APPENDIX-III

Om (the sacred syllable)—a salutation of Visvakarma (the god of the artisans)

We, the Chitrakar Community, are a part of the Hindu society, from one of the Hindu castes. In the Hindu society there are different classes of people with different pursuits: The Brahmins perform religious rites and discuss the Sastras (The books of religion), the potter's trade is to make jugs and pots; the goldsmith's business is to make ornaments. In this order, the Chitrakar's trade is to make images of gods to be worshipped is to pursue various other arts, including painting. There is a myth about the origin of the Chitrakar community in the tenth section of Brahmakhand of 'The Brahmavaibarta Purana'. The god Visvakarma, in the guise of a Brahmin, begot the first ancestor of the Chitrakar's upon the heavenly nymph Ghritachi who was then disguised as a milkmaid. The Purana has done great honour to us by mentioning us as the descendants of Visvakarma in the guise of the Brahmin. The great advance made by the Hindus in painting and other fine arts during the period of time exceeding the last two thousand years is due to the Chitrakar community. The late great poet of Bengal, Satyendranath Dutta song in praise of us, the Chitrakar's some skilled artist from our community, with his playful brush, has painted the deathless pictures of Ajanta. In the old Sanskrit literatures, as in Bana Bhatta and 'The Mudrarakshasa', we have allusions to us, the Chitrakars. The Chitrakar have been rendering great help in sustaining and spreading religious feelings in the people belonging to the Hindu society. It is our job to paint, to make sketches, to decorate, to attract the Hindu society towards religion, to make beautiful and decorative all
the festivities of life. Even so, the Chitrakars have been segregated from the Hindus for some unspecified reason. According to *The Brahma-vaibarta Purana* the Chitrakars disregarded the specific instructions of Brahmins on painting. As a result the Brahmins got angry and cursed them. So they were outcasted and lost the privilege of employing Brahmins as priests at their religious rites.

In the early days of the Muslim rule when the influence of the orthodox Hindu religion was on the declines, the Chitrakar community kept the religion alive by displaying the paintings about the glory of the goddess Manasa, about the vow of Savitri, about Rama’s banishment etc. and by singing and roaming from door to door, in the guise of holy hermits. You will get sure proof of this in the book of Patua songs by Babu Gurusadaya Dutta.

As a result of the new awakening in the Hindu society, there has come a stir in the chitrakars too. In memory of the glorious achievements of our forefathers, we, the Chitrakar community, are resolved to take our proper place in the Hindu society. We want to undergo the rite of ‘purification’ and to perform our religious rites and funeral ceremonies with the help of Brahmin priests. We place our earnest appeal to the benevolent Hindus.

On the last Agrahayana 1, the rites of ‘purification’ have been performed by the Hindu Mahasava at Kalighat. On the 22nd Agrahayana there have been some such rites by the Bharat Sevasram in the village of Baria near Diamond Harbour. On the 10th Agrahayana there were held the rites of ‘purification’ at the village of Akubpur in the district of Midnapore by the help of the Bharat Sevasram, the Hindu Mahasava, the Aryasamaj and the local Hindus. On the 22nd Agrahayan there rites were performed in
the village of Singur with the help of the Hindus. People in some more villages are eager for 'purification'. The Hindus, for once, should look into the matter, for many are not 'purified' yet. These people deceive by giving false accounts of their religion, caste and names, enter the holy temples of the Hindus, rendering them unclean, and make images of gods and goddesses. So, if the Hindu gentlemen graciously look into the matter, these people cannot resort to this sacrilege conduct.

Date
The 5th Poush,
1353 (20th December 1946)

Yours obediently,
Rajani Kanta Chitrakar
Address-Akubpur, P.O. Sutahat,
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