



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Department of MSME&T
Government of West Bengal



TERRACOTTA

Baked Earth



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



West Bengal is a treasure trove of natural and cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage of Bengal is an exemplary instance of the aesthetic lineage of Bengal. Utilitarian lifestyle items like basketry made with date palm leaves and Sabai grass, hand spun and hand woven jute rugs (Dhokra), mats made with cane slips (Sitalpati) or Madurkathi (Madur), pottery, Kantha-spreads, decorative and ritualistic items made out of Shola and others, reflect a curious fusion of indigenous craftsmanship and utility. Bengal's art and craft reflect cultural history, ethnic roots, and lifestyle in-tune with nature. Variety of masks, Dokra and metal work, range of indigenous weaves and embroideries, dolls, masks and figurines curved out of wood are examples of Bengal's artistry. Culture of Bengal is enriched by the mellifluous tunes of the Baul, Bhawaiya, Bhatiyali singers, rapturous dances of Chau, Raibenshe and Jhumur, storytelling traditions like puppetry and Patachitra, and folk theatres like Gambhira, Banbibir Pala among other folk forms.

The Rural Craft and Cultural Hub (RCCH) Project is an initiative of the Department of Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T) and UNESCO aiming to rejuvenate the rich cultural heritage of West Bengal and strengthen rural creative enterprise. The journey started in 2013 and the RCCH project currently covers 50,000 handicraft and folk artists across the state. It has strengthened the ecosystem supporting the transmission of traditional skills in art and craft, fostered direct market linkage, engaged youth in pursuing their traditions, and promoted cultural tourism to the villages of the artists. The project is indeed a testimonial to the contribution of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to sustainable development, social inclusion and also to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Beautiful in form and feature, lovely as the day,
can there be so fair a creature formed of common
clay?

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
American Poet and Educator

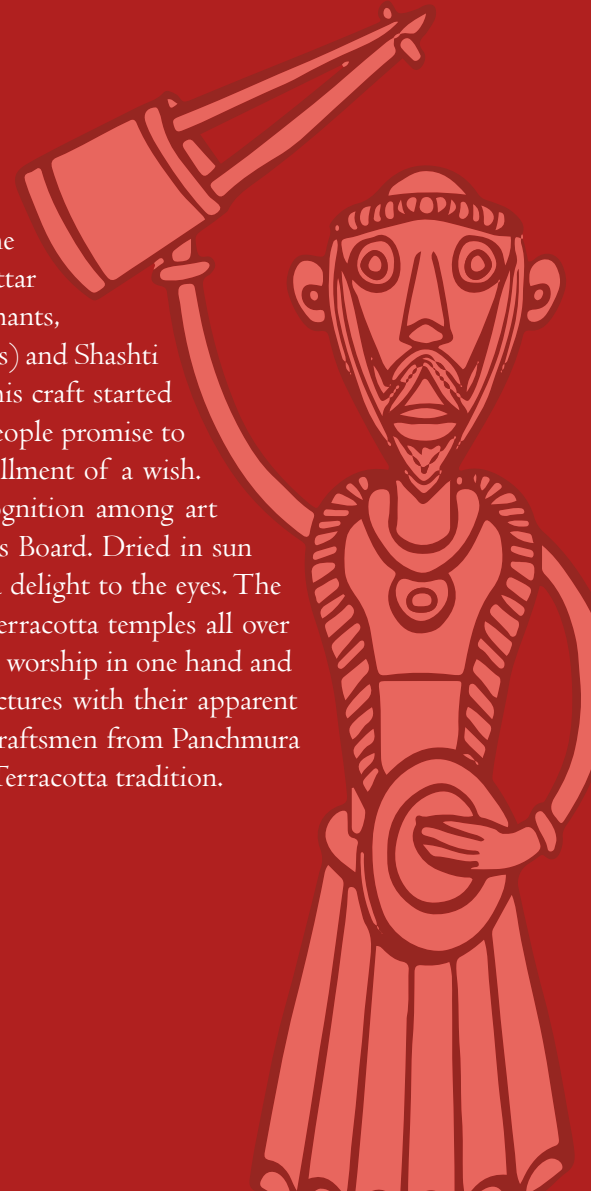




TERRACOTTA

Baked Earth

Terracotta is a type of fired clay, brownish red in colour, which is used as ornamental building material and in modeling different idols, figurines, etc. It is one of the most ancient manifestations of human creativity. The artistry of Terracotta is prevalent across the districts of Bankura, Uttar Dinajpur, Birbhum, Purulia and North 24 Parganas. Ritual horses, elephants, Manasa Chali (the crafted pitcher symbolizing Manasa, the Snake Goddess) and Shashti (the guardian deity of children) are produced in Panchmura, Bankura. This craft started with the rise in the popularity of the local serpent deity Manasa. Local people promise to dedicate terracotta horses and elephants to the serpent deity on the fulfillment of a wish. Over time, the archetypal horses of Bankura Terracotta has gained recognition among art lovers worldwide. It is regarded as a symbol of the All India Handicrafts Board. Dried in sun and burnt in mud kilns, these earthly ensembles in dull ochre or red are a delight to the eyes. The Malla kings made the Terracotta art of Bishnupur popular by building terracotta temples all over the place. The temples served a dual purpose for them by being a place of worship in one hand and that of shelter for warriors on the other. The ubiquitous terracotta structures with their apparent subtle and artistic façade were rock solid inside. The kings brought the craftsmen from Panchmura for building these temples, and that marked the beginning of Bishnupur Terracotta tradition. Bankura's terracotta has received Geographical Indication Status in 2018.

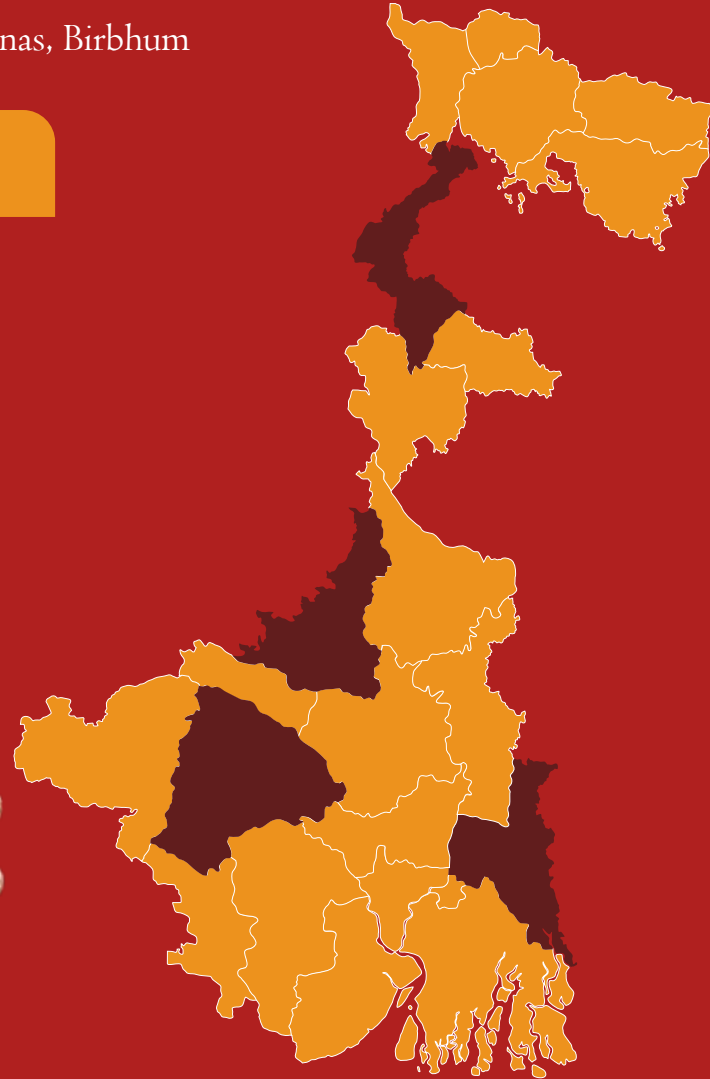


LOCATION

District:
Bankura, Uttar Dinajpur, North 24 Parganas, Birbhum



Villages: Panchmura, Kunoor, Subhashganj,
Chaltaberia, Kakutia



CRAFT HUBS

Panchmura in Bankura is the prominent hub of Terracotta making and has evolved as a cultural tourism destination. Around 80 families are practicing the craft tradition. They belong to the community of 'Kumbhakars,' meaning potters. Panchmura Mritshilpi Samabay Samity was formed by the crafts persons in 1959. The society is active and provides marketing support to the artisans.

There are other promising clusters of Terracotta tradition across various districts. Kunoor in Uttar Dinajpur is a vibrant cluster practicing the tradition. There are around 300 artists practicing the tradition in Kunoor and Subhashganj areas of Uttar Dinajpur. Kakutiya is another small cluster of potters in Birbhum. Chaltaberia in North 24 Parganas is also a large cluster of artists.

Men are mostly involved in preparation of the clay, operation in the furnace, while women are more involved in the adornment and finishing of the products.

A folk-art centre has been developed in the village of Panchmura by the West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board. Annual folk festival is held in the village of Panchmura and tourists visit the hub throughout the year. It has grown as one of the unique cultural tourism destinations of the state.



Artist at Panchmura - 296
Artist at Kunoor - 171
Artist at Chaltaberia - 158
Artist at Subhashganj - 154
Artist at Kakutiya - 38

Panchmura
Dipankar Kumbhakar : 9547163124
Brajanath Kumbhakar : 8001814005
Bhutnath Kumbhakar : 9732187161
Tapas Kumbhakar : 9641565596
Kanchan Kumbhakar : 6294842851
Biswanath Kumabhakar : 8617026403
Mahadeb Kumbhakar : 6295474950

Kunoor
Dulal Roy : 9733435602
Hrishikesh Roy : 7908606232

Subhashganj
Pankaj Pal : 7501451522
Ramani Mohan Pal : 760258585
Manoranjan Pal : 9832679838
Sukumar Pal : 9339234467
Sukumar Pal (Senior) : 9614650437

Kakutiya
Kanti Pal : 9475671241

Chaltaberia
Uttam Pal : 9830586957





THE ARTISTS

Late Rashbehari Kumbhakar was a National awardee who is believed to be the main contributor in formulating the present design of the Bankura horse. Baul Kumbhakar, who is a state awardee visited Korea, Honolulu, Russia, UK to represent Panchmura and its creative offerings. Jagannath Kumbhakar visited France. Sunil Baran Kumbhakar, Kanchan Kumbhakar are state awardees recognized for their intricate craftsmanship. Among the young artists, Tapas Kumbhakar, Krishna Kumbhakar, Jagannath Kumbhakar, and Alok Kumbhakar are excellent craftsmen.

In Kunoor the leading artists are Dulal Roy, Hrishikesh Roy. In Subhashganj the top artists are Subrata Pal and Pankaj Pal. One of the leading artists of Kakutia is Kanti Pal. There are many renowned artists in Chaltaberia of North 24 Parganas.

MAKING PROCESS

Joining together

Baking in kiln. Smoke is trapped or released to render the desired colour

Step 01

Step 03

Step 05

Step 02

Step 04

Preparation of the clay mix

Using traditional wheeling process to give shape

Drying naturally

The process starts with cleaning the clay. The clay is prepared by removing silt, sand and pebbles from the clay to make it suitable for the wheel work. This is done by breaking the lump of clay, and making it into finer and powdered grains, and refining it by removing the sand particles either by hand or by using a sieve. After the clay is refined, the next step is to add other raw materials, such as fine river sand and water.

Mixing is done by hands if the quantity of the clay is less, but if the quantity is more, then potters prefer using their legs. The blending and mixing of the clay is followed by the wheel work, which is mainly done to make the basic shapes such as cone, cylinder, etc., which acts as the main component of the items to be made.

The drying of the product made on the wheel is an important step. The drying is mainly natural, and it takes around a day or two for the product to become ready for the next step. After the wheeled products are dried, they are assembled together by hand to give a basic structure and shape. Motifs are next designed on the semi dried product by hand and bamboo tools called Chhiyari.

After drying for some time in the sun, holes are made on appropriate parts of the body of the baked clay product. This is done before full drying, otherwise the inner and the outer surface of the body will not be equally dry. Cracks may develop in the body for unequal drying of the inner and the outer portions. The products are dried naturally. Two coats of colour made from bonop are next applied. Finally, the products are put in a kiln at 700-750 degrees centigrade for 4-5 hours .



PRODUCTS

Terracotta traditionally used for making horses, elephants and Manasa Chali and decorative pieces for temples, is now being used for making products. The diversified products serve both decorative and functional purposes. With design interventions in recent times, products like lampshades, flower vases, pen stands, ash trays, stools, conch shells, clay pots, plates, etc., are being made. Other decorative items include wall hangings, various idols, etc. Potters are now also making a range of jewellerys out of Terracotta.





DIVERSIFIED
TERRACOTTA
PRODUCTS





TRADITIONAL
TERRACOTTA
HORSES





VARIOUS PRODUCTS



LAMPS



CROCKERIES



FOLK-ART CENTRE

A folk-art centre has been made at Panchmura with the support of the West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board. The folk-art centre serves as the collective workshop space, where the senior potters come and teach their children the art of moulding clay and making beautiful products out of Terracotta. The folk-art centre houses a gallery showcasing different types of Terracotta products and also exhibits the traditional processes adhered for making the craft.



FESTIVAL

Every year, the potters of Panchmura organize festivals to celebrate their local cultural heritage. The festivals attract huge tourist footfall and adds value to the rural space as a cultural tourism destination.





www.rcchbengal.com



RuralCraftandCulturalHubs | uttardinajpurhastoshilpo | bankurarlokoshilpo



rcch_bengal



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Department of MSME&T
Government of West Bengal