



Folk Art and its crisis: Bankura District

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Abstract

History is the sequence of progress in human civilization. The history of folk art has become increasingly important in recent historiographic practices. The tribal-based Bankura district is famous for its culture and especially for folk art. The district's folk arts are dominated by Baluchari, Conch, Dokra, and so on. But at present, the folk arts of the district are becoming extinct, and these industries are losing their antiquity day by day to the touch of modernity. In such a situation, most of the artists of industries are going to other professions due to a lack of money, and they are falling out of the mainstream of society. On the other hand, its effect was also visible in society. As a result, the social class based on folk art is moving towards extinction. It is clear from the above discussion that folk arts have tried to save the ancient traditions of Bankura district. In fact, folk art has greatly influenced the economy, society, and culture of Bankura district. Its clear effect can be seen in today's time. But nowadays, folk art is often unable to maintain its ancient traditions. In such a situation, governmental and non-governmental organisations should come forward to bring cultural traditions, and the government should fix the minimum price of the raw materials associated with these industries and make arrangements for special allowances for the artists.

Keywords: Dokra industry, Baluchari, conch industry, constraints

Introduction:

Culture develops from human experience, and the main foundations of culture are caste, country, and language. The fame of folk culture in India has spread all over the world. Folk culture carries the ancient traditions of any country in the world, and an important part of this folk culture is folk art. Every nation has its own identity, and that identity can be understood through folk art. This shows how far the country has progressed in the field of culture. Now we will try to know what folk art actually means. Folk art generally refers to the creations of common people for common people. Its scope is so wide that it can not be defined in a single word. Folk art includes all forms of visual art created in the context of folk culture. Very generally, it can be said that the work done by rural people, especially rural artists, which is called handicraft, is called folk art. In other words, folk art reflects rural social life. Folk art is the depiction of rural life, religious rituals, village fairs, etc., in wall paintings and sculptures. Therefore, it can be said that nature has a close relationship with folk art. Many patterns of folk art can be seen in different regions of India. Bankura district of West Bengal also has a history,

and especially from the point of view of folk art history, the ancient tradition of Bankura district cannot be denied at once. Bankura district has been carrying forward the ancient tradition of folk art since ancient times. But at present, there is a crisis in the folk arts of Bankura district. And that is why the main topic has been named "Folk Art and its Crisis: Bankura District".

Bankura district's geographical location:

Since we are going to discuss the folk art of Bankura district and its crisis, we also need to be aware of the geographical location of this district. Bankura is a district in West Bengal's Medinipur Division that was established in 1881. Raghunath Malla established the 'Malla dynasty' in the 8th century AD. Mallabhum was the name given to the Bankura district at that time. In 1765, the British East India Company annexed the state of Mallabhum, and the modern Bankura district was established. The district is named after its capital city. Geographically, the district is bounded by East Burdwan and West Burdwan in the north, Jhargram and West Midnapore in the south, Hooghly in the east, and Purulia in the west. Bankura district is the third largest district in terms of area in West Bengal. High land, small hills, red soil, and an extreme climate are the main features of Bankura district. Mukutmanipur is best known for its natural beauty, which is found at the confluence of the Kangsavati and Kumari rivers. On the other hand, Jayrambati in the Bankura district has become known as Maa Sharada Devi's birthplace.

Different types of folk art in the district:

The Dokra of West Bengal is now famous all over the world, and Bankura district is at the forefront of it. There are usually two types of dokra: empty dokra and filled dokra, and Bikna village in Bankura district has gained worldwide fame for its dokra industry. That's why this village is called 'Dokra village' and "Shilpgram." Many artists have received various awards for their artwork at different times. For example, in 1988, Juddho Karmakar of Bikna village got the President's Award for his art work. Incidentally, many artefacts of Dokra art have been found at Mohenjo-daro. Therefore, it can be said that Bikna village has kept this ancient tradition alive for a long time. Another example of folk art from Bishnupur is the terracotta art. Panchmura is also famous for terracotta art. Many traces of terracotta art have been found in the Harappan civilization. Clay is prepared by mixing straw, chaff, etc. with sticky clay like laterite. Terracotta sculptures are created from that clay by sculpting statues and scenes, which are then sun-dried and fired. A figure is first made of mud, then dried in the sun, and then hardened by firing. The art work made in this manner is terracotta art. Among the temples decorated with terracotta, "Shyam Rai," "Radhavinod," "Jor Bangla," and "Madan Mohon Temple" at Bishnupur are notable for their exquisite terracotta art. On the other hand, the famous and popular saree of Bishnupur is the Baluchari saree. Various natural animals like hawks, carrier pigeons, and forest deer are beautifully depicted in the thread of this Baluchari saree. The artist appealed to remove these four social evils: caged birds, showing snakes playing, cutting trees, and showing monkeys playing. Of course, earlier Baluchari sarees used to have only scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. This Baluchari saree from Bishnupur has crossed the borders of the state and abroad.

Sankh art is another well-known folk art in the Bankura district. People known as "Shankharis" used to make designer conch shell bangles, or "shankhas," for married Hindu women. They also make different types of musical conch shells using intricate patterns and designs. Skilled artisans have also beautifully carved the miniature figures of gods and goddesses inside the

conch shell, and in this regard, Hatgram of Bankura district has played a significant role. Bablu Nandi of this village won the National Award for his artwork.

Essentials of folk art:

Folk art caters to the various needs of society and individuals, and it has emerged from the needs of the common people. Folk art helps to understand the culture of any nation, language, group, or civilization. And it has a special place in the culture of Bankura district. Its content is very simple. Whatever comes into our hands is the material for this art. Therefore, folk art is completely related to nature. Even the folk artists help in shaping the financial structure of the society and it is equally important in the economy of Bankura district.

The crisis of folk art:

Now we will discuss the crisis of folk art in the Bankura district. At present, folk art is facing a crisis due to various reasons. Folk art is slowly moving towards extinction. One of the main reasons for this is that people's interest in folk art has decreased a lot. Moreover, as the cost of this type of art is very high. It is not possible for common people to buy it. People are using plastic products instead of this type of art, which is available at a very low price. Also, in the beginning, the government did not stand properly with the folk artists, and no concerted action has been taken to preserve these traditional folk crafts. Not only this, despite the demand for folk arts in the market, the artists are not able to reach the buyers directly. Instead, the middle class is enjoying most of the dividends. As a result, the interest of folk artists in folk art is decreasing. On the other hand, the condition of artists has become even more miserable in the wake of COVID 19. In the absence of publicity, it is not known which art is hidden all around. The market demand for pottery has increased significantly in recent years, but many artists are unaware of this. Furthermore, lack of innovation is also one of the reasons for the extinction of the industry.

Social and economic impact:

This crisis had a profound economic and social impact. In such a situation, most artists and professionals in industries are pursuing other careers due to a lack of funds, and they are falling out of society's mainstream. On the other hand, its effect was also visible in society. As a result, social stratification based on folk art is moving towards extinction, and to some extent, the social balance is also being destroyed. The day may come when the new generation will find folk art in the pages of history. So the impact of this crisis on the economy and society of Bankura dist is clearly visible.

Government initiatives:

However, the industry faced losses in the 90s. At this time, the situation became such that many artists left their art work and started pulling rickshaws, earning daily wages for their livelihood. However, the present situation has changed a lot, and the name of Bankura district is far ahead in this matter. The fame of Bankura district for dokra, terracotta, and baluchari is far and wide. But the residents of this district are no less curious about the art works of other districts, and the Khadi Mela has fulfilled their expectations. The Khadi and Rural Art Fair organized by the Government of West Bengal at the Bankura Zilla Parishad Auditorium Complex has resulted in livelihood for many common people as well as artisans. Handicraft items, palm leaf bags, leather shoes, and clay art items attract everyone's attention at this fair. In 2015, the

Government of West Bengal announced the 'Lok Prasar Yojana' to promote folk arts and related industries. As per this scheme, folk artists were appointed by the government to perform at various government functions to promote various development works. 5,000 per month per folk artist was announced under this scheme, which covered around 50,000 folk artists from all over West Bengal, including Bankura. As a result, the tradition of folk culture, which was slowly dying out, gradually got revived due to government initiatives. Naturally, Bankura district, along with the entire state of West Bengal, managed to revive the ancient traditions and culture, and today, "Folk Festival" is celebrated every year in almost every block of the district.

Conclusion:

It is clear from the above discussion that folk arts have tried to save the ancient heritage of Bankura district. In fact, folk arts have greatly influenced the economy, society, and culture of the district. Every country in the world has its own art and customs. And the people of that country play an important role in keeping this tradition alive. So we have to think about how much we can contribute to save the industry. It is not possible to keep folk art alive for a long time without the concept of "art for people and people for art." On the other hand, the government has also started many schemes to keep the folk art tradition alive. But in some cases, more steps are needed. The government should fix the minimum price of raw materials associated with these industries and provide special allowances for those folk artists who are not yet receiving any allowance.

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