

CHAPTER II
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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Savantwadi city has got original natural beauty and hence people aptly call it as 'Sundar Wadi'. The city is situated on the banks of 'Moti Talav'. On the western side of the city there is a hill called 'Narendra Hill' which is covered by a thick forest which attracts the who are residing there. For the last three hundred years the Chitari families are residing in the city and they have maintained their culture and their art. For the last years together they are doing their business with honesty. Colour work and lac work are done by the Chitari families and they are expert in it. Because of these people this art is surviving in the State of Maharashtra.

The word 'Chitari' is derived from the word 'Chitrikar' meaning artist and because of this word people started calling them 'Chitari'. Chitaris are originally from Goa. In the State of Goa, there is a village by name Bori-Shiroda and in the village there is a temple of this people and they are devotees of the god. Mostly these people are residing in Kumtha, a city in Karwar District of Karnataka State and in the State of Goa.

The Chitaris, who are residing in Karwar, are expert in carving and the Chitaris who are residing in Goa and Savantwadi are expert in colour work. A few Chitaris are residing at Shirashi, Honawar and Bangat Sagar of the Karnataka State.

If one happens to visit the temples which are near the Savantwadi city, one finds that walls, polls, wooden bars and the arches of the temples are coloured with lac by these Chitaris. This lac is used by Chitaris at the time of colouring wooden beams. In the history of the erstwhile Savantwadi State we can find that in the year 1778 the 'Ganjifa' and 'Khadava' were presented to the Peshave by the King of Savantwadi. This fact has got documentary evidence in the history of Savantwadi State. It can be very well seen in the picture story (Chitra Katha) that continues for a number of centuries. These Chitaris are drawing the pictures of Gods and Goddesses. If we minutely observe the paintings drawn by the Chitaris in the temples it will be obvious that they are more than three hundred years old. So also the drawing of the picture-story is of more than three hundred years old. In villages there are Palkhis, Abdagiris and Palang which is the property of temples coloured by Chitari families. This has been the tradition of the village. Some eighty years ago

the Prince of Savantwadi Mr Khem Savant Bhonsale had prepared sofa-sets, wooden chairs, supporters of the glass lamps, wall plaques with the help of carpenters and these articles were painted and coloured by the Chitaris by using lac. The above mentioned articles are good examples of an ancient art which is developing in this area. At the time of colouring articles first of all the Chitaris put the colour with their hands and afterwards they put lac on it. Today also the sculpture and all articles which are nicely coloured by the Chitaris are available in Darbar Hall of the Savantwadi Palace. This type of articles can be seen in the museum of Baroda. The surface of the articles is painted by colour and to avoid the damage to the article from outside it is necessary to colour it with the help of lac. At that time the Chitari never used shades on a plain surface but they used colour at the time of painting the pictures. The Ganjifa game has given the name and fame to the Chitari as they have prepared it nicely and with the help of different colours. The Ganjifa game is based on 'Dashavatar' and this game has got tradition and mythological base,

At the State regime Princes and Princesses were playing with the Ganjifa and for them, these Chitaris were giving cards of Ganjifa. The cards of Ganjifa

are in round form and on those cards Chitari used to paint pictures of Gods and Goddesses. The sets of Ganjifa are available in the museums of the different states. Especially we can see these sets of Ganjifa in the Victoria and Albert Museum at London, museum of State of Baroda, Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay. At the ancient times in Savantwadi State the Chitaris were well-versed in the languages known as Chang-Kanchan, Kanpuri and Devanagari and with the help of knowledge of the language they were preparing the Ganjifa in that languages also. This art shows how these Chitaris have developed their art in the different manner. The Chitaris were making the articles with the help of animal horns. So also they were experts in silver inlay on coconut shell. The Chitaris are well-versed in the Khas Embroidery and they are known for it. Because of this art the name of the city became popular not only in the State of Maharashtra but also in India. In the year 1800 an international exhibition was arranged by the British Government and a number of prizes were given to the Chitaris in appreciation of their art. The above mentioned reference is available in many historical documents. In ancient days Chitaris were colouring the pots with the help of lac and this art is developed by them. Today also they prepare such type of pots and Savantwadi is the only city where

such type of pots are available.

During the seventeenth century the aboriginal habitant of the area, named Mukund Chitari first of all came from Bori-Shiroda to Savantwadi. He and his family members settled in the Savantwadi town. The king of Savantwadi State Shri Khem Savant Bhosale gave shelter to him and since then this art is developing in this area and has now spread throughout India. First of all Shri Mukund Chitari started colouring the toys and afterwards he developed this art. Then he started preparing the cards of Ganjifa. Shri Mukund Chitari was expert in colouring temples, palanquins and these articles were famous at that time. He used to sell the above mentioned articles throughout the Bombay State.

After the death of Mukund Chitari, his heirs Shri Govind Chitari, Shri Ganesh Chitari, Shri Gopal Chitari and Shri Krishna Chitari developed this art.

The credit for making this art popular must be given to Chitaris who exhibited high sense of excellence. All these articles were highly praised in the market where there was demand for these articles and orders were placed before the Chitaris and these articles have given good business to the Chitaris.

After the demise of Govind Chitari and his brothers their sons by names Ramchandra Zilu Chitari, Pandurang Krishna Chitari, Anant Krishna Chitari, Ramchandra Gopal Chitari, Laxman Gopal Chitari, Sakharam Ganesh Chitari, Narayan Ganesh Chitari tried to develop the fine art and tried to maintain qualities of an art. In the year 1902, in Savantwadi area there were five toy-making units. These units were run by (1) Kashinath Vishnu Mhapsekar, (2) Ramchandra Jiwaji Kudalkar, (3) Dhanabai Kashiram Wadkar, (4) Mahadev Yesu Wadkar, (5) Babli Dewoolkar. These toy-making units extended support to the poor Chitaris and their families. They gave raw material, paints and lac to them. So also monetary support was given to them. Because of the financial support they try to maintain their qualities in this art. The five units had supported them a lot and because of these industrialists today the art is surviving.

During the period 1902 to 1932, this art was developed like anything and had reached its peak. In the year 1948 the Savantwadi state merged into India. That was a time when this art was in danger as new techniques were developed by the people and people started forgetting the ancient art. At that time one Pundlik Gvind Chitari, the artist tried to maintain

the status of the art. To maintain status he had taken lot of pains. He faced a number of difficulties even though in those circumstances he tried his level best to maintain the name and fame of the art.

As Shri Pundlik Govind Chitari had tried to maintain the high standards of craftsmanship in the twentieth century his name became famous in Maharashtra for Ganjifa and he was the best artist for Ganjifa of the century. In the year 1910 he started preparing wooden fruits and different types of articles. In subsequent years there was demand for the wooden toys and the supply of wooden toys was out of his control. Still then he tried to supply maximum articles as per demands. Pundlik Govind Chitari was expert in colour work and was known for finishing touch. For that reason his toys were purchased by the tourists. At the time of colouring the toys they were using brush and because of that they were painting the toys nicely and beautifully. Because of the Chitaris the Ganjifa game is famous in the city of Kanpur, Satara, Sangli, Pune, Miraj etc.

In the eighteenth century the Ganjifa set was available for seven rupees only and in the year 1914 it was sold for twentyone rupees.

2.2 PRODUCTION PROCESS

Types of Toys:

- (1) Object of Lac
 - (a) Scale lacker wooden toys
 - (b) Liquid Lacker
- (2) Wooden fruits
- (3) To make Supali
- (4) To make dolls
- (5) Wooden Plank (Paat).

2.2.1 Object of Lac:

Lac work is made on the coloured woods. Such objects of lac are made in two types -

(a) Scale Lacker:

The following toys are made in Sawantwadi. Tops, large tops, mallet, short sticks toys, stand etc.. These objects are made in two ways (1) handmade, (2) machine-made. The wood of 'Kalakuda and Heth is used for these objects. This is soft wood and is made available by shephards - a tribal community in Sawantwadi area. They make their objects by hand with the help of a scythe and sharper. Those who make their things by machine, use (1) hand-wheel, (2) rubbing machine, (3) Lathe machine, (4) Circular

saw, (5) Colour machine, (6) Bend saw, (7) Zigzag machine, (8) Air Compressor, (9) All tools of carpentry etc.. After the wood is given the shape of the required toy with the help of a machine the essential power-colours are mixed in the button-lac. These lac colours are applied on the object with the help of a lathe machine.

The Chitaris prepare different types of toys, especially big toys are of animals like horse, elephant etc. and articles like cups, spoons and Devara (a small finely carved wooden stand where images of gods and goddesses are arranged). While the small toys are made of one piece, big toys are made first in separate parts and they are finally assembled to make a toy. This is the system of preparing small toys or Patti lacker.

(b) Liquid Lacker:

Now-a-days Chitaris prepare the toys of liquid lacker in the large-scale quantities. There is demand for this type of toys in the market. They have market abroad, too. Export quantity toys are specially prepared. The toys prepared for export comprise Gangifa box, Tambul fruits (red fruits), snake ladder, chess, Dashawatar, ornament-box, palanquin, Zumbers (hanging lamps), letter-stand

envelope-stand, tray, tea-pot etc.. These articles have good demand in the foreign market.

The above mentioned articles are made only by Chitaris who are residing in the Chitar Ali in Sawantwadi as they are well-versed in their art. Other artists who are residing in the vicinity of Sawantwadi town are no expert in this art. The Chitaris have developed this art as there is a demand for these articles. Many standard, artistic and well-streamlined can be seen in this art. The Chitaris have discovered the different types of toys which are prepared from the wood known as Heth or Shivan. Out of this wood they prepare the boxes and charts also which can be used by the people. The Chitaris draw the chart of a chess on the portion on the box which can be used for gambling purpose. Before painting the box to fill up the pitches or wholves the Chitaris use lambi and after putting lambi they use different types of colour and afterwards they paint different types of pictures on it. After painting the pictures three coats of lack are spread on them. When spray was not available, they used to put the lac on the fire-pan. When the lack is melted it is applied to the pictures. Care is required to be taken to see before the application of the lack that the

pictures are completely dry. This work needs precision and utmost care and Chitaris are expert in it. The toys of ancient Indian game Ganjifa are very superbly prepared here and hence it has very good demand. Different types of this Ganjifa game are prepared by the Chitaris, such as Dashawatar, Nava-graha, Chang Kanchan (Mogul), Kadappa, Mayasurdevi and Mulakshare (i.e., alphabets). In the Ganjifa sets we can find twenty-one round cards. On every card they paint the picture of god and goddess. At the time of painting the picture they apply their skills. On ten cards of Ganjifa they paint the picture of one God. To keep the set of Ganjifa they prepare one wooden box. This box is also painted equally attractively. The snake ladder made here has had great demand in foreign countries. The snake-ladder is a different game. On the chart they draw 147 numbers which is called 'Param Padam'. The art of this snake-ladder is magnificent and the artistry and precision involved in the snake-ladder are of a very high order. The painting drawn by the Chitaris on ornament-boxes, hanging lamps, letter-boxes, snake-ladder is simply beautiful and spellbinding. They are air- and water-resistant and they are painted with lac and colours. This has been proved by the demand for these articles

in the foreign countries. The articles are thus long-lasting.

2.2.2 Wooden Fruits:

With toys wooden fruits are also famous. In the Konkan region the people worship the God Ganapati. During the Ganesh Chaturthi days the people decorate their houses and the idol of Ganapati is seated at a decorated place under a wooden plank known as Matavi. This Matavi is prepared by the Chitaris. The Matavi is bordered by different wooden fruits prepared nicely by the Chitaris. The Chitari families are doing this for the last ten years or so. The wooden fruits are so nicely made as one would take them as natural fruits unless closely observed or felt by a touch. The Chitaris are expert in preparing forty different types of fruits such as mango, cashew, coconut, plantain, jackfruit etc.. Two sets of fruits are prepared - one containing 27 fruits and another containing 60 fruits.

Method of Preparing Wooden Fruits:

To prepare the wooden fruits a Chitari uses a jungle-wood known as Pangara. This wood is light in weight. After cutting the tree it is kept under water for quite some time so as to harden it. A pair of artists does the work of preparing

the fruit - one of them gives the shape to the fruit and the other gives finishing touch to it. The fruits are then dried in sun. After so drying for about one week, the painting of the fruit is taken up. A particular shade of colour is given to the fruit which is called coating. With this coating the roughness of the fruit is removed and the wholes, crackages etc. disappear. The next stage is that of polishing. This polishing is done in five coats within a period of 2 to 3 months. After this the fruits are coloured. These colours are in powder form and are available in Sawantwadi market. With a warm cotton rubbing the fruits are given shining. Certain fruits are prepared with branches and leaves. For this the Chitari uses strings, paper, sticks. These parts are joined to the fruit with the help of gum.

2.2.3 Preparation of Wooden Supali:

Savantwadi city is famous for wooden Supali. It is a wooden article which is prepared with the fruits by Chitari. Supali is used for playing by children. As would be clear from its name, Supali is small-sized Soop. To prepare this toy wet bamboo is required. First of all they remove the skin of Bamboo which is called Bele. The expert Chitari

gives shape to the Bamboo skin with his own hand and with the help of hand they prepare this Supali. In the Sawantwadi city the Scheduled Caste people (Harijan) are well-versed in this art. The Scheduled Caste people sell these Supalis. The Chitaris purchase these Supalis as a raw material and apply two coats of primer to these Supalis and then colour and varnish it finally. Two such coats of varnish are necessary. After drying it is rubbed by warm cotton and given shining.

2.4.4 Preparation of Standing Dolls:

The toy industry began with wooden toys only as it was an attraction to the small children. But now-a-days this wooden doll has disappeared from Sawantwadi market as the Chitaris are no more interested in making them, as they were in the olden days. While grazing the cattle, the farmers used to carry two weapons with them - one is scythe and another the axe. With the help of these weapons they used to cut the wood and give shape of doll to it. The toys so prepared were marketed on weekly bazaar days by the shephards (Dhanagar is the name of the community). After purchasing the dolls from the shephards the Chitaris used to colour them. The village Ambegaon is famous for such toys as

the villagers are preparing them in large quantities. In this area there is scarcity of customers to purchase such dolls and hence Chitaris are not preparing them, as a result of which the dolls have disappeared from the Sawantwadi market.

2.2.5 Preparation of Wooden Paat:
(Wooden plank used for sitting on)

In this area the people are fond of sitting on wooden plank while taking their food. The Chitaris are expert in making such Paats. The planks or Paats are decorated with different colours. Mango-tree plank or jackfruit-tree plank is used for these Paats. Three coats of colour are applied. First of all Shadu (white clay) and after that a coat of Chinchoka is applied to the plank. Then the plank is dried. The plank is then washed with water and rubbed thoroughly with stone. After that it is painted with water-colour and varnished.