

Geographical study of Madhubani painting in context of women empowerment in Mithila region

Dr. Jawahar Lal

PGT Senior Secondary School

Maniyari, Muzaffarpur

Sanjeet Kumar

Research Scholar

B.R.A.B.U. Muzaffarpur

ABSTRACT:

Present study was done in two villages of Madhubani such as Jitwarpur and Ranti to evaluate the types of Madhubani painting, the number of females involved in it, the type of painting and the income they are getting from this profession. During survey the women belonging to different castes, the painting designs of the different cost and prices of different paintings were also studied. It was also informed by the villagers that these women had neither education nor formal training in the painting. Here the art of painting was handed down from one generation to next. In the process there have been slight changes and embellishment, but basic style has remained largely unchanged. It was further revealed by the older people that earlier the upper castes women were sticking in the painting of mythological and religious themes. They were painting the prominent figures of Ramayana, Mahabharata and other God and Goddess. Similarly, the Harijans who were earlier called Chamar and Dusadh incorporated their own mythologies in their painting. They painted the image of Salhesa an important divinity in the Dusadh community. It was also gathered after interaction that they also depict different events like birth, marriage pictures of nature in their paintings. They demonstrated certain painting, from which it was concluded that the central themes of the most painting was love, devotion and fertility, though there was variation in the approach. They had painting of fish, parrot, elephant, turtle as symbol of fertility and prosperity. It also included painting of Sun and Moon, bamboo trees and Lotus flowers. The divine beings are positioned centrally in the frame. Similarly, human figures are mostly abstract and linear in form. It was further observed that these traditional artists still make different colours themselves by extracting them from the parts of different plant, such as leaves, flowers and barks etc. the black colour is extracted from roasted seeds and woods. First they were limited to religious painting, but it was revealed that they are painting the out of Kohbar, Doli and Kahar, the scene of departure of the married girls from their parents house, the birds particularly parrots, pigeons and peacock, the natural scene such as sunset, the rainy season, rainbow, leaves and flowers, the deer, well dressed young girl, old women etc. When these traditional painter, changed their style and subject of the paints they are getting better return, because in addition to Hindu customers there are foreigners also. Painting of pillow cover, bed sheet, purse & bag all are attracting customers of different age groups and religions.

KEY WORDS:

Madhubani Painting, Jitwarpur, Ranti, Mythology, Prosperity, Fertility, Nature, Doli & Kahar.

INTRODUCTION:

Madhubani district was carved out from the original Darbhanga district in 1972. Madhubani district in Bihar, India is located at India country in the city place category with the gps coordinates of 26⁰.20', 52.3788" N and 86⁰.4' 18.6996" E. The elevation is 60 meters height that are equal to 197 feet. The area occupied by the Madhubani district is 3,501 square kilometers. The north border is attached to Nepal, while the south is surrounded by Darbhanga district. In the east it is surrounded by Supaul district while the west is surrounded by Sitamarhi district. According to Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the district was declared as most backward and its position was declared as 250, out of total 640 total backward district of the country. It is one of the 36 districts in Bihar currently receiving funds from the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme (BRGF). (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2009)

The district has five subdivisions such as

- i. Sadar subdivision Madhubani
- ii. Benipatti
- iii. Jhanjharpur
- iv. Phulparas
- v. Jainagar

Similarly, there are 21 blocks and circles. The rural people of Madhubani have changed their socio-economic conditions on their own and due to different supporting schemes run by the State and Central Government.

The Madhubani paintings, earlier known as Mithila paintings, was earlier limited to inside paintings of selected land lord, where a caste known as Kumhar use the walls and earthen pots. Gradually this art of painting was adapted by the females of other castes and this art has flourished and is alive in many villages in the region, where this is being transferred from mother to their daughters. Local people said that even today most of the artists do use the paints derived from the nature, such as plant and their parts. For drawing on wall or land the white colour is obtained from rice (White). Similarly, black colour is obtained by burning barley. The sap obtained from the pseudo stem of banana is mixed with sap of banyan tree and lime. This gives yellow colour. Leaves are used for green, while flowers for different colours. They also used the colour obtained from henna leaves.

As per the 2011 census, although women occupy 50% of the total population of the country, the women work force constitutes only 28 percent of the female population. Similarly, out of total number of self-employed persons, women account only 5 percent. The importance of women as an important human resource was recognized by the constitution of our country. Women are important contributors of the economic support of their households. More the women work for income, large the proportion of house hold income derived from their income.

It has been observed from the different literature survey that Madhubani paintings are now not limited to women of Brahmins or Kayastha. Even the women belonging to Harijan communities are involved in paintings and they are showing their talents in these areas.

SURVEY OF LITERATURE:

It is not possible to summarize the works of different workers but some of them may be cited here, such as Thakur (1982); Nayak (1984); Joshi (1985); Nayak (1988); Fairhead (1991); Das Gupta (1995); Archer (1998); Mago (2001); Nayak (2001); Nayak (2002); Nayak (2002); Rekha (2003); Grey and Moseley (2005); Rekah (2010); Joshi (2012); Saxena (2012); Sharma et al; (2012); Das (2013); Bishaw (2014); Archana and Gupta (2014); Shilpa (2016); Khan (2016) and Ankita et al; (2018).

In the present paper after survey and discussion with the families involved in Madhubani painting of village Jitwarpur and Ranti, the scopes and problems in the creation of women resources have been gathered and how to shoot out these problems have been suggested.

MATERIALS & METHODS:

Jitwarpur and Rahika of Madhubani and Ranti of Jainagar can be reached by private taxi, buses or even by train up to Madhubani and Jainagar, from where either autorickshaw or any shared communication facilities can be availed. However, for the sake of convenience and time saving private taxi was hired to visit these villages. In the village, survey was made to gather information as to who are these days doing painting works, whether the painting was done as a hobby or they are the source of income of the family. Further, information was gathered as to which castes are doing these paintings and what are the theme & objectives. Again it was also discussed that where they sale their paintings and which type of paintings are of high in demand. Information were also gathered that whether they receive any orders for specific types of painting and whether the guardians do cooperate in this or they cause obstacles. During discussion their problems were also discussed. They were asked as to whether they got any training or its was just transferred from their mothers. Based on the above information data have been collected for discussion, summary and conclusion.

RESULTS:

Jitwarpur village is adjacent to Madhubani district head quarter. Here cultivation of rice & wheat is common. The village has populations of Brahmins, Karn Kayastha, Harijan

(Dusadh) and families of Suri castes. The socio-economic conditions in general are poor, although, few families are well to do. During discussion it was observed that the paintings patters have been changed drastically. Earlier the women of Brahmins and Kayasth families were engaged in painting works. Further they were confined to some religious events related with Ramayana, Mahabharat, and Devi Durga. They revealed that earlier, restricted women's were doing painting as a hobby at particular occasions such as marriage, mundane and Yagyopavita etc. There were paintings revealing garlanding of Sita and Ram, Dhanush Yagya, Sitaharan, image of Rawana & Sita, Jatayu wadh, burning of Capital Lanka, Draupadi Chir- haran and several scenes of Mahabharta etc. They started paintings of devotion, fertility symbols. They started painting of fishes, parrot, elephant, turtle as symbol of fertility and prosperity. Paintings of Sun and Moon, bamboo plants, and Lotus flowers also got more attraction. The pointed nose and big eyes with hairs in different styles all were the symbols for the expression of the beauty of the women of Mithila.

During discussion in one portions of the village, where Harijans (Dusadh) community is dominating, they pointed out that the females who use to work in the house of Brahmins and Karna Kayasth got interested in painting and they also painted their famous God Salhesa. Salhesa is an important divinity in the Dusadh community. This God of strength and his legends feature prominently in the works of Dusadh artists.

The difference between the works of Brahmins and Kayastha women and women of lower castes were apparent. The Harijan Madhubani paintings appeared simpler and less sophisticated. They were closer to the Geru tradition of painting, with emphasis on volume and depth rather than ornamentation, where as Brahmins and the Kayastha stuck to the mythological and religious themes. The Scheduled caste artists allowed themselves greater freedom of expression by depicting day to day life with secular motifs. Yamuna Devi belonged to the Chamar community and made a portrait of a Chamar disposing the carcass of a cow which is a famous example of this. We were informed that Yamuna Devi a Dalit lady painted mud paintings. This was exhibited in Japan. The paintings got much appreciation and she became the first Scheduled caste women to gain recognition for her Madhubani style. They said that now several Dalit women are doing paintings on paper and they are earning a good amount form it. This is helping them to maintain their families.

It was further revealed by the women that sometimes we work together for a particular painting, usually led by the more experienced or senior woman of the house hold. These paintings are large in size and are painted and designed only on specific orders. They also revealed that girls belonging to different communities are allowed to observe the methodology and to assist the senior artists. This becomes their training and education in this art. After getting the basic training, these girls start their own paintings and this encourages them to express their hidden talent through paintings of new images. Here there is certain change but the basic concepts remain the same. These girls are free to choose her own theme for painting. She can select the size of painting and the surface to be used as well as the orientation of the surface, whether vertical or horizontal, depending on the theme and

elements to be included. By designing the borders and placement of the elements of the paintings, there is production of new styles.

Women painters also revealed that there are total shift in the theme and elements of the paintings, we are painting the borders of the Sarees and Clothes used for marking dresses of young girls. We are also painting the pillow cover, the handkerchief, the cushion etc. these paintings are much in demand. The paintings of Doli and Kahar, the Kohbar, are much liked by the females of different communities. Similarly, paintings of natural calamities such as flood, fire, famine or the torture of women for dowry or other are much liked and are sold easily. They also said that we know the art, have different themes and elements in mind but because of financial scarcity we are forced to stick to simple paintings only.

All the units where painting works are being done at Jitwarpur are unregistered at these artists do the work of paintings at their homes. It was also noted that in some families, there were many members but had no interest in the painting works and a single female member is responsible solely for the entire work of a particular product. However, in some families there were cooperated works and thus they were preparing paintings easily and happily. It was also found that in some families the male person is doing work of painting and wife assists at different stage of the painting. It was also noted that some youths were interested in the art but due to not regular income they left the home and are working outside the state for regular income.

Some painters revealed that the painting on Tassar Saree gives better return that may range between 2000-5000. But the problem they pointed out was the regular marketing of such paintings and there was no income till the paintings are getting sold. They further revealed that, the handmade papers are cheap and the paintings are easily sold. So we usually do paintings on paper instead of Tassar Sarees. Most of the painters revealed that October to March is the peak season for Madhubani paintings. During summer and rainy season, the painting is affected due to heat & moisture. Some of painters revealed that annual income is not more than 2.0 Lakhs.

In the Harijan tola, painters recalled Yamuna Devi, the first Harijan women Madhubani artists from the state was awarded state award in 1984 and National award in (1997). Ramji Ram, husband of Yamuna Devi was also awarded by the State Government in (1985). Binda Devi, the daughter in law of Yamuna Devi is alone doing works of Madhubani paintings and no other persons are helping her. She said that I alone make 40-50 full size (22X30 inches) finished painting annually. They revealed that some artists have tie-up with Delhi based artists.

They sell their paintings to them, and these traders use to shell the paintings to the foreign buyers at more and higher price than they purchased from us.

The painters in Paswan tola, are specialized in Goidna and Madhubani paintings. They said that a Goidna painting on 22x30 size takes about 10 days, while the Madhubani paintings on the same size takes 7 days. The Goidna painting is purchased by the Indians in

Rs. 800-1500, while the foreigners pay Rs. 4000- 5000 for the same. Sometimes they may pay up to 6000 for each Goidna painting. But his is not a regular business. Sometimes they do not come here for one or two years. Some painters in Dusadh tola revealed that the painting showing Tsunami tragedy, Gandhiji's Freedom Struggle was sold for Rs. 15000 each. Some painters in this community are doing work of painting on canvass. Earlier the canvass painter, named Urmila Devi has been awarded by the State Government and was sold for Rs. 35000 each. They also said that one member of the family do participate in Craft Mela in Delhi Haat, New Delhi. Some person of this community said that sometimes we get cheated by the promoters, who took our paintings and assured to pay back once the paintings are sold but, he never came back and we had a huge loss of about Rs. 64000.

There are some Bengali families in Jitwarpur. Their paintings are made on handmade paper. The theme is Radha-Krishna, Ganesha, Shiva and Peacock. Here they revealed that generally large sized paintings are made on order and the cost is fixed Rs. 15000 per paintings. However, small sized paintings costs, minimum Rs. 600 only. In Kayasth tola the painters revealed that, we paint on small pieces of handmade paper, and mostly on market orders. They revealed that there are demands for paintings related to nature, environment and social themes than religious and mythological narratives. They said Kohbar paintings on handmade papers are of high demand. They also revealed that paintings depicting Doli, Swayamwar are much in demand by the Indian buyers including Muslim customers. They said that customers from Delhi prefer Kohbar paintings made on white background. Buyers form Bengal and Eastern regions prefer motifs on fishes, birds, animals, natural scenes, Swayamwar, Radha Krishna. Foreign buyers like Madhubani paintings on handmade papers. They also revealed that most of the customers, including Banks etc, want paintings with fish motifs only. They also said that there is a group of young artists under JIO programme, who are involved with a livelihood and marketing. Here there is unique partnership between, traditional artisans and modern designers to transform local crafts into global products.

In the Ranti village local people narrated the works of famous women painter, Late Ganga Devi and Late Mahasundri Devi, who were given National awards. They were also given 'Tulsi Samman'. Mahasundri Devi was awarded 'Padma Shree'. Similarly, different painters have been awarded by the state government.

DISCUSSION:

Madhubani paintings, has been registered in 2005, under Geographical Indication Act of Intellectual Property Right. Madhubani painting is now not limited to religious depictions. The painters have painted the events of International terrorism, Global warming, Clinics where female fetus are aborted, the burning of bride for dowry, Tsunami disastrous, Purchasing of votes by leaders, Deprivation of medical facilities to the poor's, Earth quake & Floods etc. have been depicted in the Madhubani paintings. Not only had this some of paintings of Madhubani, such as paintings of Godavari Dutta, has been sold in one lakh and thirty five thousand, Paintings of Shashi Kala Devi, and Santosh Kumar Das has been sold up to 48 thousands Rupees. Madhubani paintings, if organized properly, have Wide Avenue

for the creation of women resources. Not only this there should be a vocational courses starting from school to colleges, where the training related to Madhubani painting should be given to desirous female students. Further this art should be taken out of Madhubani and each district should have a vocational course so that after getting training the female students may earn at their home itself. Similarly, there should be a National network so that the Madhubani painting is marketed by Government agencies and the painter should get the actual price of their paintings. The women resources developed through training of Madhubani painting may become an assets for their family, because, earning by the women may help in the economic reforms of the family. Similarly, if such a trained girl is married, she will decipher the knowledge from one village to other and one family to other family.

CONCLUSION:

Exploration of Madhubani paintings and its organized trainings to the girl students may form the seed for the women resources in future that may help in the reformation of the socio-economic conditions of the rural families, where even today 90% of the women depend for money on the male persons of the family. The ideas and the thoughts expressed by different researchers are of great significance in the above contexts.

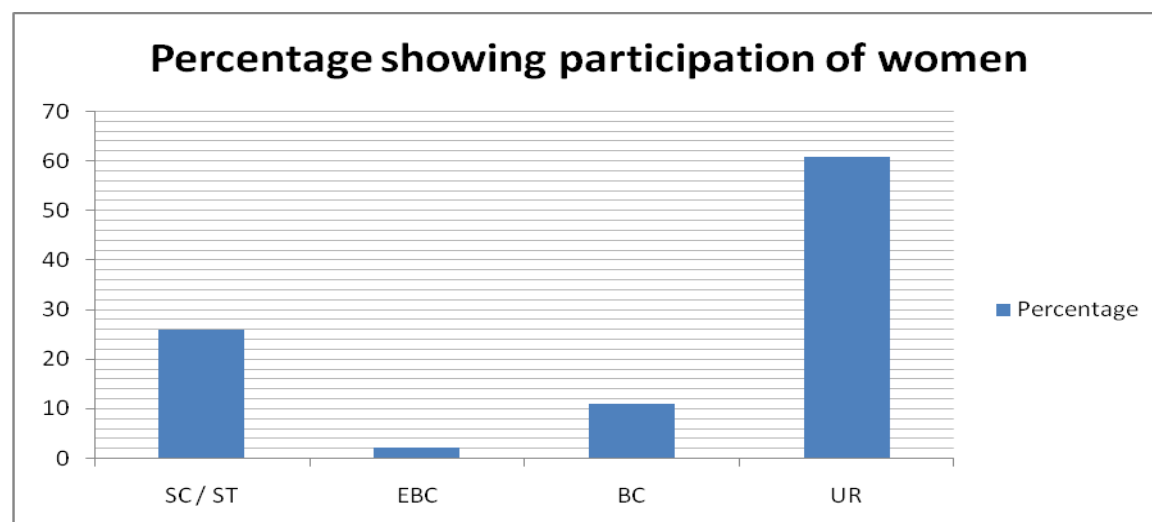
Some of them may cited as – Nayak (1984); Nayak (1988); Jain (1989); Jain (1997); Archer (1998); Babbington (1999); Rekha (2003); Singh (2004); Rekha (2003); Singh (2004); Rekha (2010); Sharma et al (2012); Das (2013); Archana and Gupta (2016); Gupta and Gangawar (2016); and Ankita et al; (2018). Therefore, Madhubani painting if utilized properly may be boon for the development of women resources in Bihar particularly, both in rural and urban area.

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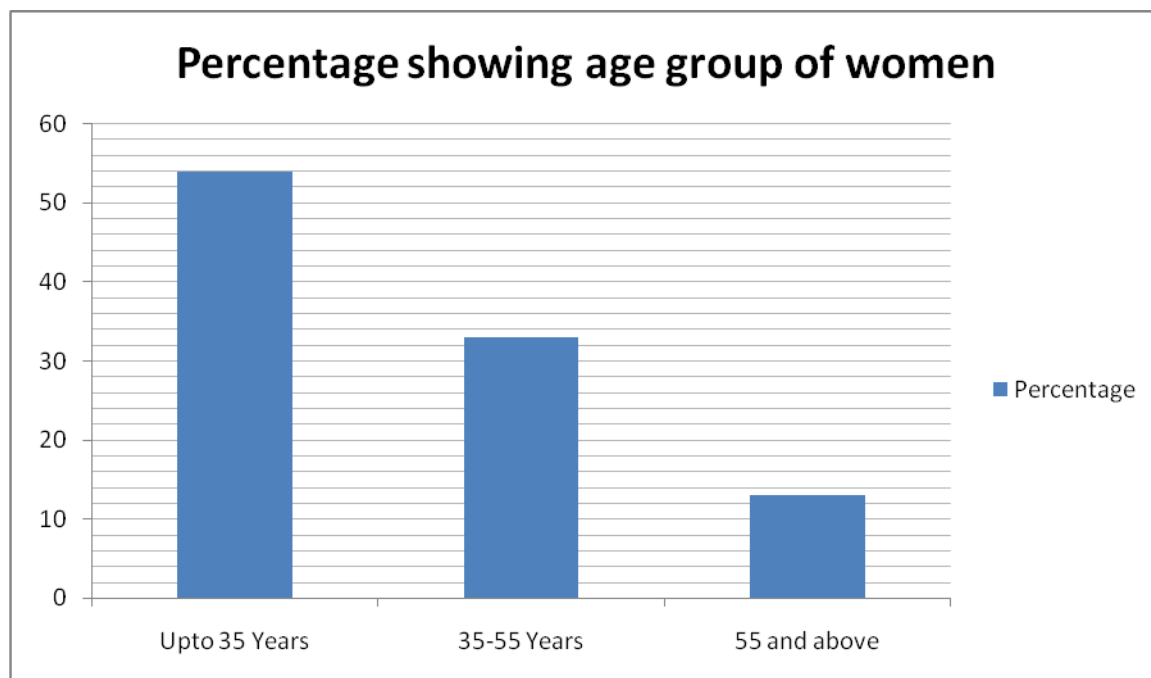
GRAPH-1

Graph showing participation of women in Madhubani Painting, Caste wise



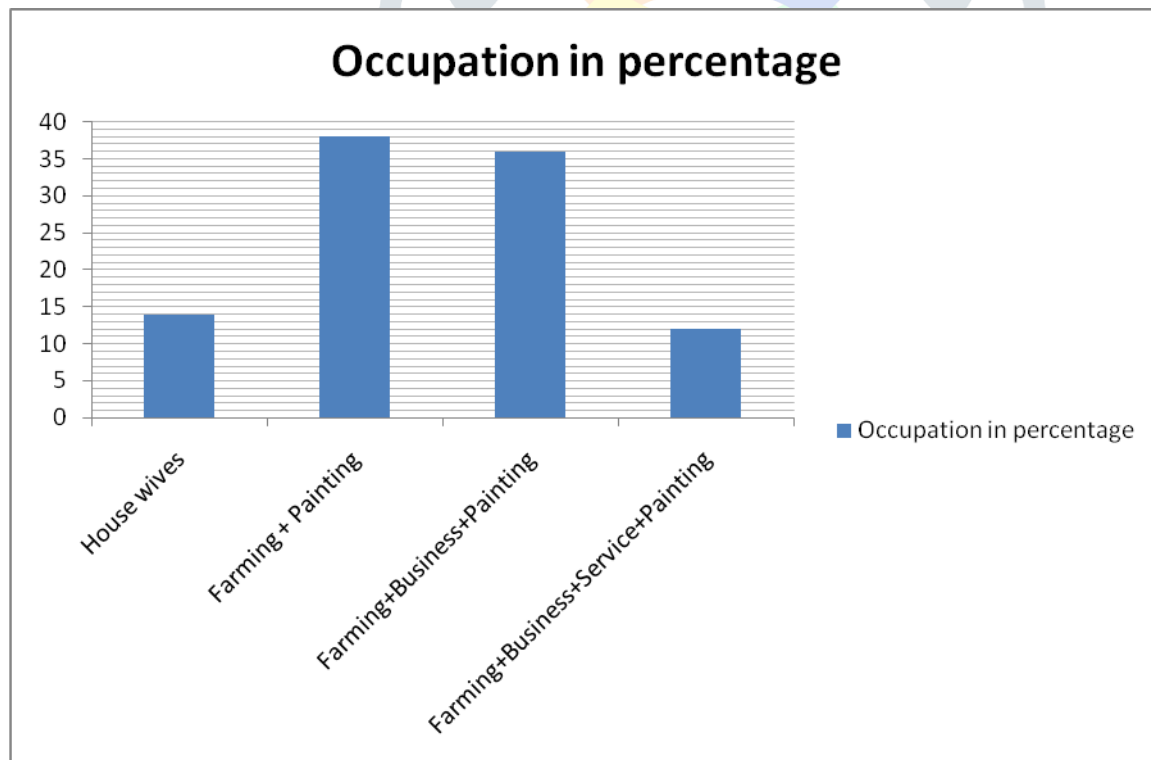
GRAPH-2

Graph showing age group of women participating in Madhubani painting.



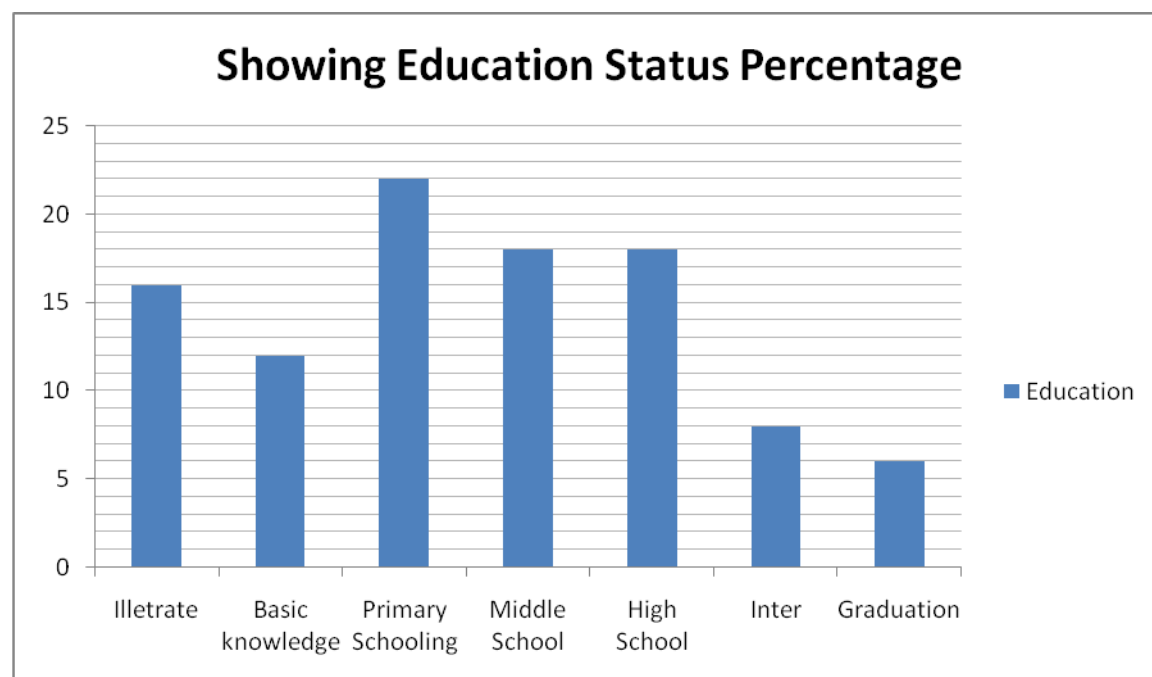
GRAPH-3

Graph showing occupations of respondent with respect to their occupation.



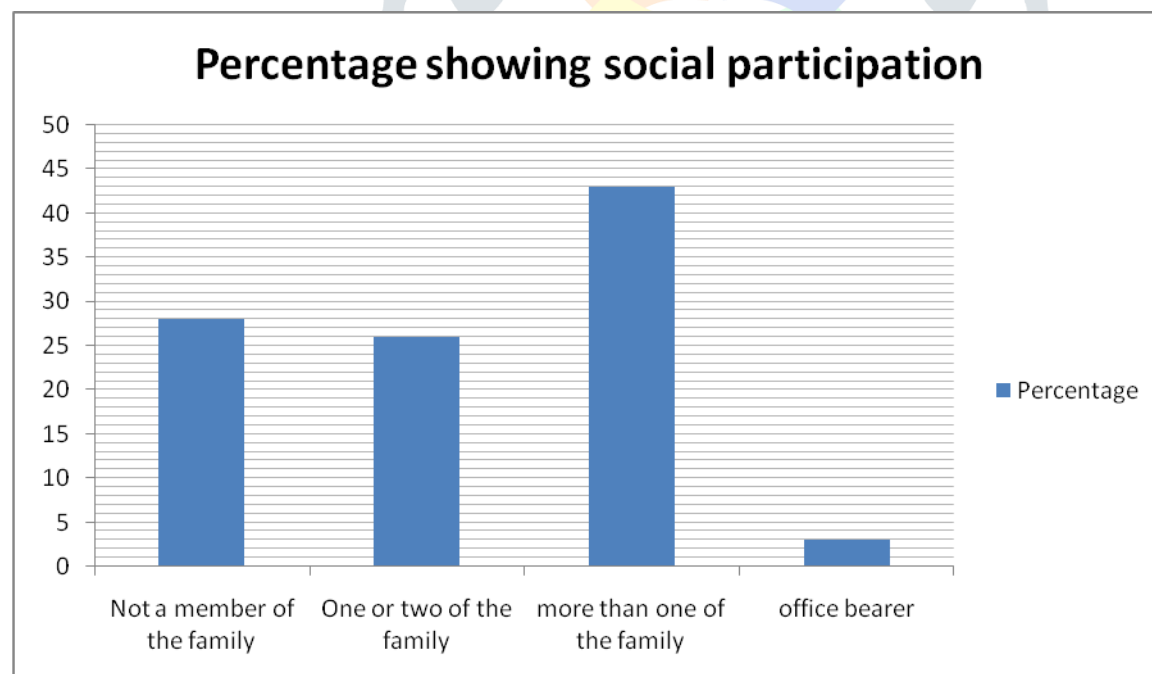
GRAPH-4

Graph showing educational status of the persons involved in Madhubani Painting.



GRAPH-5

Graph showing social participation by the persons involved in Madhubani Painting



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