



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Dokra

Aesthetics of Metal Crafting



The notion of education through handicrafts rises from the contemplation of truth and love permeating life's activities.

Mahatma Gandhi

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).





Dokra

Aesthetics of Metal Crafting

Dokra is one of the earliest methods of non-ferrous metal casting known to human civilization. The lost or vanishing wax casting method of metal casting, popularly known as Dokra, is a primitive technique, which can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization. Dokra statues are revered all over the world for its primeval simplicity and enthralling folk motifs. These figures have a rustic and antique finish, which adds to its appeal. Dokra products involve a tedious process of designing and metal casting. The finishing touches are added with precision. Each piece of the artwork is unique as a mould created can only be used once.

Dokra of Bengal has been accredited with Geographical Indication (GI) in 2018.



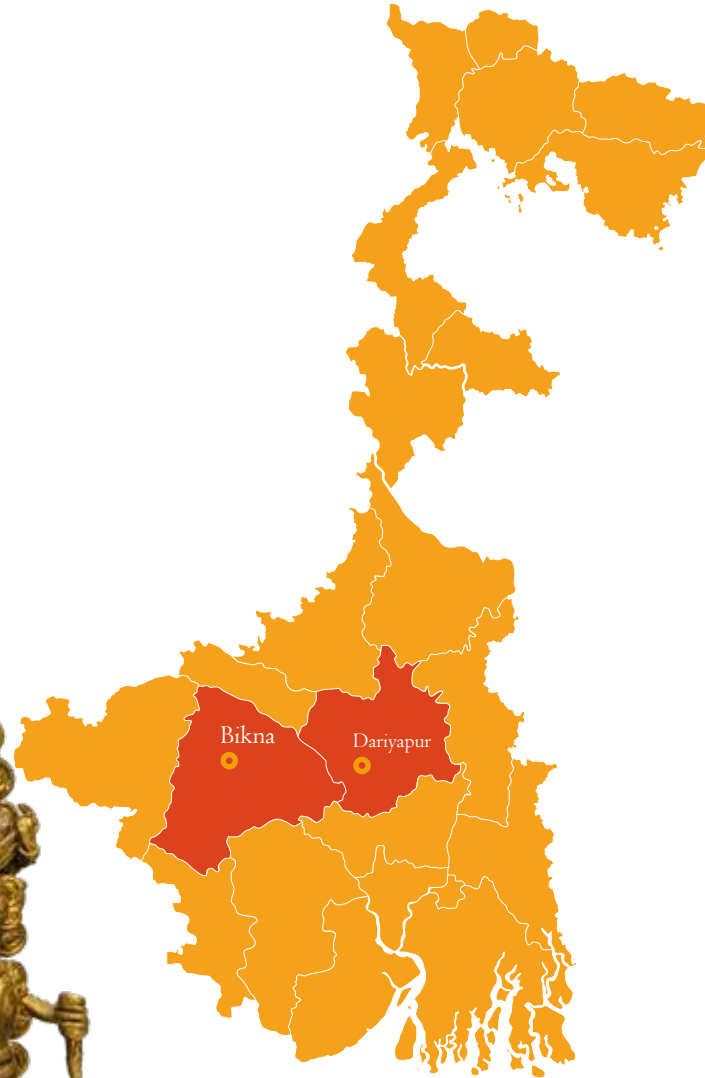
Craft Hubs

District:
Bankura, Purba Bardhaman



Village: Bikna, Bankura

Village: Dariyapur, Purba Bardhaman

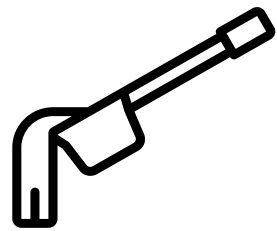


Bikna & Dariyapur

As part of the Rural Craft and Cultural Hub (RCCH) initiative, two major hubs of Dokra in West Bengal are being strengthened and are now emerged as the cultural tourism destinations.

Bikna in Bankura and Dariyapur in Purba Bardhaman are the major clusters of Dokra. The history of the Dokra artists in Bikna is about 150 years old. The craftspeople migrated from the Chotanagpur region to Rampur near Bankura and settled in Bikna over the period. On the other hand, the Dokra artisans of Dariyapur village settled there 120 years back.

Folk-art centres with community museums have been created in both the villages with the support of the West Bengal Village Industries Board. Annual folk festivals are held in the villages, and tourists visit these hubs throughout the year. Students and designers visit the hub to learn about the process and collaborate with these craftspeople. The artists participate in national and international festivals and look forward to opportunities of purposive exchange and collaboration.



Bikna Artist

Men - 100 | Women - 103

Dariyapur Artist

Men - 96 | Women - 72

- Harendranath Rana 9932601095
- Somnath Karmakar 9932546842
- Gita Karmakar 9933698558
- Putul Karmakar 9382914469
- Gopon Karmakar 8670518026
- Subho Karmakar 9153255955
- Suresh Karmakar 7872287512
- Subhash Mondol 9735228086
- Guranga Karmakar 8001058766





Process

The raw materials used in Dokra are brass and bell metal scrap, resin, wood, gum, tar, wax, mustard oil, coal and soil of a particular type locally known as Nena. The artists procure the raw materials from the local market.

The women first sieve the mud to remove the pebbles. Then, it is mixed with water to form a smooth dough. After that, the dough is given the desired shape and kept in the sun for drying.

The process of Dokra crafting varies from place to place. In Bikna, the craftspeople use tar and resin wood gum (Dhuno) to form an elastic substance by continuous heating and covering the mould of mud with the elastic mix. In Dariyapur, craftspeople use wax and tar. As wax is very soft, resin is added. 1 kg of wax is mixed with 600 gm of resin and 500 gm of mustard oil. For further precision, form, and fine detailing, A layer of resin and mustard oil is applied for further precision.

Thereafter, a thick layer of mud is pasted and the object is perforated on top. The chunks of metal are introduced in it using a metal funnel. It is then put into a furnace. The craft community know the exact time required for the completion of the process. The products are then carefully taken out using tongs. The mud cover is then broken to take out the final product. Buffing is done to give the final product a shiny finish and make the surface even.



Clay core is covered by a layer of wax and tar or tar and resin wood gum.

Clay covering is done to form a mould for pouring in metal. Drain ducts are left for the wax, which melts away when the clay is baked.

Making of the composition with wax & tar.



A clay core is modelled in the shape of the desired product.

Melting the metal. Metal fills the mould and takes the same shape as the wax.

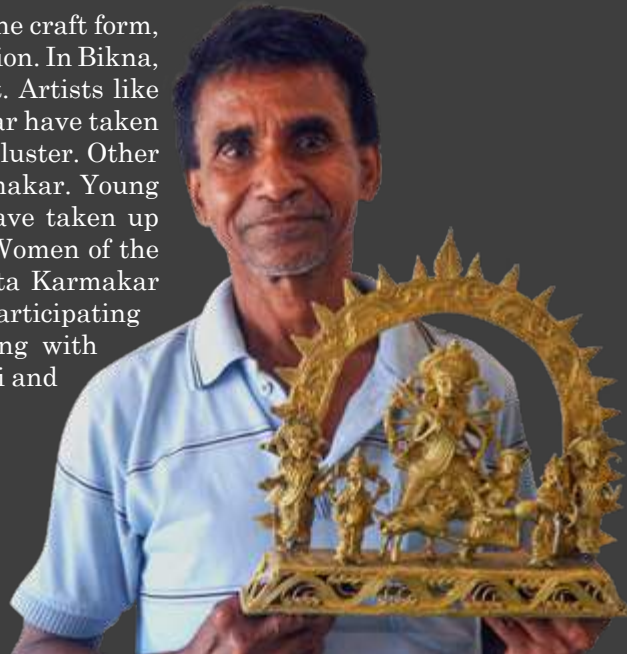
The final product is then polished



The Story of Dokra Artists

Dariyapur in Purba Bardhaman and Bikna of Bankura are vibrant hubs of Dokra craft. The village of Dariyapur located close to Guskara has evolved as an important cultural tourism destination. One of the renowned artist of the area Shri Ramu Chitrakar won the national award in 2012. Subhas Mondol is another well-known artist of the area who have travelled to many countries. Other senior artists include Ashok Karmakar and Mukul Karmakar. Subho Chitrakar is a young artist who is leading the entrepreneurial activities for the cluster. Other young artists include Suresh Karmakar, Sanjay Karmakar, Bapi Turi. Women in the surrounding area are also equally developing and crafting this unique craft. Among the women artist, Fultusi Karmakar, Bandana Karmakar, Priya Karmakar and Dipa Karmakar works on developing various jewellery works. The folk-art centre at Dariyapur developed under the Rural Craft Hub project by the West Bengal Khadi & Village Industries Board has provided the artists with a space for workshop, exchange, sale of handicraft products.

In Bankura town, Bikna is a small hamlet practicing the craft form, which has slowly evolved as a cultural tourism destination. In Bikna, Juddho Karmakar is a national award winning artist. Artists like Harendranath Rana, Gita Karmakar, Goapon Karmakar have taken up leadership roles and have strengthened the Dokra cluster. Other leading artists include Babloo Karmakar, Dayal Karmakar. Young artists like Somnath Karmakar, Subhankar Rana have taken up leading roles for enhancing online sales of the craft. Women of the area like Putul Karmakar, Rekha Karmakar, Mamata Karmakar have also shown entrepreneurship skills and are participating in various festivals and fairs. A folk-art centre along with museum has been developed by the West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board at Bikna.



Products

Initially, the community made brass vessels to measure rice, bells of different kinds, anklets, lamps (diya) and figures of local mythical characters (Jimut Bahan and Deeporani) and idols of deities. Traditionally, the crafts persons made jewellery for their own family members, while now a variety of modern jewellery like necklaces with beads and dokra pieces, lockets, ear rings and bangles are made. Additionally Dokra products like bullock cart, horse, elephant, peacock, owl, Nandi (bull), idols of Durga, Saraswati, Ganesh and Lakshmi Narayan, lamp, candle stand, incense stick holder, ash tray, soap case, mobile holder, door knob, figurines of women, mother and child, tribal couple, wall panels with stories of Krishna Leela etc. are also made.



Traditional Dokra



Diversified
Dokra
Products





Ornaments





Home Decor





Cutlery



Lamp Shade



Folk-Art Centre



Bikna's folk-art center acts as a collective space dedicated to safeguard the traditional practice of Dokra. The folk-art center is run and managed by the local community of artists. This folk-art center has been made with the support of the West Bengal Khadi Village Industries Board.



A folk-art centre has been made in Dariyapur with the support of the West Bengal Khadi Village Industries Board. The folk-art center exhibits different varieties of Dokra products and showcases the traditional processes adhered to make the craft. The center also acts as a collective space dedicated to preserve, promote and safeguard Dokra craft form.



Festival

Dokra artists of both Dariyapur and Bikna celebrate their annual festivals in the villages. These festivals are dedicated to celebrate the traditional cultural heritage of the rural locales and witness high tourist footfall. These festivals add value to these villages as cultural tourism destinations.





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