does not stay limited to only playing purposes. Their use is primarily for playing but man’s penchant to beautify everything raises them to the level of art objects as well. The process of making these gets associated to the culture of the people using them. One very clear example is the procedure of preparation of the cards of Gaṅjifā in different states of India.

**History of Gaṅjifā Preparation**

The advent of Gaṅjifā in India might have been controversial, but its spread and popularity since the time of Mughals is unmistakably well-known. This has also resulted in most scholars agreeing to the theory that the Mughals were the bringers of these cards in India. The founder of the Mughal dynasty Bābur had a hard time establishing his own empire in India. When he
eventually established himself, being the descendent of Timur and Chengiz Khan, he started making arrangements to enjoy a royal life in a foreign land which he now called and considered home.

As is natural, he started cultural exchanges with India. He adopted some Indian ways in his life-style but Persian ways were getting equally infiltrated to the Indian life through the new rulers. Starting from modes of worship to warfare, from food to entertainment, everything was initially emulated from his homeland. This is when we find the earliest reference to the game and the cards of Gaṅjifā in India in Bābur’s biography, Bāburnāmā (934 A.H. i.e. 1527 A.D.). Bābur being a newly crowned emperor, had a taste only for the finest of things. Gaṅjifā was an elite game in Persian society and Humāyun-nāmā mentions that Babur was very fond of playing it. The cards that were made for the emperor and the court to play with were called the Darbār Kalam and they were made of materials that only the highest of classes could afford, such as ivory, tortoise shell, mother of pearl or of inlaid or enamelled precious metals like gold and silver (Leyden 1982). They were also made of not so precious metals like brass. Metals were either painted upon or engraved. Occasionally they were studded with precious stones too. Ivory cards were carved or engraved and generally painted. Small wooden tablets or wafers of lac were also used as raw material (Leyden 1982).

When the game started getting popular, it first spread to the indigenous royal courts. So, even the cards prepared and played by the Indians, like those played by the Marāṭhās, were made of such lavish materials, as can be seen from the remaining pieces surviving at museums across the country and abroad. They are mostly of ivory.
The spread of anything is not limited to a particular populace or community or class even if guarded religiously and strictly. Similarly, the most interesting and engrossing game of Gaṅjifā could not escape the interest from the lower strata of the society also. From the royal courts it got absorbed by the common people too. The economically and politically not so rich classes were not denied of such an enjoyment. So they made their own arrangements according to their convenience and affordability. The inexpensive sets of cards that were prepared for the common people were called the bazār kalam. They were made of paper, leather, fabric, papier-mâché, cardboard, palm leaves, layers of cloth, etc.

Be it darbār kalam or bazār kalam, the polished surfaces of shell, ivory or precious metals or the crude faces of paper or fabric cards, the colours used were all natural. That was why they lasted on those surfaces for centuries.

**The Preparation Process in Odisha**

As has been mentioned above, some concerned people of the state of Odisha still take care to keep this game alive. But the reasons for these efforts of this concerned group are not only the game and its antiquity. It is not just a game, it is an art. It is not just about the cards and how they are played, it is also about how the bases of the cards are made and how the figures are drawn on them. Ganjifā cards, which are called Ganjapā in Odisha, are not popular only because it is a game from our ancestors’ time but also because the creation and manufacturing of the tools of the game i.e. the cards are equally interesting and the preparation process is more ancient a heritage than the game culture itself.
Now when the game is becoming more and more difficult and time-consuming for the new generation with its perpetual time crunch, the manufacturing of these cards is surviving only because appreciators are interested in the art itself, if not the game. The art that has been spoken of so much now is the traditional painting style exclusive to Odisha. It is called Paṭacitra in Odia language. Specially treated cloth is used as the base for this painting. Paṭa is a derivation from Sanskrit meaning ‘canvas of cloth’ and Citra means ‘painting’ or ‘picture’ (Mohanty 1984). Traditionally everything natural is used for the paintings, be it colours, brushes or palettes.

Regarding Paṭacitra this art tradition has been closely linked with the Jagannātha cult. Traditionally its origin is traced with the building of the Jagannātha temple and cult of Puri by the great Ganga king Coḍagaṅgadeb in 10th-11th century A.D. (Sharma 1993). No specimens are found older than the 18th century though. However, it has been kept alive due to the high demand of these pieces among the tourists who come to visit the temple from all over the world. Incidentally, Paṭacitra paintings are found among the earliest indigenous paintings of Odisha. Some scholars have, in fact traced the origin of this art to the 8th century A.D. A more detailed account of the history of this art is given in the sixth chapter.

_Making of the Cards_

As is common in anything traditional and rich, the preparation of these cards is a lengthy process. For the preparation of a 96-cards’ pack it usually takes 15 to 20 days for the artists. The time taken may increase in direct proportion to the number of cards being made. Each card with every detail is made by the artist with his hands and assisted by his helpers, who are generally his family members and are no mean artists themselves. Moreover, it is not even a one-go process. Things are done step by step and systematically. Different people are kept in charge of preparation of separate things.
1. **Preparation of the Base**

**Odisha:**

Essentially, the base is made of cloth but not of just one layer. It takes more or less five days to get just the base ready.

- At first a good amount of tamarind seeds are taken and crushed properly till they assume a more or less powdery form.
- Then the semi-powdery substance is soaked in water overnight to make it soft enough to grind.
- The soaked matter is then ground with pestle stones till it turns into a kind of semi-paste.
- Rice powder may be added to give a stiffer feel to the cloths it will be applied to.
- This product is then heated and made into a gluey paste.
- This gum is traditionally known as *NiryaśKalpa* (B. Mohanty- *Pata-Paintings of Odisha*).

![Fig. 2.2 Niryaś Kalpa](image-url)
• A piece of old silk or cotton cloth of the required length is then taken and the above sticky paste is applied uniformly on one side of the first layer of the cloth. Generally a single long piece of cloth is preferred as to accommodate all the 96 or more cards and to avoid repeating this lengthy procedure.

Fig. 2.3 Artist applying tamarind paste on the first layer of cloth

• Then another layer of cloth of equivalent length and the same material is put over the paste-applied side of the previous layer.

Fig. 2.4 The second layer of cloth
• This dual layer of cloth is laid out for drying in the sun until it is hard.
• The third ingredient used for this complicated process is chalk stone (*khaḍi*). It is also crushed well into minute pieces.
• This substance is again soaked in water to make it soft.
• Then the soft, wet pieces of the chalk stones are ground with stone pestle, mixed with the tamarind gum and made into a paste.

![Fig. 2.5 Chalkstone powder mixed with water and tamarind gum](image1)

• This paste is then applied on the dry, hard layers of cloth stuck together, on their free, outer sides. It is applied until the surfaces are covered and the cloth beneath cannot be seen clearly.
• This is again kept out for drying.

![Fig. 2.6 Chalkstone paste applied on cloth](image2)
- So after such a long drawn out process, it can be seen that the layers of the different combinations of pastes and cloths will be as follows: chalk paste-cloth-tamarind seed paste-cloth-chalk paste.
- The resulting two surfaces of this sandwich which have dry chalk paste over them, feel very rough. To make the surfaces smooth for painting they are first rubbed with a rough stone and then with a round polished stone. These are called Śīlāpathara (grinding stones).

Fig. 2.7 Grinding with a rough stone

Fig. 2.8 Grinding with a polished stone
Then from this big piece of cloth, pieces are cut according to the required
shapes and sizes of the cards. The measurements are done with Gaja (yard
stick). Earlier a stylus was used to cut the pieces out. Now scissors have
replaced it.
• Sometimes more than two layers of cloth can also be used depending on how strong and thick the artist wants to make the base.
• The product is a canvas high on tensile strength with an excellent surface coat for painting.
• Thus the base is prepared which is called the ‘Paṭa’.

![Fig. 2.11 A strip of Paṭa](image)

• The base is also prepared with jausāla (lac) and paper which are relatively cheaper materials. They are used for making the cheaper sets, not meant to last long. But Paṭacitra artists do not usually involve themselves in making of these cheap sets.

**Other than Odisha**

• In Sāwantwāḍi, Mahārāṣṭra, the cards are originally mainly made of thin layers of paper, mainly waste paper, glued together. They are lacquered which makes the surfaces smooth, glossy and non-sticky. It also protects the card surfaces from getting ruined. The lacquer is made of some natural resins. Sāwantwāḍi is famous for its lacquer workmanship (Leyden 1982).

• In Nirmal of Andhra Pradesh too the cards are made of paper or papier-mâché (paper pulp). They do a priming of the cards by a compound of tin and tamarind mash. Over this, another mixture of oils, waxes and resins is
applied. This is a traditional process and requires quite a lot of effort of the group which assists the artist to achieve a golden lustre which does not easily tarnish. The colours which are painted over this coat give the cards a metallic gleam (Leyden 1982).

- The Ganjifā cards of Mysore in Karnāṭaka were mainly patronised by the royal house. The sets made for the elite class were commonly made on sheets of sandalwood and ivory and they were etched with gold and silver enamel. The bazār kalams were mainly made out of waste paper or cardboard and starched cloth. Some other materials traditionally used to prepare the base were mother of pearl, leather, mica, palm leaf, birch leaf and wafers of lac (Source: http://www.ourkarnataka.com/Articles/starofmysore/ganjifa1.htm)

- Biṣṇupur in West Bengal also uses the same technique as that of Odisha, to paint its own brand of Gaṇjifā cards. It is also called Paṭacitra but the style of the painting is different.

- Ganjifās from the rest of the places viz. Rajasthan, Gujarāṭ, Madhya Pradesh, Kashmir and Nepal are also not very different as far as the material of the base is concerned.

2. Preparation of the Colours

The colours used in the painting are natural, i.e., vegetable and mineral colours. Though now-a-days artificial colours like poster colours, oil colours, etc. are also used but the original colours have not lost their attractiveness. They are still very much in demand.

Odisha

- The palette of paṭa painting is very limited. The basic colours are:

  a. White is acquired from conch shell (Śaṅkha): Conch is ground to powder in a pestle. It is diluted with water and poured out into another pot. The insoluble portion is ground again and this process goes on till it is completely finely ground and absorbed in water. This solution is boiled and stirred continuously while doing the
former to not let the powder settle. This paste is dried and required amount of water is added to it whenever one needs to use it.

b. Red is extracted from Hiṅguḷa and Gairika or Geru stone: Hiṅguḷa is crude cinnabar which is used to extract blood-red colour and Geru is red ochre stone (Haematite) that gives Venetian red. These are made into thick pastes with water first then glue is added to them. They are made into small tablets and dried to make them convenient to use like water colour cakes.

c. Yellow comes from Haritāḷa stone: It is yellow ochre stone. The process of preparation is same as the red stones.

d. Black is extracted from pure lamp-black or black produced by burning coconut shells: Wick of a lamp is lit with oil and above it a brass plate filled with water and supported by three coconut shells are kept. After half an hour or so the soot on the back of the plate is gathered and glue is added to it.

- Green is taken out from the juice of leaves or a mixture of yellow and blue.
- The colour Blue is a relatively later addition which is acquired from the lapis-lazuli stone or from a type of indigo.
- To prepare the colours, these materials, such as conch shells and coloured stones, are crushed and then sifted with the help of a fine cloth to produce a fine powder.
- Then these powders are mixed with the resin of the wood-apple tree or Kaitha (Feromia Elephantum) or Bilwa tree to finally make a colour paste out of them.

![Fig. 2.12 Grinding the colour stones](Source: http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/04-08/features988.htm)
The colours, which become gluey and paste-like are kept in the halves of coconut shells, called Sadheis. To keep all the colours together, the Sadheis are either stacked up or ringed together. The ring of coconut shells is called a ‘Mālā’.

Fig. 2.13 Sadheis

- The artists make their first sketching (ṭīpāṇa) with light red ochre, yellow or with white.
- These basic colours are mixed in different combinations to get new, hybrid shades.

The other centres outside of the state of Odisha, more or less the same raw materials are used to prepare the colours.

3. Preparation of the Brushes

The Citrakāras or artists use a variety of brushes ranging from very fine to very thick. There is variety even in the extent of softness of the brushes.
Odisha

- The brushes are made by tying a tuft of animal hair to the end of a bamboo twig with a piece of thread over the nut and liquid lac is applied at the base to bind the strands of hair firmly.
- Very coarse brushes are prepared from the kiāroot (Mohanty 1984). They are used to paint on the walls (Das 1982).
- Brushes of soft and fine quality are prepared out of the hair of rats or other rodents like the squirrels and musk rat. Those of coarser quality are made out of the hair from the belly of goat and the coarsest ones are made of cattle hair, especially from their ears.
- The brushes with thick and flat ends are used for painting large areas like backgrounds of the pictures or the rear of the cards. The fine brushes are used for lining and decoration work.
- Bamboo cylinders, called Bāunsanāfī, are used to keep the brushes. Sometimes they are put in leather cases or bowls made of dried pumpkin shells (Mohanty 1984).

However, these days the use of such brushes has stopped altogether. The easily available artificial-hair brushes have simplified the job and are popular now.

Fig. 2.14 The artificial-hair brushes with the bamboo holder
Other than Odisha

The brushes are similar for all kinds of traditional painting techniques. Animal hair is easily available and the most suitable of materials for painting.

Steps to be followed:

Traditionally the Citrakāras are supposed to approach to paint in a particular sequence. It makes the flow of the painting regular. Below are the steps and the sequence in which they are carried out (Das 1982).

1. Demarcation of the border.
2. Roughing of the whole design on the card blank. It is generally done by highly diluted white colour (śaṅkhapāṇī). This outline is called ṭipaṇa.
3. Colouring the background.
4. Colouring the bodies of the deities/characters.
5. Putting on of clothes.
6. Colouring the ornaments.
7. Drawing the thick black lines.
8. Draw the thin black lines.
10. Touch up.
11. Lacquering the surface to protect it from wearing and hence from deterioration. Lacquer is called Jauśāla locally. Charcoal is fired in an earthen pot and when it is red hot the painting is held over the smouldering fire face up. Lac and resin powder are mixed in 1:3 proportions and sprinkled over the painted surface. When the powder melts it is rubbed over the painted surface with a cotton puff.

There is another way of lacquering. A piece of lac is impaled on a stick and held over fire to melt. Then it is rubbed on the painting. Now-a-days, however, lacquer paint is also applied out of cans to make things faster.

The backs of the cards are either painted with one colour like dark red, brown, black or yellow or with various colourful patterns. In Odisha the backs
are commonly reddish brown to dark brown. Sometimes they have a single yellow or a double yellow and green borderline and a floral pattern in the centre. Completely decorated backs are seen in some expensively made packs from Kashmir, Nirmal and even at Paralakhemundi (Leyden 1982).

**Shapes and Sizes**

The progenitors of Indian Ganjifā cards, the Mamluks of Egypt or the early Persian Ganjifās were made rectangular. Its supposed descendants, the modern European cards, too are rectangular (Leyden 1982).

One of the very main reasons why the Ganjifā cards look really interesting to the laymen and the researchers alike is its shape. What had prompted this unusual shape is unknown but it can be hypothesised that they were derived from the Chinese money cards. Backing this hypothesis is the suggestion that the name itself is derived from the word ‘Ganj’ which means treasury and the money suits based on gold and silver coins.

For convenience during playing, there is an unofficially prescribed size for these cards and the artists do not get too ambitious to overlook this range. In Odisha the diameters of the cards range between 2.5 inches (6.35 cms) and 4 inches (10.16 cms). The paintings made on the cards in Odisha are very delicate and minute. But in some other places, according to their necessity, the diameter may differ. The largest card found in the whole of India is in Bishnupur in the state of West Bengal. It measures 4” in diameter. And the smallest one, measuring 1” in diameter. This is found in Sawai Madhopur of Rajasthan (Leyden 1982).

However, Ganjifā cards were also originally found in rectangular (or square) shape, though very rarely. In Odisha this variety was never been popular. So their existence in this state is doubtful. But they are definitely found in the collection of the Ganjifā cards of those other states which are still working to keep this art alive. There are even some oval-shaped cards found at some places but they are the rarest of the rare. They seem like curios themselves among the other Ganjifā cards.
Fig. 2.15: Shapes of cards

Round       Rectangular     Oval  Hexagonal

Themes of Paintings:

To complete these round pieces of different materials and make them into Ganjifā cards the most important component is the depictions on them. The Mughal cards that were taken up by the local royal houses then subsequently the local people, assumed the indigenous flavour of the areas they spread to.

In Puri the Jagannātha culture imbibed it almost fully. The most popular and common themes are Daśāvatāra and Navagunjara. The former is the most famous Hindu set with the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu and the latter is based on the story of Arjuna practicing penance for Lord Viṣṇu who appears in a strange animal form where different parts of his body were made up of the parts of nine different animals.

The second best known place is Sonepur in Subarnapur district. Due to its association with Rāmāyaṇa the only set that is played here is the Rāmāyaṇa pack where the set is divided into two halves of six suits each that are considered as the family of Rāma and Rāvaṇa and the game is taken as a battle between the two armies.

Paralakhemundi is also popular for its Rāmāyaṇa Gaṅjapā. It differs from the Sonepur one by its depictions. This set depicts the story of the life of
Rāma starting from his childhood to Sitā’s integrity test. Besides, there is Bird-Gaṅjapā typical to this place where the pip cards depict different kinds of birds.

In Cikiṭi the most popular are the Kṛṣṇa-Aṣṭamalla sāra which depict the eight heroic feats of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Then the naqṣ cards which are locally called Ratha-Hathi (Chariot and Elephant) because in the king card the king sits on a chariot and the minister sits on an elephant.

Besides these there are the Aṣṭadikpāla and Saptamatrā Ganjapā which are found rarely.

Outside Odisha the scenario is not very different. In Bishnupur and Sawantwadi too Daśāvatāra is the favourite theme. The former also specialises in naqṣ cards (which are also known as the gambling cards). In Rajasthan due to the similarity of Rājputānā art with that of the Mughal art, the cards have pictures similar to the Mughal Ganjifā. The suits are the same as the Mughal set. Mysore in Karnataka is a rich centre for preparing and playing these cards. The caḍs are many types among which the most popular is Daśāvatāra and Camuṇḍeśvarī cads. Rāśī, Navagraha, Musical Ganjifā are some of the exotic designs which are usually made to order.

Boxes for the Cards

The cards are not the only art pieces that one acquires when one buys a set of this traditional card game. They come in boxes made out of light wood or paper pulp according to the size of the cards inside them. They are covered by a layer of cloth or paper (in the poorer quality ones) with adhesive. Sometimes there is no covering layer. Then they are painted on all the sides except the base. But in some of them which have been finished with greater care, even the base bears some beautiful images. The paint is usually varnished to save it from wearing off at the edges and corners. They usually have sliding lids but boxes with lifting ones are also made. The latter ones are usually not of very attractive quality.
Odisha

The sets of Puri, especially the 96-cards’ ones form cubicle sets. So the boxes are also more or less cubicle. But with the increase in the number of cards the size of the box too increases as expected. They are made of wood and are painted on all the sides except the base. The paintings outside are inspired from those inside, on the cards. For example, a Daśāvatāra set only has the images of the incarnations painted on them. It has no cover of cloth or paper on it. The fine workmanship makes the surface of the wood polished enough to be painted. They have sliding lids with either a ledge or a finger-groove.

Fig. 2.16 Puri Daśāvatāra Gaṅjapā box with ledge

In Sonepur the cards are really small in comparison to the cards of other areas. So a stack of the same number of cards as a set from Puri appears longer in length. Therefore, the boxes are oblong and rectangular in two cross-sections. They can be made of either wood or paper pulp and have a cloth or paper covering. They are not of very high quality and usually bear the name and address of the artist. The lids are sliding naturally. The boxes bear the paintings of sages, Rāma and scenes from the epic Rāmāyaṇa.
Fig. 2.17 Sonepur Rāmāyaṇa Gaṅjapā Box with finger groove

The Paralakhemundi cards are quite big so as to accommodate the elaborate scenes of Rāmāyaṇa. Hence the boxes get a cubicle shape. Either paper pulp or wood is used to make them and the cloth or paper cover is indispensible. They sometimes have lifting lids. They are painted with scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa or any other mythological stories depending on the theme of the set packed inside.

Fig. 2.18 Opening lid
Outside Odisha

Mr. R.V. Leyden has made some short observations about the boxes from some other Ganjifā manufacturing places of India in his book-cum-catalogue Ganjifā: The Playing Cards of India.

- In Sāwantwāḍi boxes are usually cubic in shape and predominantly red in colour. Mythological figures are the main themes of painting.

(Source: Leyden 1982)
• Rajasthan boxes are short and oblong and they have floral or rhomboid patterns all over them.

![Rajasthan box](source: Leyden 1982)

• The Nirmal in Andhra Pradesh boxes are bigger in size, long with slightly bulging sides. They show palaces, processions and hunting scenes. Kurnool and Cudappah boxes from the same state are also longish. They are painted with the images of Viṣṇu, flower friezes and ladies. All the three types have a raised lid on their lid.

![Nirmal box](source: Leyden 1982)

• Mysore, Karnataka boxes are oblong or cubic. They may have decorations. Sometimes they are plain.

• Kashmir ones are long and have the typical Kashmir floral patterns painted on them.

The description of cards and the boxes are just taken here to give a brief review of the available places of findings and the nature of production. Some of
the descriptions are not personally documented by the research student but have been taken from other scholars.

THE ARTISTS

These bits of arts are the profession of a community of people who are in charge of carrying out the art of a region, the artist community. They have different names and castes in various places. In Odisha they are known as Citrakāras which literally means ‘painter’ in the Odia language. Throughout the state they have common surnames i.e. Maharana or Mohapatro.

In the district of Puri the small village of Raghurajpur is the most flourishing place for the manufacture of Paṭacitras. Besides this, Dandasahi in the town of Puri used to be a popular manufacturing area too. But, almost all the families in the hamlet of Raghurajpur are Mohapatros. Some of the big names are Late Shri Jagannatha Mohapatro, his son Banamali and grandson Bijaya Mahapatro in Raghurajpur. Shri Jagannatha Mohapatro is also a National Award winner. This family has continued the tradition even now. Also, because of their artistic genius researchers and collectors of Ganjapā come to them to enquire more about these cards and place their orders for sets they would want to posses.

Fig. 2.23 Late Jagannatha Mahāpātro

(Leyden 1982)
In Pāralākhemunḍi’s Citrakāra Sāhi or the ‘street of painters’ Prakash Chandra Mahapatro used to be an ace painter when Leyden had visited during 1978-91 (Leyden 1982).

Fig. 2.24 Banamali and Bijaya Mahapatro

Fig. 2.25 Prakash Chandra Mohapatro

(Source: K.K. Maheshwari Collection)
One rare sight was a girl painting in this place. She was observed by industrialist Dr. K. K. Maheshwari in 1995 when was collecting Ganjapā cards and information about them. A girl paṭa painter is a very unusual. Her name was Bidyabati and along with mainstream paṭa painting she also used to paint these cards.

![Fig. 2.26 Ms. Bidyabati Mohapatro](Source: K.K. Maheshwari Collection)

In Cikiṭi one famous and perhaps the last painter of Ganjapā was Ṣrī Apanna Mahapatro. His painted cards are still being played.

![Fig. 2.27 Mr. Apanna Mahapatro](Source: Leyden 1982)
Sonepur town is another living centre of playing, to some extent, and manufacturing. The sets are only of Rāmāyaṇa painted in a typical style of line-drawing. In localities like Maharana Pada, Ghodaghatpada, Campamala and Nimna Grama these cards are prepared. The artists here are the Maharana not the Mahāpātros. Presently essentially the only artist alive is Gyanindra Maharana of Ghodaghatpada. His family is also shrinking in size. The day the candidate had reached his house it was the tenth day of the death of his wife and he had returned from the ceremony a little while ago.

At Sawantwadi the artists are called Citāris who are mainly the lacquer workers and wooden toy makers. In all the other areas like Bishnupur, Mysore, Rajasthan and Nirmal the card-makers are actually the painters of the local painting traditions and they are called Citrakāras too.

Boxes of expensive materials like ivory and costly metals used to be prepared in the olden times. Now-a-days they are no more. Other shapes like round ones can also be found but rarely (Leyden 1982).

The whole process of making one set of cards in this traditional way is extremely time and energy consuming. The home of an artist is a full-fledged workshop. Though there is no official division of labour, the family members automatically take up different parts of the job of completing a particular painting or a set of cards. The women usually do all the preparatory work like preparing the canvas, grinding and making powders on the mortar, making glues and pastes out of the raw materials. The grown up children and sometimes also the ladies do the pip cards and other less important parts of the painting like applying the background colour and painting the less important images. The main strokes of the figures are done by the master artist with his expert hands. The older members of the family usually take up leisure activities like playing these cards. If they are not playing with a pack of these cards, they do some of the less important paint work.

However, to make heavy work easier has always been man’s tendency. It is difficult to stop change and modernisation. The whole process has gone through a lot of changes. The powders of tamarind seeds, chalk stones, the
colour stones, the resins etc. are readily available in the market these days. The artists just buy them and heat them to make the pastes or glues. Moreover, the colours have also changed. Hardly anyone is taking the trouble to look for the stones or shells and powder them or collect soot. Artificial colours, like poster, acrylic and fabric colours are used for painting the cards. The brushes are also synthetic ones bought from the market. The procedure of making the base has continued to be the same, though the powders are made by people who have taken it up as their business.

These changes have rendered the quality of the paintings poor. The natural ones used to last for years but the paints from the present ones start peeling off in much less time. The efforts spent behind a painting go waste if it could not be sold within a particular time. But the increasing prices and pace of life and the decreasing demand of such art among people prevent the artists from spending more resources than they can afford to.