



Rural Craft in West Bengal: Pattachitra Perspective

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Abstract:

West Bengal is popular for its cultural heritage, which covers handcrafted products that make up a large scale of conventional rural crafts accomplished by the rural people in the villages. Some districts of Bengal are famous for their handicraft products, such as Bankura for its terracotta art and craft products and Dokra for arts. Districts like Panchmura and Bikna are famous for these craft products. Dariyapur village in Bardhaman is also famous for its Dokra crafts which are widely populated as 'Dokra of Bengal'. Among the world. Chau masks of Purulia district makes them popular in the craft market. Charida village has special expertise in the production of this popular mask. Gomira mask of South Dinajpore is a very attractive craft product for its special design, which is produced in Kushmandi village. East and West Midnapore are also very famous for their craft products like mattresses (Sitalpati). Pingla, Naya village, Chandipore are the main centres for the production of Pattachitra. Chaumask, Gomira mask, mattress(Madurkathi), terracotta art and crafts, and pattachitra get intellectual property rights, i.e. G.I. tags from the Government of India for their special features, unique characteristics, distinct identification, and artistic values. Terracotta art and craft of Bankura district also get their patent right for using their own logo on their craft items.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Rural people, Craft product

Rural Crafts of West Bengal: Theoretical Background

West Bengal is very popular for its rural craft. Different types of rural craft in west Bengal are- Shantipur in Nadia district is popular for their forte and traditional thin saree and costume quality

craft item. Dhaniakhali and Farasdanga in Hooghly districts are popular special dhotis and sarees. Begampur in the same district is also expert in loosely fabricated, feathery, and semi-transparent sarees. Murshidabad is popular for its Baluchari saree with a wide variety in the fashion, style, and quality of Bengal. Kantha Stich is an utterance of regional traditions, embellishment in West Bengal, Kanchas are habitually made by rural female persons on old cloths, mostly mushy, rejected dhotis and sarees. Kushmandi, Dinajpur are popular for their wooden mask which is popularly known as Gomira Mask. Charida in Purulia is an attractive place popular for its Chau Mask for, 150 years. Dokra in Dariyapur is very famous for its pre-historic, attractive folk designs and dynamic structures. Ghurni is a village of Krishnanagar that is famous for its clay dolls.

Under the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model the concept of societal outstrip craft tourism is already introduced in these crafts villages. This is evaluated by UNESCO for its contribution to direct communication with the buyers and artisans of craft products. Apart from the reinvention of the handicrafts, rural tourism represents its enormous effect by creating a number of employment opportunities. This is very important for the fostering of rural women and ultimately motivate the young generation to focus upon their ancestral trade practice, which they abandon due to lack of marketing opportunities. According to the project report of MSME of West Bengal handicraft product of Bengal is very much popular for its beautiful cultural trend, uniqueness, and artistic values. The MSME department of west Bengal make tie up with UNESCO to give much concentration on the betterment and creation of job opportunities, continue production of craft products under small scale industries, and providing better export facilities into the international market. West Bengal government make craft hubs across the state with the help of UNESCO to develop the promotional strategies of craft products which help a large section of poor artisans also. All these initiation of west Bengal government and UNESCO motivate poor artisans to continue their artistic activities and production.

Major challenges faced by rural crafts in West Bengal:

Rural banks are often unable to afford to provide loan facilities to the artisans at a low rate of interest, as a result, they lend money to the borrowers at a high rate of interest, which demotivates the artisans from their production. Sometimes dishonest intermediaries purchase the craft products from the artisans at a very low rate but sell them at a high price to the customers, which is also harmful for the craft production. Promotional strategies and marketing opportunities for these craft products are too similar. But there are also various opportunities, i.e., if the market for craft products grows, it will create employment opportunities for the youth of Bengal. It also helps to have a high chance of entering the international market. It should be very possible if our Bengal government ties up with UNESCO for the betterment of craft products. With the rising market opportunities created by online marketing, catalogue marketing helps promote craft products in national as well as international markets. But the intellectual property rights of the artisans are under threat.

Lack of sponsorship, lack of financial support from any other financial organisations demotivated them to continue their production. Most of the artisans get very low wages from the organisations under which they work for production. Those artisans who make and sell their products on their own get very little profit compared to the machine-made products. In the pandemic situation. The cancellation of orders due to this situation also led them to postpone their production.

The initiation took by Central Govt. & State Govt for promoting Rural Crafts

The Government launched the Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY) in the year 2001-2002 with a view to mobilizing the artisans into Self Help Groups. The Government has identified and adopted 90 clusters across the country which will also cover aspirational districts, women clusters, weaker sections, and export potential clusters. According to the report of the Ministry of Textile 2019 fund sanctioned in the year of 2016-17 Rs. 10.19 Lakhs and 50 artisans were benefited whereas in the year of 2017-2018 it was Rs. 1.50 Lakhs and 500 artisans were benefited and no fund has been sanctioned in the year of 2018-19 in West Bengal. Per Mega Cluster Scheme includes employment generation and improvement in the standard of living of artisans. This program follows a cluster-based approach in scaling infrastructure and production chains at handicraft centers, specifically in remote regions, where the sector is largely unorganized and has not evolved to adopt modern developments. Under this scheme, clusters are identified by the Handicrafts Mega Cluster Mission (HMCM) via central and state agencies for upskilling and development. According to the data of the Ministry of Textile (HMCM Project), there are two types of projects Green Field Project and Brown Field Project. In West Bengal, there are 4 greenfield projects and Brown Field Project is Nil. The Directorate of Textiles (Handlooms, Spinning Mills, Silk Weaving & Handloom Based Handicrafts Division) under the M & SSET Department, Govt. of West Bengal, is the nodal agency to look after the development of the Handloom sector in the State of West Bengal. There are numbers of schemes are given below: Handloom clusters development projects, West Bengal Handloom Circuit, 2014, Tantisathi, 10% price subsidy on hank yarn under Mill Gate Price Scheme, production of Cheaper Variety of Sarees, Establishment of State participation in Share capital support to the West Bengal State Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd. With a view to creating robust human resources for the textiles sector, Ministry of Textiles has been implementing various skill development schemes and programs since the financial year 2010-11. Need-based skill up-gradation programs for handloom workers in technical areas viz. weaving, dyeing, designing, etc., earlier conducted under National Handloom Development Scheme, Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) are now undertaken under Samarth scheme. Further, the Government imparts various training programs and schemes for promotion, development, and generation of employment for artisans of the handicraft sector under the “National Handicraft Development Programme (NHDP)” and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to the artisans. A total of 11.14 Lakh persons have been trained under the scheme of Comprehensive Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS), Ministry of Textile, Govt. of India. Under this scheme of ISDC 269 persons have been trained, 150 persons are in training, and 104 were placed in West Bengal whereas in Tamil Nadu is the highest position 6337 have been trained 4114 persons are in training and 4738 were placed.

Case on Bharatpur Pattachitra at Bankura District

Tarapada Chitrakar, one of the senior citizens in Bharatpur village who engaged in pattachitra since his childhood. He carries on his traditional work inheritably. According to him, most of the patuas in this village has low literacy level. They do their scroll painting on a full-time basis. But they do not get sufficient remuneration or wages from their artwork. Their economical background is very poor. Most of the patuas live in a mud house. They have no fixed place to demonstrate and sell their products. Patuas of this village sell their pattachitra directly to the consumers. They get only Rs.1000/- Shilpi Bhata from the west Bengal Government. Local administration, stakeholders are lackadaisical for the development of the patuas in this village. They are unable to attend any trade

fairs and exhibitions due to financial crisis as they are unable to provide participation charges into fairs and exhibition. They do not get any governmental support to get orders from the consumers. Even they do not get any financial support from govt. and non govt sectors. They do not use internet and social medias to promote their artwork. Bank or any other financial organisation do not make any cooperation to get loan facilities and charged high rate of interest to them.

As a result, most of the female patuas now engage as maid servant in various hotels, tourist lodges. Even they yet not get any training facilities from any governmental and non-governmental sectors. They produce 3-4 pattachitra in a fortnight. But they make sell only 1-2 units in a month or in a fortnight. They do scroll painting only on the piece of paper and on the piece of cloth.

Case on Pingla Pattachitra at Midnapore District

Naya village in pingla block in Midnapore district is world famous for its pattachitra. Shyamsundar chitrakar is one of the renowned artisans among them. According to Shyamsundar Chitrakar, the patuas of this village get Shilpi Bhata from the West Bengal government. people in this village engage as a patua at the age of 6 years and continue their art work till death. They got various training facilities from the Governmental, non- governmental sectors, college, and universities. Vidyasagar University, some colleges in Midnapore make contact with the patuas of this village and help them to get order from the national and international level. Patuas of this village efficiently use social media and internet to promote their artistic performance. ‘Duare Sarkar’ campaign calls them to sing pater song in that campaign. The patuas get wages for their pater song. Chitrakar of this village are engage in different SHG. They get loan facilities, orders, from them. The rate of interest rate is very low. Shyamsundar Chitrakar also visited Paris to demonstrate pattachitra into the international platform. Most of the patuas of this village got many awards for their artwork.

Swarna Chitrakar is one of the renowned woman chitrakar in national as well as in the world for her pattachitra and pater song. She visited many countries to demonstrate her artistic performance. She gets call from national and international platform. She earns approx.30000/- to 40000/-per month from the selling of pattachitra. According to her, most of the patuas get governmental and non-governmental training for their development of artwork. The patuas of this village do scroll painting on kurtis, sarees, utensils, room decorating items, as per the current taste and demand of the consumers. Illiteracy, and low level of educational standard is the main problem of this village. Again scroll painter Mamoni pointed out that “Problem I am facing is that schools are shut, so my son and daughter are at home 24/7,”. She also told that “I would usually paint when they would be at school, but now I am too busy taking care of them. There is also a problem of availability of art supplies like paper. She is already planning a song and scroll imagining the post-pandemic world. Meanwhile, their hope is that their scrolls can travel the world, even if the artists, themselves, cannot. Social media provides one means, but I can attest to the fact that seeing these works of art in person makes a powerful statement.

EXHIBIT 1: GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE: VARIOUS SCHEMES

Year	Govt. and Non-Govt. initiation and Schemes
1999	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY
1990	Jagarani’, ‘Ma Monosha’ Pirbaba’, ‘Zorano Pat’, ‘Gazibaba’ ‘Olabibi’ and ‘Najrul So-Sahayak Group’
1998	Patua Mahila Unnayan Samity’
1986 and 1991	The first potua workshops were held at Naya

1992	the NGO, Crafts Council of West Bengal, organised a one-month workshop in Kolkata
2013	A partnership agreement was made by the Government of West Bengal in the Department of Micro and Small Scale Enterprises & Textiles (DMSSE&T) with UNESCO, New Delhi, to develop 10 rural craft hubs in the state, covering 3000 families traditionally skilled in craft traditions like Sitalpati, Madurkathi, Terracotta, Patachitra, Dokra, wooden masks, wooden dolls, Chhau masks, clay dolls and Kantha embroidery.
2014	Government of West Bengal has set up 'Rural Craft Hubs'
2022	Community Leadership Program by WICCI, in Bharatpur village

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