



Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal



Department of MSME&T
Government of West Bengal



WOODEN DOLL
Handcrafted Wonders



The role of culture is that it's the form through which we as a society reflect on who we are, where we have been and where we hope to be.

Wendell Pierce

American theatre actor and entrepreneur

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).





Wooden Doll

Handcrafted Wonders

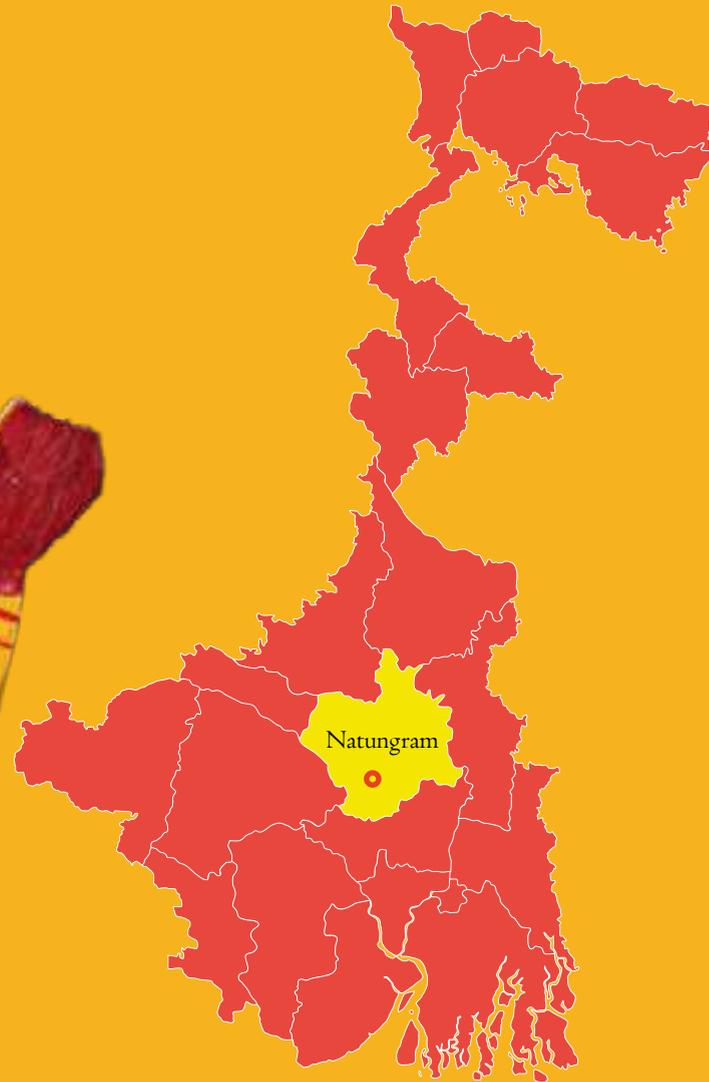
Vibrant colours and indigenous craftsmanship are the characteristic features of the wooden dolls crafted by the artists of Natungram in the Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal. The wooden dolls are delicately carved out of wood and the figurines are inspired from local culture and mythology. Innovative ideas, a brilliant combination of pure, simplicity and aesthetics, combined with the master craftsmanship of the doll makers result in amazing works of art. Figurines of owls, Rashiputul (figures of Radha Krishna on a single block of wood), Durga and Raja-Rani dolls are some of the signature creations of Natungram's doll makers.



CRAFT HUB

District:
Purba Bardhaman

 Village: Natungram

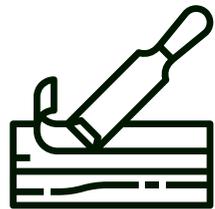


NATUNGRAM

Natungram of Purba Bardhaman is a vibrant hub of the wooden doll makers. There are around 155 artists practicing the tradition in the village.

The men are skilled in the wood work and women are engaged in adding colours and adorning the dolls. The artists have formed a collective by the name of Swami Janakidas Natungram Wood Carving Artisans Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd., which undertakes collective efforts in furthering promotion, practice and safeguarding the tradition of doll making.

A folk-art centre with a community museum has been developed in the village by the West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board. Annual folk festival is held in the village and tourists visit the hub throughout the year. Students and designers visit the hub to learn about the process of making wooden dolls and collaborate with these talented craftspeople. The artists participate in state and national festivals and are eager for further opportunities of purposive and collaborative exchange.



Artist at Natungram

Men - 88 | Women - 67

Uttam Bhaskar (President) :	9732908249
Dilip Sutradhar (Secretary) :	9333386501
Bijoy Sutradhar (Treasurer) :	7872214736
Dilip Bhaskar :	9733902091
Manik Sutradhar :	9932469992
Sujoy Sutradhar :	8637023054
Subhash Sutradhar :	6297625701
Ghoton Sutradhar :	8918268118
Toton Sutradhar :	8967110814
Joydeb Bhaskhar :	9153281453
Amal Bhaskhar :	9064793569
Gour Sutradhar :	9832570996
Rakhi Sutradhar :	8167309627
Tinamoni Bhaskar :	7908678503





Doll Making PROCESS

The dolls of Natungram are carved from a single piece of wood. The dolls are mostly made of Gamhar wood which is preferred due to its strength and durability. Aam Kath (Mango wood), Neem wood and Akashmoni are also used. Vibrant colours and intricate designs are the characteristic features of the dolls. The process involves cutting the wood into desired size and shape, drawing a figure on the block of wood, which is then chiselled out. The carved surface is then cleaned and smoothed. A paste with Khari mati (white clay), flour, water and adhesive is coated on the surface and made to dry. Khari mati gives a smooth finish to the dolls. Colours are applied, motifs with specific designs are drawn out by fine brush strokes, and facial features are added.



1



Slicing

2



Section
Cutting

3



Carving and
Designing

4



White Clay
Coating & Drying

5

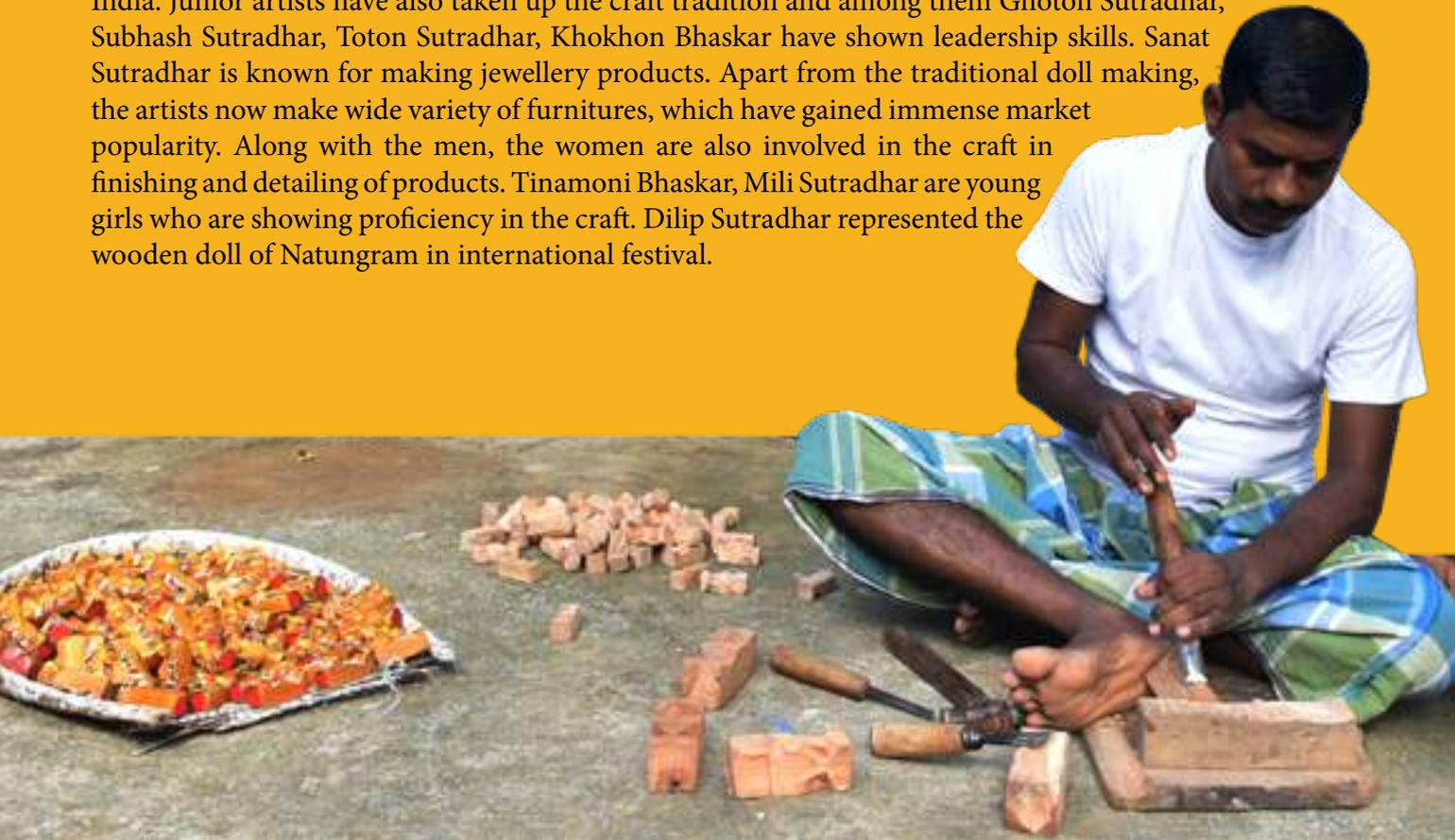
Painting



The Story of

WOODEN DOLL MAKERS

Natungram in Purba Bardhaman is a unique craft village where men and women work to make unique wooden crafts. Manik Sutradhar, Bijoy Sutradhar are known for their artistic work and have travelled across India. Junior artists have also taken up the craft tradition and among them Ghoton Sutradhar, Subhash Sutradhar, Toton Sutradhar, Khokhon Bhaskar have shown leadership skills. Sanat Sutradhar is known for making jewellery products. Apart from the traditional doll making, the artists now make wide variety of furnitures, which have gained immense market popularity. Along with the men, the women are also involved in the craft in finishing and detailing of products. Tinamoni Bhaskar, Mili Sutradhar are young girls who are showing proficiency in the craft. Dilip Sutradhar represented the wooden doll of Natungram in international festival.



Products

The crafts persons have improvised their crafts into different utility and home decor items to further strengthen their market and bring innovation in their creative produce. They make furniture, clocks, wall racks, and other decorative and utility items incorporating the traditional designs of the Owl, Gour-Nitai and Raja Rani. The community also undertake commissioned work to make idols of deities and carve installations.



Traditional Wooden Doll.

CONTEMPORARY Styles





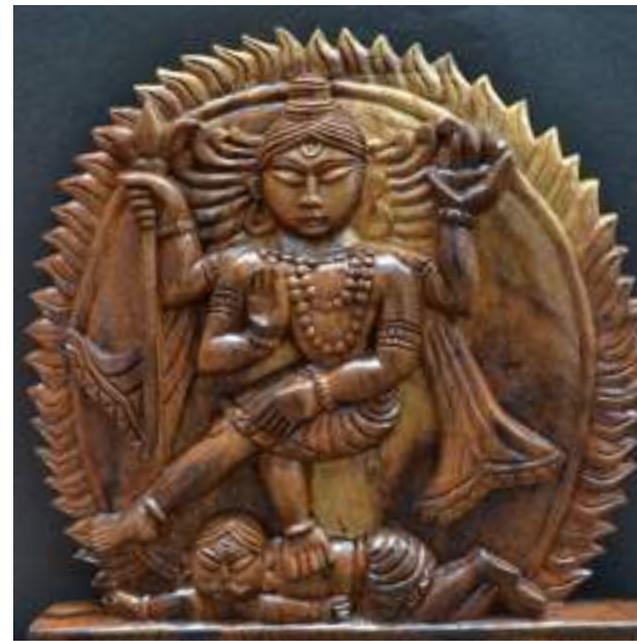


Diversified
Wood
Products





Ornaments





Folk-ART CENTRE

Natungram of Purba Bardhaman is a vibrant hub of wooden dolls. The village houses a folk resource centre, built with the support of the West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board. The resource centre exhibits different traditional and contemporary wood-carved products along with showcasing the traditional process adhered to make the wooden items. It also serves as a space for workshops and trainings, thereby dedicated to promote, preserve and safeguard the cultural heritage.



Village Festival

The doll makers of Natungram collectively organize annual festival in their village to celebrate their cultural heritage of doll making. The festivals witness high tourist footfall and add value to the rural locale as a cultural tourism destination.





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