CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

The study of folk art and crafts is essential key to the understanding of the common man’s culture. In West Bengal the folk art and crafts have an importance all their own. They express the great tradition and cultural heritage of West Bengal. The reason for their preservation and development lies in the fact that they are the material symbols of Bengal’s unique folk cultural ethos.

Folk art describes a wide range of objects that reflects crafts tradition and traditional social values of various social groups. It is an art made by general people who have had little or no formal schooling or training in art. Folk artists usually make works of art with traditional techniques and content and styles handed over through generations in a particular region. This folk art environment is also called "self made world". It also includes the visual expression of people. This is the art of people who are exposed to the changing society as they travel over the valleys and highlands all over the country. They carry with them the experiences and memories of different spaces and their art reflect the changing pattern on life. The folk spirit has a tremendous role to play in the development of art and in the consciousness of the overall culture.

Folk artisans always gather the raw materials which are easily available in the region, such as stone clay bamboo, wood, cloth, paper, shell etc. By the help of these materials the artists produce certain folk objects like dolls and toys, conch shell’s articles, basket wood carvings, solapith, dokra metal crafts masks etc. some of these products are made for religious purposes, game purposes, house hold things and also used as ornamentation, as well as fine arts.

Folk art of West Bengal has great potentiality in the international market because of its traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity. West Bengal is quite popular among foreign tourists because of their crafts and traditional beauty. The Government of India as well as West Bengal Government and non-Governmental organizations have therefore made some efforts to promote such art and crafts which have become an intrinsic part of India’s culture identity. Admittedly what ever the measures have been taken for the promotion of folk art and crafts in West Bengal are fragmentary in nature. An overall awareness is necessary in both rural and urban populations in Bengal. The easy way to bring such awareness is to make an approach through folk art museum.

India is today heading towards globalization. It is high time to promote our folk art and crafts and to develop a trade link with the global market.
through these folk products. There is reason to believe that Bengal’s folk art would play significant role in building up a stable economy in the country. In fact there is not yet a wide recognition of economic potentialities of the folk art and crafts in the global market. But the varied productions and their regional consumption and limited foreign exports of the craft objects help us to understand that there is ample scope to build up a nationwide market and ultimately they will get access to the foreign markets. In view of the large export potentialities of some of the Bengal’s craft it is necessary to have a constant touch with the artisan classes and no improve their skill and works by providing some facilities. This can be given by either by Govt. or non-governmental organizations and especially by the folk art museums. Admittedly folk art museum has a specific aim for promoting folk aspect of any region. Folk museums generally preserve the old traditional crafts as well as contemporary folk art and crafts.

To write about the handicrafts of the country is almost like to write about the country itself. It is so vast and complex. It is fact that the study of the art and crafts of the country have very ancient origin. The crafts of Indus Valley Civilization were very popular also. The studies of art and crafts are set against the background of an introductory survey from the Indus Valley Civilization. The study includes technology, designs and quality of products, marketing & export of the art and crafts materials. It also includes details discussion of the socio-economical conditions of craftsmen community.

In the Ramayana, we get a detail description of trade guilds. In the 19th chapter of the second section of the great epic, the dwellers of Ayodhya are represented as going out in a procession with Bharata to seek Rama in the order of the guilds - potters, weavers, jewellers, ivory workers, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, makers of figures, crystals cultures etc. with the chief of every guild bringing up the rear.² The guilds spanned members of various section or ethnic caste. These castes were managed by a court of mahajans and seths.³ The tradition of Indian handicrafts is intermixed with her religion and philosophy and it is also a rich part of Hindu religious texts like the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, the Sutras, both the epics etc.

The impression of the going life of Bengal crossed the era of Mangalkabya through the way of copper plate and stopped that place in where the sky becomes near to us in Folk-tale and legend. We are familiar with the background of social life by these ingredients. The Brahmanas, merchants and the general people were present in the different stages of this society. The King and his administration was the complimentation of this society. The wealth from the abundance of nature. Tamrapatta (Copper Plate) and inscriptions become silent when they were going towards the
past. From there writings were discovered which were written on new leaves
in various places like, Tamluk, Sagardweep, Harinarayanpur, Berachanpa
and many other places. These writings are revealed in utensils, clay utensils, 
clay utensils, baked slab and painting left their bondage of words. The
historians of Bengal became astonished when the ruins of the Sompura
Vihara which was established by Dharmapala was discovered from a clay
mound which was covered by a tall forest in Paharpur of Rajsahi district.
The temple of Paharpura is one of the main evidence which proved that
once upon a time there was a close relation between Eastern India that is
Bangladesh with South East Asia. An event can be mentioned in this context:
some years before an inscription was found from the sea bank of Malay
Peninsula of South East Asia. A sailor named Mahanabik Budha Gupta
showed his gratitude to bihara which was located in West Bengal (Mursidabad
District) ‘Raktamrittika’ in that inscription. Some people guessed that this
sailor was the inhabitants of Karnasubarna of Bengal. About the prosperity
of the business of the Bengalees are found in the custom folk tale and legends
of Bengal. When the similarities are found between the design of temples of
Bengal with the temples of Burma and Java are far away from Bengal, then
the stories of folk tales did not regard as a totally false stories. So, it can be
guessed that there was relation between Bengal with abroad from the ancient
age to the reign of the Pala Kings.

In 6th century B.C. when Mahavira came to Burdwan of Bengal then
the inhabitants of this region welcomed Mahavira. It explained in the
Acharanga Sutras of Jains Distracted. Jains became displeased to the natives
of Rarh area due to adversed welcome of Mahavira. But the citizens of the
Rarh area not so guilty about that because Mavira moved in the road without
any clothes and this is not preferred by the citizens. In spite of this there are
no discussion in the sacred books of Jains about Rarh area. Buddha did
not stepped in there before Magadha. It was really surprising that there was
small discussion about Bangladesh in the Pali Literature. There was also no
discussion about Bangladesh in Sanskrit Literature. Only some discussions
were available about Tamralipti in the Daskumar Charita. We can get broad
discussion at first about Bangladesh in the writings of the authors of the
Mahabharata. After that we get discussion about Bangladesh in the writings
of Kalidasa. We got information about the prevention of Bengalies due to
the conquest of world of Raghu in the book (Raghu Bansam) of Kalidasa.
From that we knew about the heroism and love for freedom of the Bengalees.
We came to know that there was a good administration prevailed in the
reign of Gupta Kings from Tamrapattlies (Copper Plate) of Damodarpur,
Bengal was well established in the history of India after the reign of Guptas.4
Once upon a time to compose the history of Bengal, was started by the
name of Sasanka who was the competitor of Harshvardhana. Gradually
the history of the past age from Sasanka was known from various ingredients.
Among them archaeological remains are main. The famous remains was the edicts of Gupta Age which were written on the copper plate. The learned society became newly conscious about the society and administration of Bengal from the flourished administrative system of Bengal on that time. After that an inscription in Brahmi script written in Mauryan alphabet was discovered at Mahasthangarh in the district of Bagura. This inscription proved that Mahasthangarh was the ruins of Pundranagar, the capital of famous Pundravardhan Bhukti. After the establishment of the ancientness of the existence of Pundras it was thought that ancient archaeological evidences can be also discovered about the existence of 'Anga, Banga, Kalinga', Pundra Sumbhma etc. which were mentioned in Mahabharata.

From these evidences some conceptions can be made about the ancient culture of Bengal but they may not be concrete ideas. It was not said perfectly that from when the people settled there life in Bengal which are made by soft silt of rivers. Some weapons which are used by men of new stone age are found in Mayurbhanj of Odisha, Chotonagpur area and in the western side of Bankura. The baked clay dolls and many other articles of the Sunga age are found at Bangarh of Dinajpur done by the archaeological excavation by under Kolkata University. Baked clay dolls are also found from Mahasthan. Many baked clay statues, dolls and decorated plates are found from the outside of Bengal like Patna, Basar (ancient Vaishali) Setmahet, Mathura and Kausambi etc. The uses of these types of baked clay dolls are a part of the Bengal culture. The specialists guessed the dolls whose features like a man or an animal are used as an articles of the playing of the children. Again they are also used for the decoration of houses and observation of vows. The information of the some dolls like the dolls of Banagarh was coming after that from Tamluk. Some years before some peculiar clay pots are found from Tamluk. The specialists guessed that these pots are made about thousand years before than the birth of Jesus Christ from their characteristics and shapes. Their guessing spread astonishment in the Bengal loving people. They thought that there was a settlement in Bengal before the birth of Jesus Christ. A female figure of woman of the second century B.C. was collected from Tamluk. In 1955 the Indian Archaeological Department started some excavation at Tamluk and then many beautiful decorated figures are discovered. By observing this shape and method of making, it was guessed that they were made in 3rd or 4th century B.C. Many beautiful clay dolls are found near Tamluk. Most probably this Tamluk is the place which was famous as Tamralipi in the past from where Mahendra and Sanghamitra went Sylon with Bodhi three. Archaeological investigation was started in here with the help of Ashutosh Museum of Kolkata University. A huge brick building was discovered from the homestead of Khana Mihira. A ruins of temple was also discovered there. It was most probably the time of Guptas. But most marvelous things were coming from the agricultural
field and open field. In these things the number of clay dolls are more. After that utensils, pots, ornaments and beads are found which are used by people in their daily life. Not only in Berachanpa, a settlement of ancient age was found in Harinarayanpur in Diamond Harbour, Boral of 24 Parganas.

In spite of red clay pots there are also some evidences which are found from Chandraketu Garh proved that there were the relations between the East and the West. There were many evidences which found that these relations were established by sea rust. When we discussed about the writing (Greek) which was engraved on a baked clay tablet, found from Tamluk, then it was not a wrong thinking that there was a relation with Bengal and Western world.5

A large number of terracotta plates, animals, birds and human figures have discovered from the excavated sites. From these plates, single statue and animals and the statues drawn by animals people got the ideas of making technique, artistic skill and beauty of them. Not only that from those things people got an idea of the society and the mind of the society prevailed on that time.

After that Paresh Chandra Dasgupta collected Black and Red clay (N.B.P.) pots which are made by polished black clay from North India.6 By his collection he made the way of writing history of Bengal culture easy. He collected those things from Chandraketu Garh and Harinarayanpur. By his care many articles of the time of Indus Civilization were also collected from the Ganges valley. Now some artistic skills of that time are found easily. This artistry was mainly depend on people and its ingredients was soil which is found easily.7 The technique and sensation of this artistry was spreading broadly. After sometimes the artistry of Bengal became aristocrat. This aristocracy most probably introduced in the technique of making the idols of the Puranas. The ingredients of that artistry was stone. Though there was a modernity can be shown in their technique from clay to stone, but a similarity was shown in the shape which was practiced by Kushana. So, a great artistry was introduced with stone and many Temples, Mathas, Viharas was started to made by stone. Many colourful pictures are painted on books and manuscripts. This artistry became independent from the skill of artistry which was practiced on that time. At first it had a similarity with the technique of the rules of North India but it becomes special for its characteristics by bearing the aristocracy of Bengal. With this artistry there was an another artistry was practiced in Bengal. That artistry was similarity with the walls of the temples of Sompur Mahavihara established by Dharmapala Deva (which is now known as Paharpura). Many statues which are made by stone slabs the practiced traditional ways prevailed on that time were found. This artistry has a broad demand and it was a close relation with the people.
If we wanted to search the foundation of the traditional art of Bengal then we must be noticed to the slabs of burnt clay of Paharpur. These type of artistry of burnt clay were found in Savar in the Dhaka district of East Bengal, Maynamati near by Kumilla. In spite of this types of artistry were also found in Bangarh of Dinajpur, Panna and Tamluk in Medinipur and many other places of 24 Parganas. Most probably from this type of artistry, the art of baked clay became famous in the all places of Bengal. The artistry which is based on the folk tale made up of easiest ingredients, become famous in the people and presented by different varieties and many famous ingredients. In this type of artistry the uses of animals and birds are vast but the uses of trees are very small in number. The uses of geometrical pattern are also used in vast. This type of quality is prevailed in the folk art of Bengal. The main ingredient of the artist of the folk art is soil which is found easily. They also used torn old clothes or the thread of the clothes and cheap colour like vermilion, ochre, oil and lamp black. There, no evidences are found except the work of baked clay in the age of Pala and Sena but there are no confusions that on that time the existence of artistry was present which was attached with the daily life of the people. The artists of the folk art drew many paintings about the play of Radha Krishna and Ramayana on the walls of the temples. In where the art left its vast surroundings and stepped its feet in the daily life of the people, the traditional art was established in there. Our surroundings is the sum of peculiar and unlimited shapes. When people understand the shape of the visible things then they use colour to make it complete, so colour gives completeness. The people tried to make beautiful the things which are created by them. The mind of the people generally sensitive. The influence of surrounding is very much effective for their mind. The people very much influenced by the things which they get from this surrounding in the field of their creation. This influence make their choice. His artistry and his life controlled by his sensation and the power of sensation by which they try to make the things beautiful.

There are three types of folk art according its representation : (1) visual, (2) audio, (3) audio-visual. The ingredients for the type in shape, colour and line. In here the balance between eyes and mind and impression of balance help for aesthetic applications. The main ingredients for the second type is same simple tone and some traditional passions. In here devotion and love have supremacy. The work of language is to communicate or expressed. The work of art is same also. After that there is an impression in art. The main version of language and art is same. But the expression medium of language is sound, noise and sentence. And the expression of visual art is revealed in shape, colour and design. The audio art expressed by tone sound, noise. Both art are expressed by word, tone, dance, dialogue and presentation. Every artistry has own ingredient or asthetic expression. They
are known as linguistic ingredients of the artistry.

Culture is the prestigious issue for socialized people. Creation of environmental materialism and idealism of all people is known as culture. It is derived from the word 'purification'. The excellence of body-mind-heart and soul is known as culture. The technical term 'folk' included with 'culture' known as 'folk culture' is accepted by majority of the people. The word 'folk' means only the rural people or the major secular socialist illeterate people but they are not uneducated and they are the part of the farming basic people. They are the part of the people who are bounded by geographical nearness and occupationally daily exchanging relation. It is truly called secular artistry. It is so called because it is famous in common people. Folk culture is the perfect result of the thinking of secular people. It is deeply connected with history, sociology, environmental studies, music, dance, artistry, asthetics, language and literature.

From primitive art to the people of different occupation, they made their essential things like houses, furnitures, their rituals, their ideas which are made in Geographical and Natural surrounding except surplus value of the things which are revealed in consciousness are called Folk Culture'. Professor Kalyan Kumar Ganguly says it easily which are considerable the work which are done by the general workers of the village are known as handicrafts But this definition is not proper explanation of its total characteristics. Like, peasant Art of Europe, Rural Art, Traditional Art, Colonial Art, Provincial Art, Native Art are the different forms of folk culture.

There are narrow differential lines between them to distinguish properly. Without explanation differently, those artistry bear the part of total folk culture. Some materials and subjects are effective in the origin of Folk Culture in its traditional materials and methods. They are -

1. Isolation
2. Lack of Academic Education.
3. Lack of wealth.
4. Regional/Area based.
5. Local medium.
8. Characteristically accomplished unmechanically.
9. Lack of accuracy.
10. Single Craftsmam/Artist.
11. Orthodox style : mainly style, motif and decoration.
12. Repetition of common mode of style from time immemorial.

Due to its characteristics and nature its aesthetic value spread all over the world though it is local. It is also a reflection of the life of the people. The concrete design which is grown the mind of various people. It focuses on the structure, or ornamentation, colouring on folk art and on the anthropological characteristics of as well as its nature and image. Though its origin is related with primitive thinking as well as religious belief and social belief superstition is closely related with it. Though it will be explain partly but when its total nature influenced others in social life style then it reveals a special area based characteristics. Making of things in daily use, in partly decoration and in the thinking of an atheistic artist brings as appearance which create a boundary in the household things by thinking of an artists, there is an essential image in the daily uses things as well as it has a beautiful image. So, folk art mainly revealed the happiness and appearance of useful things. In Europe there are two types of atheistic art - Peasant Art and Rural Art. Like the material which is made by peasants and rural people, has some method and characteristics, its became different in different areas like weapon, dress etc. It has a sophisticated effect on group rights and financial comfort. So a beautiful handicraft is grown in area of ruling class. These type of handicrafts are grown in different era in religious instruction also. The influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, Semitic, Islamic or Catholic influence on Renaissance are performing on the creation of different artistry. So secular folk culture is found outside of this boundary. Its vision only on its practical side. Pagan religion or popular belief, motif or subject matter or the thinking of God and Goddess are included in it.

An abundance of artificial decoration or outside decoration of folk culture is found in industrialization and urbanization. So rural art terminated to provincial art if gradually its artisery characteristics enters from smaller area to bigger area in the field of greater idea and character. Again in some areas there are opposite artisery character can be seen. This character became locally even though it is influence by the people who are coming from abroad as a result of colonization. We properly said that it is totally effective by the cause of surroundings and neighbourhood people, if one of the material is effective mostly the character may be changed like that. It is said that:

1. Peasant Art.
2. Rural Art.
3. Regional Art.
4. Provincial Art.
5. Colonial Art.

Though over mentioned artiseries are divided between eight categories they are differentiate with each other. Again these divisions of the folk art specialized by the characteristics of the any one symptom of the folk art. Most of the time folk art can be seen like anachronism but it has a special characteristics which is specially of its own. The main quality of the Folk Art is the attraction of primary colour. It is perfectly said that the Folk Art is the result of the motive of atheistical people, traditional, rule imotion of the ideas of society, rituals, beliefs, daily needs etc.

Rabindranath thought many times about perfect Bengali synonym of the English word 'culture'. Sometimes he used the word 'kristi' as the synonym for the word culture but he also showed his disfavoured for that work in his musical drama 'Taser Desh'. In spite of this many people used the word 'kristi' as the synonym of 'culture'. According the aspects of etymology culture and kristi both are synonymous because in the word of 'karshan' and 'chas' the matter of ploughing is belongs both of them. But Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyya saw the uses of the word 'Sanskriti' instead of the word 'culture' in the Marathi Literature. He preferred this word and so he tried to use as a synonym of culture. Kshiti Mohan Sengupta also showed in his writings that the word 'Sanskriti' is also used in the classical literature of Sanskrit for the synonym of the word culture by the effort of Rabindranath. Beside the words culture there are the words 'cultur' in Germany 'kultur' and 'kultura' in Russian etc. The more ancient of these words is the Latin word 'kultur'. The meaning of this Latin word is ploughing, cultivating, the method of producing agricultural or animal products such as agriculture, pisciculture, sericulture etc. But now the Latin word cultur is used in broader way. Mainly this word is used to make understand to do practice to learn, or to improve any matter. Like it is generally said to culture any matter. But the word 'culture' in sued as a special meaningful word in many European languages. And Rabindranath, Suniti Kumar Chattapadhay, Kshiti Mohon Sen Sastri used the word 'culture' in Bengali by its special meanings.

Generally the word 'culture' in English is the total result of the prosperity of arts (humanities) which are seen in the group of social people. But in the manners and customs, conduct and behaviour etc. courtesy, politeness, gentility, decency etc. are also make to understand by the word 'culture'. It is seen by the word like cultured/ uncultured etc. General people use the word culture in the word like 'cultural function' in which the meaning of the word 'culture' is used as the practice of music, dance, picture statue,
literature etc. In the study of archaeology and anthropology the word culture is used by its genuine technical term. The uses of the tools for the production of tools or useable things known as culture in the study of archaeology and anthropology. Like which group of people used rough and crude tools are known as the people of Paleolithic Culture. Their skills were limited for the production of useable things and their life style was very low standard. So their culture was also very low standard - in this way the word culture is used in many division of the human science. The word culture in Bengali must be perfect and informative if we discuss this topic in their practical view about the uses of the tools. There is no conflict between the ideas of the specialist human scientists and general learned people. Both ideas are completing with another. Suniti Kumar and his many successors like Nihar Ranjan Roy, Gopal Halder and Binoy Ghosh use the word culture in Bengali language by its broader sense. From this discussion we can understand that they use the word culture as the synonym of the Bengali word Sanskriti to make understand the conscious its results effort and which to make the life beautiful, glamorous etc. The result of growing specialization in the various aspects of a man like - dwelling place, eating-drinking, rest-sleep, amusements etc is known as his culture. The culture is divided into three divisions. The main three divisions are - (a) personal, (b) familial, (c) social. Again the personal division is divided into two division - (a) materialistic culture which is called Material Culture in English and Atmagata sanskriti which is called spiritual culture in English. Spiritual culture is mixed with amusement thinking and imagination in which religion, philosophy, literature, science and humanities are included. Material culture of a man is made up with eating, wearing, occupation and its dwelling place. After that family and society are coming. In both field culture means (1) rules, (2) prohibition, (3) programmes, (4) relationship. These matters may be separated into the family boundaries and the social boundaries. For e.g. the relationship between the family is man with man : the relationship of husband-wife, father-mother, son-daughter, brother-sister etc. And the idea of relationship in society grow between various families, castes-class, groups etc. In here relationship means the class relationship or group relationship.

Some archaeologists though that the aspects of culture is depend on the tools which are used by the group of people for production of their usable things. They showed that culture may be different for uses of the tools by different group of people in various methods. The word folk culture is the synonym of Bengali word folk which is used as a first part in word folklore or folk culture etc. The German word ‘volk’ is the same word as the word folk. The four meanings of the word ‘Folk’ is described in the main dictionary of the English. The first meaning is people that is man, public etc. But in special meaning of Folk is vulgar. After that it is cleared that the simple labours which are not included in God, King, priest and aristocrate family
are known as 'folk'. So it noticed that there is a hints of negligency and lower standardness. So folk culture folklore means - the matter which is attached with the people who are living in the village and they lead their life by labour and the people whose standard of living is low.

The word culture of Bengali spoken people is considered according the uses of their tools. The people are divided into two division according the uses of tools - (1) who use the tools by power (machine tools, power tools), (2) the people who use the lolls made up of wood and iron (traditional hand tools). The people who use machine tools or power tools are lived in cities or the place in which the get benefits of cities. The people who use traditional hand made tools live in villages. There is no confusion that the folk culture of Bengal is attached with the village of Bangladesh. But in villages there are two types of people - Firstly, the people who are only depend on agriculture or they are attached with the agricultural work. The village craftsman that is the people who earn their livings by handicrafts are the part of village economy. The culture is divided into three parts according their field - (1) higher or urban culture, (2) folk culture or rural culture and (3) the culture of primitive people. The three division of folk culture are (1) folk literature, (2) folk religion and (3) folk art. This is only the view of three different aspects of folk culture.

Folk art is the part of Folk Culture of Bengal. The likely exposition of folk art is found in its all aspect of practical life. Fork art can be classified into five different units. They are as follows:


1) The unit, religious thinking can be divided as follows:

Things for Worship : (i) basic of worship, (ii) floor painting (alpana), (iii) idol, (iv) earthen dolls of Gods & Goddess, (v) religious false face (Mask), (vi) ornaments of sola pith, (vii) mosque, chandimandop, (viii) sculpture, motif, (ix) painting of God & Goddess, (x) throne, palanquin, (xi) half circular canvas containing painting (chalchitra), (xii) utensils of stone, (xiii) sola crafts, (xiv) wooden image, (xv) cards of ten incarnation of God Vishnu, (xvi) conch shell artistry etc.

2) Material culture : It is of two types - (a) Farming tools, (b) Vehicles

3) Household & decorative things : This type of objects can be classified as follows:
(a) Wood & Carpentry - (i) cot, (ii) costly bed, (iii) wooden seat, (iv) wooden beats etc.

b) Bamboo & cane works : (i) winnowing tray, (ii) wicker, (iii) sitalpati, (iv) baskets etc.

c) Utensils : (i) clay pot (shallow earthen plate, urn shaped pot etc.), (ii) Metal (iron, brass, bell metal utensils)

d) Weaving and needle work : Saree, napkin, cotton wrapper, printing sketch etc.

e) Ornaments : (i) ornaments of silver, gold, bejewelled, stone, terracotta, garlands of clay etc.

f) Mould of sandesh and mango cake (sweet mould).

4) Social (secular & socialist) : (i) wall paintings, (ii) sold crafts, (iii) musical instruments (Tomtom, drum, flute etc.), (iv) palanquin etc.

5) Religious & social : (i) a canvas of yoma (yoma pata), (ii) canvas of magic (yadu pata), (iii) dolls of the chariot, (iv) manuscripts cover painting.

In English Folk means mass. So it is called 'Folk Art' as the art is associated with the mass. But there are questions to be arisen - what is folk art, what is its definition, its character and feature. The art which is prepared for the community of the community and by the community. Before discussion about the character and features, let us relate between folklore and folk art. Folklore is generally divided into two-formalized and material Folklore. So it is called that folk art is included in the material folklore. Just as painting is not possible without content. So also without material any art is not constituted. Folk art is an important section of the folklore. Apart from the folk art, any discussion of folklore is not fulfilled. There is not bar to folk art. Any onlooker having wit and having aesthetic sense can get the taste of the humour of folk art. In the formalized folklore, the recreation theory can be applied but this theory is not applied to folk art. The folk art is access to touch, and access to vision. In practical life, the role of the folk literature is more important than the folk art. The folk art is earnestly written for the individuality, there is no direct role of the totality. In the respective of following the tradition there is direct impact.

The art is the effort of expression any of the medium. But it is not always cared the art. If there is a charm then it is called an art. Expression of charm is not always called an art. If the expression become delightful to others, then it becomes an art. Mainly it must be delightful to others and
own. Art is created from love. It is said easily that an art is a work which is beautiful, delightful and by which likeness and love can be revealed. The folk means the rural people who only depend on agriculture. Gandhiji said that India live within the village. The meaning of this live is most of the people of India live in villages. The population of the town is not more than forty percent. It is calculated that another forty percent of the people in the rest of sixty percent live below the poverty line. They are folk and their artistry is known as folk art. Their artistry is divided into two parts. Firstly, the matter of material art whose ingredients may - 1) grass, leaves, bark etc., (2) bamboo, cane, reads, sponge wood, jute stick etc., (3) wood, (4) stone, (5) soft soil, (6) burnt soil, (7) paper, (8) colour, (9) metal, (10) the bones, skin, teeth etc of animals. In this type of material artistry some of them are made for need and some of them are made for amusement. Secondly, the art for own-self. It’s medium are (1) voice or tone, (2) practical metre, (3) music measure, (4) story and imagination, (5) fund-taunt, (6) question, (7) wisdom, (8) word. It is mainly the brief account of the expansion and diversity of the folk art.

Folk Art can be divided by another process. In this process folk art may be two types (1) motionful, (2) motionless, which is motionful that always changeful and which is motionless that always stay in one place. The life of rural people which is depend on agriculture, folk art is included with that. They are mostly traditional and heriditory but not depend on higher education. There has no logic to say that only the rural people are called folk and the urban people never called folk. The main view point is technology and tools are the base of technology. Technology is developed on tools and production is developed on technology and social custom is developed with the rules of technology. This is known to all now. There are many limitation in the social customs in which the rural people live. The culture which is bounded by limitation is called folk culture and the folk art, folk literature and folk songs are the part of folk culture. The urban people free from that limitation so they are totally different from the rural people. So the cup-plates of porcelain are not included folk art. But pitcher and pots of baked clay can be called as a folk art. Because they are coming from the agricultural rural life.

The Art of Bengal is folk art in its real meaning and in every field. The field of the art in this territory is the followers of its Geographical and Historical form. The art of Bengal is the processing form of the series of flowing the pre-Aryan or Aryan, Brahmana, Bauddha, Vaisnav and Islam. Not only that it is exposing the regionally and the thinking of Bengalees and the surroundings of Bengal and its special form of environment within it the improvement of religious and social form with ethnology. So
the art of Bengal is both mixed and attractive. It is also Indian, mixed Indian and republican or democratic.\textsuperscript{12}

Let us discuss about the character and feature of the folk art.

1) Folk art is traditional and somewhat bulky.

2) Folk art is easy and simple like the public in general and the warmth of heart is felt.

3) Folklore is originated from the necessity and aestheticism is added later. Folk art is available of low cost.

4) In folk art there is less dependence of materials.

5) There lies the regional impact on the folklore. It is also distinct in the folk art and the familiarity of the folk art is limited.

6) In folk art there are extreme beliefs in magic spell and social customs and it is very primitive and the assistance of modern technology is nominal in folk art.

7) In the field of folk art, the folk artists obtain the ability of creating the very art in the argument of their birth and environment. Later they take training from those who are skilled specialized ability.

8) There is an inspiration to keep the tradition of hereditary art creation, and there is a feeling of respect to the tradition, the accountability and above all the inspiration of creation. The role of earning money and fame is not worthy of mention.

9) The ingredient of folk art object is as same as it was at the early time. These are as clay, lac, bamboo, wood etc.

10) As there are different classes, communities of folk art, the people of particular group and community is associated in every art. The painter and 'Patua' are associated with the painting drawn on the canvas, the dokra blacksmiths are associated with the Dokra art, the Malakars are associated with shola art, shell workers are associated with the conch art etc.

Now we may came into the context of the present condition of the folk art. At first it is good to admit that most of the folk arts are in dying condition. Many problems of them are in extinct and those which are struggling for being of existed, are in the perishable condition. We can look into the cause of those. Many problems are responsible for this.\textsuperscript{13}
1) With the change of era, there has been a change of taste. The attraction which was existed in the folk art, has been depreciated. In most cases the folk artists being unable to satisfy the changed taste, the folk art is in the verge of demand.

2) The folk art did not face the opposition earlier. In many cases they are monopoly in demand and market. Now there has been a change of the condition. Consequently the folk art has lagged behind in trying to complete with the other.

3) The next generation of the folk artists is not involved in the art going on hereditary.

4) In the relation of the folk art, the meagre income in this art deprives them in maintaining their family. As a result many of them are prone to the large income.

5) There is a dearth of raw materials needed for this folk art. Those which is at least available, has to be bought for high cost. It is also the cause of depreciation.

6) The present age is the age of publicity. By dint of publicity the demand of the various goods gets increased. On the other hand in deficiency of publicity the goods are not sold in the market though there is high quality of those goods.

7) Most of the folk artists dose not get the loan from the banks. The bank authority is hopeless of getting back the money with interest from the folk artists in distress.

8) The so called modernism and the realization to the humanity have intensified of the folk art.

9) Peerless or costliness is also the cause of depreciation of the demand in the folk art. Till there is a vague of utilizing the metal vessels made of brass and bell-mental, the people involved in this folk art are better in financial condition. Now the age of using the metal vessels made of stainless sheet.

10) The deficiency of respect of the people to the tradition and the continuous succession is one of the cause of degradation and distress of the folk art.

    Folk art is something different form other art. Because it has many limitations. The field of invention of new folk art is very rare. Folk art has limitation in both sides (1) form, (2) content. After that it must be remember
to think of the folk artists. He is often an illiterate people. He is not a searcher
of excellence. If his occupation is art though he only follow the tradition.
And if his occupation is not making art then he most probably attached
with the art by sudden inspiration. The flow of money for the folk art is zero.
The condition of creator and customer are same, both has some money. So
ingredients must be cheaper otherwise it is not possible for customer to buy
and artists to create. Though all artistry was some limitations but they did
not decrease its quality. It collects its respect from the magical likeness of
the art.

Man can not make any things. They only can give new shape of the
things. The creation of shape is his recognition of creativity. The shape may
be two dimensional or three dimensional. The two dimensional is painting
and the three dimensional is sculpture. But folk artists not only make artistry
for making the art. The folk artist make the artistry which is needed for
people and he makes by the ingredients which are get easily. Pot is necessary
to keep water. So varities of pots are made for keeping water. People give
money for them because they are useful and from this money (value) the
artists can collect the provisions of life. But when he started to make this
usable things then likeness of making things came which shape is
advantageous for his work, the artist choose this method. Advantageous
means which are advantageous for maker and customer bother. Upto here
need of demand is stopped. After that demand of likeness and demand of
loveliness have came. This demand is also claim by two sides artists and
customer (users).

The proof of the performance of genious of the working class is present
in customs, folk culture, folk dancing, folk song, folk art etc. Generally the
English term folk or folks means general people - which became the treasury
of people by heriditary. It is derived from the main German word 'Volk', old
English 'Folc', old Norse 'folk' which is in English also 'Folk' in modern era.
Though 'Folk Art' means in socially dance, singing, drama etc. art and crafts
are also included in it. Again of traditional folk is found in sculpture then it
is also included in 'Folk Art'. We became interested to include arts, fine arts
and sculpture in Folk Art under discussion. Logically art has an intimate
relation with society. The experience of social life creates a mark on an
artistic mind from which art is created in value of surplus. There is a touch
at first emits essential matter and after that its beauty which is created by
the mind of an artist whose original base is depend on its essential matter.
But general people never take it as an art. But they are creator of that
creation which is created from an impression - which is called folk art by
the people who are conscious about art. Now, we discuss briefly about the
relation between the thinking of society and art. The society totally rejected
the view of Plato in which Plato said that art is injurious in society because
there is a dictatorship in the origin of discipline in social thinking and the origin of art. There is no particular data in history from which we can know about the relation started between art and society.

It is included that there is a difference between folk art and perfect art. So it is best to call the perfect art as an art of individual and folk art is an art of the people. There is a deep influence of society on folk art and its origin. In other ways there is rare influence or no influence of society on an art of individual. A writer said, though there is an influence of art on society, there is no influence of society on art - perfect art ..... no touch in art.14

The public who are now in the boundary of Bengal they are not coming from the same heridity. They are mixed breed and they born by mixing of many human races. This human races stayed in the boundary of Bengal still pre-historic age. Among them the famous groups of Proto-Austriloid, Indo-Mongoloid, Armenoid, Western Brachycephals from Alpine group and Nordic. The practice of the touching of heart which is mainly revealed in the habitants of Bengal and Gujrat is the sign of Alpo-Dinaric community.15 So, it is quite hard to know that how the culture of Bengal is revealed and by which communities cultural effect in working in Bengal culture. But the culture of Bengal is quitely influenced the culture of Negrito. It is believed by the specialists that worship of peepul tree was became popular by this community and its basic characteristics still now untouched though it is influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism.

Therefore, the community who lived in the Indian sub continent, either they lived in the Bengal at the age of pre-historic, or they passed away over the Bengal to other places except the people of one or two communities. A mixed culture had been grown not only by the influence of caste or sub caste, but also exchange of cultural property of muslim community who were coming in Bengal in the middle ages and they are muslims who transferred their religion. There is a sign of popular practice and popular faith of different religion. a mixed culture have grown up due to cultural exchange of this communities. The cause of the origin of culture from ancient Bengal to modern Bengal is grown by the mixing of civic life and rural life of Bengal. We discussed about undivided Bengal. The cause of similarities in behavourial and style between Bengali Hindu and Bengali Muslim; not only for changing their religion but also behaviour and style enter in the Hindu religion like Islam religion for the non-Aryan Bengali primitive people. Binay Sarkar said; "There is a coating of Bengli culture in both the Hindu and Muslim religion."

A wonderful result of Bengal culture is folk art. German Scholar Spenglar said that the origin of culture is grown in the village, the simple life
of human. There is a close relation with real subject matter and improvement of heart, creativity and improvement of mind of the people of there. The distinguished between culture and civilization. When village transferred in city, the farmers became mechanical then fall of man started there is an improvement in work is seen and decline of spirituality started the decline condition of culture is called civilization. Like other countries folk art is also grown in the secular or atheistical society, which society is following the class distinction like other provinces of India. The creators of these folk art are divided in caste sub caste and class. Mainly the writers of the religious scripture and law books of Hindus tried to bound the society among four castes like Brahmana, Kshetriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras but there are many other castes and people and their stages.16

But in the view of Hara Prasad Shastri, the necessary of formation of the society in Bengal is realized in this era (Aryan age) between reestablishment of Brahman religion and the many Buddhist who changed their religion in Hinduism. For this cause there are many castes and sub castes are created in Bengal.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vedic Literature</th>
<th>Current Profession</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karmar</td>
<td>Karmakar</td>
<td>Metallurgist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulal</td>
<td>Potter</td>
<td>Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaibartta (fisherman)</td>
<td>Kaibarta</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganak</td>
<td>Ganak</td>
<td>Astrologer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopal</td>
<td>Goala</td>
<td>Herdsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takkhan</td>
<td>Carpenter (chuter)</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaibar</td>
<td>Dhibar</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>Barbar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malanga</td>
<td>Dhapi</td>
<td>Washerman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baitree</td>
<td>Tantee</td>
<td>Weaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surakar</td>
<td>Suntee</td>
<td>Wine seller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is mentioned that the caste system of Bengalees which is mentioned in Brihdharnapuran and Brahmabaibastapurna is same and its reign in the middle term of twelfth and fourteenth century.18

In Brihadharmapuran Vaisiya mixed sub caste are divided between three classes and there is a perfect place of sub caste and occupation.19
A. (Perfect good - breed)


B. (Middle - breed) - 21 sub castes


Gurusaday Dutta divided the artists in twelve division according their special activities20 -

1) Carpenter (SUTRADHAR) :

(1) Cottage Architesture
(2) Wood Sculpture in/on cottage
(3) Brick Architecture
(4) Wooden chariot
(5) Palanquin
(6) Throne (Simhâsana)
(7) Colouring on wood, on square paper
(8) Toys and dolls

2) Painter (CHITRAKAR) :

(1) The Yamapatika and Exhibition pf Scroll paintings
(2) Picture in relation to verses
(3) Activities of Rama, activities of Krishna, activities of Gauranga, Panchkalyani etc.
(4) Pottery and making of idols of God and Goddess

(5) Scroll paintings (eye donation)

2a) ACHARYAS:

(1) Painting - a circular canvas of mat containing painting to the back side of the idol (Chalchitra).

(2) Painting on canvass/Scroll painting

(3) Horoscopes

(4) Book covers

(5) Cards

2b) Modelling:

(1) Unburnt and coloured earthen images (Idols)

(2) Terracotta figurines and house utensils made from clay

3. Potter (KUMBHAHAKAR):

(1) Clay idol with large framework

(2) Household utensils made by clay

(3) Painting:

a) pitcher and a consecrated pitcher placed in a house to win divine favour (Mangal ghats and Kalasas)

b) a shallow earthen plate (Saras)

c) a circular canvas of mat containing painting of heavenly scenes placed at the back of an idol (Chalchitras)

d) clay modelling for wall painting/decoration

e) toys and dolls

f) false face (Masks)

4. Sculpture (BHASKAR):

Stone Idol: Krishna, Radha, Balgopal, Mahadev, Kali

5. Brazier (KANSAKAR):

20
a) Brass Idol : Radha, Gauranga Balgopal, Durga, Chariot, Pot made of brass

b) Brass & copper utensils

6. Blacksmith (KARMAKAR) :

A large lumber like cooking utensils, suitcase, anklets and bell and a dish shaped gong sounded musically at the time of worship

7. Conch seller (SHANKHAKAR) : Conch, bangles

8. Weaver (KUBINDAK) : Saree, Dhoti, Napkin etc.

9. Florist (MALAKAR) : Plinth decoration toys, dolls, fans etc. bead maker’s art, puppet show

10. Goldsmith (SWARNAKAR) : Gold and silver ornaments

11. Carpenter (KARANGA) : Wood vessels/utensils

12. Leather maker : Cane and grass works.

According to the Census of India 2001, West Bengal has a total population of 80,176,197 out of which 18,452,455 belong to Scheduled Caste and 4,406,794 belong to Scheduled Tribes. The entire population has not described from one parent race, but is the result of a mixture of diverse racial groups coming to this country during different periods of pre-historic and later ages. The population along the Gangetic valley up to the south which is an important part of the country from the points of view of trade commerce, and agriculture presents a racial admixture in its social composition.

Bengal has always had a natural attraction. In medieval India it was said that there was a way in but no way out of Bengal. This must have been true also in pre-historic times. Here food producing primitive races had ample land for easy agriculture, food gathering races had ample sources of collecting their food from endless forests and thanks to numerous branches of big rivers pouring into the Bay of Bengal, fisher-folk had a veritable paradise here, and finally the hunting tribes had virgin forests full of various species of wild animals. Therefore, all the races which settled on the soil of Bengal in pre-historic times tried to make it their permanent home. It provided an environment congenial for the development of their respective cultures, however insignificant they might have been. Gradually over the years, when
they were faced with more powerful races from outside, they either withdrew towards the south-east or south-west, or accepted submission at the hands of the invaders. During the latter process mutual assimilation and absorption of cultural elements became inevitable. While it is not possible to give here a chronological account of the different races of humanity which trekked their way through Bengal in pre-historic times, a brief account based mostly on proved hypotheses may be cited.

The Proto-Australoid group of people, the most ancient group now living in West Bengal along the western border districts of Midnapore, Purulia, Bankura and Birbhum seems to be the Austric speaking group known as the Munda. It is also identified with the Bhumiji, meaning 'born of the soil'. It seems that it settled down within the borders of West Bengal, having branched off for some reason or other from its parent group over the country now formed by the hilly and forest areas. It is apparent that originally it was a nomadic tribe which used to collect food by hunting in the forest, but with the decrease in the number of wild animals and promulgation of various laws prohibiting killing of animals in the forest (since ‘reserved’ by the Government), it has been able to develop an aptitude for the same. This group of aboriginals, though numerically insignificant, still holds the priesthood of the village Gods. Also belonging to this group are the village exorcists and magicians, black and white, who carry on their profession on behalf of the community or and individual.

Two Dravidian-speaking aboriginal groups, one known as he Oraon and the other as Maler or Malpahariya, live on the south-western and the north-western borders, respectively, of Bengal. A scheduled caste community known as Mal, living principally in the district of Birbhum of West Bengal is supposed to have descended from the Dravidian speaking Malpahariay of the adjoining area of the Rajmahal Hills. Therefore, it is apparent that there are Dravidian elements too in the culture of this area, though it is very difficult to distinguish between the Dravidian and the Austric elements. Physically also, the Austric-speaking or the Proto-Australoid, and the Dravidian-speaking, are indistinguishable.

The culture of the Proto-Australoid group of people extends up to Assam; it probably covered the whole of Bengal at one time. For, the Khashi, a language spoken by a Proto-Mongoloid group of people of Assam, belongs to the Austric group.

The northern districts of West Bengal beginning from the second range of the Himalayas up to the plains, and extending southwards over a wide area are inhabited mainly by the Indo-Mongoloid group of people. During medieval ages the Himalayan tribe of the Bhutanese invaded and occupied
the northern districts of West Bengal and extended their political power and
cultural force over this area.21

Though opinions continue to differ with regard to the actual constituents of the present population of Bengal, the following is more or less generally accepted:

1. The Proto-Australoid representing lower castes of West Bengal.
2. The Mediterranean representing higher castes and to some extent lower castes also.
3. The Proto-Nordic representing the higher castes. But this type exists in very small numbers.
4. The Armenoid representing the higher castes.
5. The Alpine representing the higher castes.
6. The Mongoloid-Tibetan type representing the population of Darjeeling District.
7. The Mongoloid-Burmese type representing the lower castes of North Bengal and East Bengal (now comprising Bangladesh).

From the above account it is evident that almost all the races known to have lived in the sub-continent of India, with the exception of only a few, can be regarded as having lived in or passed through Bengal at one time or other of the pre-historic era. It naturally followed that each race left its own mark, not only physical but also cultural, which collectively formed the basis of Bengali culture. This is the reason why so many variants, sometimes antagonistic to one another, occur in the elements of the subsequent cultural life of Bengal. The Bengal school of Vaishnavism preaches universal love, but the Sakta cult, which has been derived from the Tantra, practises bloody rites of the most inhuman nature. Both these religious cults developed in Bengal parallel to each other. It will also be seen that the Sun-god is worshipped in Bengal in not only half a dozen different names and forms but also in a variety of different ways. The Sun, being the principal object of worship, offers the largest number of varieties. But as time went on, all the diversities were drawn towards a common ideal and a bond of unity that finally led to the developed of a composite culture.

From the ancient period of history up to the present century, there has been considerable migration of races from one part of Bengal to another, for various socio-political reasons. This migration has been in the directions - from east to west and vice-versa and south to north and vice-versa. Small groups of people migrated from outside Bengal during different periods of history due to the pressure of population and other practical reasons, and
settled in isolated pockets, ultimately merging into the local population at the cost of their individual character. But over certain areas some groups have been able to retain their identity against all odds.

The Dravidian-speaking Oraon and the Mundari-speaking Santal, both Proto-Australoid as far as their physical features are concerned, are the two main tribal groups which have settled in the different and difficult parts of Bengal, first as agricultural labour and ultimately as cultivators of their own land. For the last one thousand years or so, migration of races from east to west and vice-versa has occurred also for political reasons. With Turkish invasion in the beginning of the 13th century A.D., the higher racial groups moved from west and central Bengal to the remote corners of East Bengal now forming the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh. Again during the 15th century A.D., after a similar political upheaval in East Bengal, some higher racial groups partly moved further east and southeast and partly returned to West Bengal, the land of their forefathers, to settle down along the Gangetic valley which was traditionally prosperous both economically and culturally. Also, during very recent times with the partition of Bengal there has been heavy exodus of a section of people from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, to West Bengal. The popular elements of culture which developed some local features in East Bengal have been carried to West Bengal by the migrants.

Folk culture of Bengal has also developed in the rural areas as in other states. But due to rapid industrialization of West Bengal during recent years, the people's culture which developed on the basis of a life with an agricultural bias is undergoing major changes. Even those who have not yet moved to industrial areas from their rural homes feel the impact of industrial life through various modes of communication. Rural electrification, and various other plans and programmes of the Government, have also been responsible for changing the cultural pattern of life of the people. Originally, the peasants of Bengal used to have a long period of leisure after reach harvest, and during this period they could devote themselves to various cultural activities. But with the introduction of the system of cultivation of crops all round the year by using artificial or chemical manure, the agriculturists over most of the areas have to engage themselves in work during almost the whole year. There has been economic gain at the cost of cultural life. The life-style of the agricultural people has undergone a drastic change. While previously they enjoyed long cultural performances covering weeks, fortnights and even months, now they prefer shorter, ready-made programmes. Thanks to the progress made under the Government's rural electrification scheme. Schools and colleges for boys and girls have been established in the rural areas, and the life of the children of the soil are getting adjusted according to their routine. A uniform syllabus of study for
both males and females, and a uniform routine for daily work have been imposed upon the pupils irrespective of local conditions and individual talent. The latent artistic urges - distinctive traits of each community - are denied an opportunity to grow and flourish in their natural environment, and just wither away. Thus folk-games are rarely played, folk-songs are rarely sung, folk-tales are rarely told, folk-dramas, folk-ballads, are rarely performed, and folk-riddles are rarely asked. Folk-life or folk-culture, in short, is fast becoming a thing of the past.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The study of historiography aims to search the folk art and crafts history of the region and the earnest effort of the scholars for bringing the crafts tradition of the region into the limelight of the cultural history of the province as well as our country. Statistical Report of West Bengal throw a light on the geography of West Bengal, which was previously discuss by W.W. Hunter in his book 'The Annals of Rural Bengal - Scholar’s Choice Edition'.

Gurusaday Dutta was mostly know for his interest and contributions to Bengal’s folk art, dance and folk music. He spent a lifetime collecting and studying art objects from the remotest corners of undivided rural Bengal collecting items of folk art such as Kalighat painting, Patuas, Kanthas, Terracotta, Panels, Stone Sculptures, Wood carving, Moulds used for making patterns on sweets or mango paste etc. Gurusaday Dutta wrote extensively on folk culture. He also wrote a good deal about the Bratachari movement.

Shri Gurusaday Dutta, I.C.S., one of the front ranking pioneer of the identities of Bengali rare and freedom movement in Indian Independence. In 1929 he started collecting examples of both rural and performing traditional art heritage of undivided Bengal, which ultimately led the foundation of Bratachari movement in India and after Shri Dutta's death - a museum of folk art and crafts, named after him was established in 1963 and declared open by Prof. Humayan Kabir, the then Union Minister of Education, New Delhi.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was an Indian social reformer and freedom fighter. She is most remembered for her contribution to the Indian independence movement. She also involved with Indian handicrafts, handlooms and theatre in independent India and for upliftment of the socio-economic standard of Indian women by pioneering the co-operative movement.

She set up a series of crafts museums to hold and archive India’s indigenous arts and crafts. She promoted arts and crafts and instituted the
National Awards for Master Craftsmen and a culmination of her enterprising spirit lead to the setting up Central Cottage Industries Emporia. Kamaladevi was a women ahead of her lines, she was instrumental in setting up the All India Hadicrafts Board, she also the first Chairperson, The Crafts Council of India was also the first President of the World Craft Council, Asia Pacific Region. UNESCO honoured her with an award in 1977 for her contribution towards the promotion of handicraft. Tarapada Santra, born in an obscure village of West Bengal. He struggled against acute poverty and stringent social constraints all his life to be recognized as an authority on the folk arts of his state. Tarapada Santra delves into the intricacies of the creative pattern of folk arts of Bengal. Providing an overview of the vast array of art forms and analyzing how regional influences and political changes were reflected in the creative styles of the artisans. He has several publications on folk arts of West Bengal.

Ajit Mookerjee’s contribution on folk art is very much to the point. In his book ‘Folk art of Bengal’, a promising introduction to the study of folk art parallel to that his old friend Dinesh Chandra Sen has carried out so admirably for the Bengali folk sons should lead to further research. Mr. Mookerjee’s pioneer work will no doubt stimulate others to discover and publish local examples of their peasant art.

Asutosh Bhattacharya was an ardent scholar of Folklore. He served as Professor of Bengali and Head of the Deptt. of Modern Indian Languages at Calcutta University. He also served as a Research Associate in Primitive Religion and Folk Culture and subsequently as an Assistant Anthropologist in Social Anthropology in the Anthropological Survey of India. He authored more than seventy books on various aspects of Bengali culture. Among which "Folklore of Bengal", Bangiya Lok Sangeet Ratnakar, Banglar Loksangshrit, Chhau Dance of Purulia etc.

Barun Kumar Chakraborty was a retired Professor of the Department of Folk Culture, University of Kalyani. He was a talented research scholar and wrote several books on folklore. 'Stalwarts of Bengali Folklore' is a unique book of its kind.

Binay Ghosh, the author of the book 'Traditional Arts and Crafts of West Bengal : a Sociological Survey'. He has done his research work on Pottery, The Dokra Metalcrafts etc. He also discovered about the Patuas, the Mask makers, the Sutradhars and the Bhaskars communities.

Prabhas Sen in his book 'Crafts of West Bengal', discussed scholaritically about traditional crafts of Bengal. The book captures the variety and vitality of Bengal's crafts and the range of their creative expression.
Sri Siten Chakraborty served in different branches of Cottage Industries, i.e. Silk & Sericulture, Handloom, Handicrafts, Khadi and Village Industries etc. Sri Radha Krishna Bari served as Research Officer (Handicrafts) at experimental Workshop cum Institute of Cottage and Small Scale Industries, Govt. of West Bengal. He had occasion to acquaint himself with the rich heritage of handicrafts industries of the state - their problems and potentialities and had contributed his humble share for development of handicrafts in all its aspects, specially towards introduction of improved techniques and designs. Both Sri Siten Chakraborty and Sri Radha Krishna Bari worked scholastically for the welfare of different crafts and crafts persons of West Bengal and the book 'Handicrafts of West Bengal' is a unique publication of their joint efforts.

There are many scholars like Kalyan Kumar Ganguly, Prodyot Ghosh, Puspajit Sen, Animesh Kanti Pal, Pallab Sengupta, M.N. Upadhyay etc. have done valuable works on folk art and folk culture.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

* To explore and analyze various forms of folk art.
* Importance of folk art in different geographical parts of West Bengal.
* Study of different folk art importance of folk art in the socio economic condition of the region.
* To study the existing opportunities facilitating the preservation, promotion of folk art through museum.
* The promotion of folk art & marketing through museum.
* To suggest strategies for promoting and propagating folk art and culture.

The present dissertation is divided into five chapters, dealing with nature and character of folk art and crafts of West Bengal and various problems connected with their proper preservation, development and marketing facilities.

Chapter I, reveals aims and objectives of present dissertation. The objective of the scheme is to make special efforts to encourage folk arts and crafts and to frame special programmes for the preservation and strengthening of the vanishing art forms. The root of the culture of West Bengal is explored and the artistes from the rural belt are provided with a stage of showcase their talent. Every folk arts festival is followed by seminars, discussing the art forms and the numerous ways to preserve the vulnerable heritage.
West Bengal, a land of fecundity and prosperity embraces all within her fold. The numerous tribes and ethnic groups of West Bengal have their own distinctive arts, as varied and beautiful as the tribes themselves. Bengal’s repertoire of folk song with its lyrical appeal and richness, its thematic diversity and range is a reflection of rural Bengals creativity and imagination. As a traditional art form, folk dances of Bengal have gained immense popularity and recognition over the years.

Religion has a very important role in the formation of identity of each society. It is the shell of cultural formation. The individuals in a society are born into them. It is through these customs and practices that social solidarity remains. Societies are made up of structures of cultural rules, establishes, beliefs and practices to which their members are expected to conform. Each social structure has unique customs and practices as well as systems of beliefs. Folk art and beliefs play an important role in the timely reforms and establishing of these customs and practices.

All our folk art and culture forms have an ethnic nature. They remain within a particular geographical region in West Bengal. They myths of a particular region from the plot of these art forms. These art forms are the totality of the cultural experience of particular regions. These art forms are totality of the cultural experiences of particulars regions. It is the highly popular and religious cultural groups that help them rise beyond time. Folk art forms maintain their ethnic nature through which they mark socialization possible, they regulate and harmonize them with other communities. Apart from creating cultural identity folk art forms have other great social missions. The most important is the collective conscience they produce.

Chapter II, highlights diversified geographical features of West Bengal. The study includes the physiographical characters of different geo-cultural units of West Bengal for proper understanding of the growth and development of folk arts and crafts of West Bengal.

West Bengal is Geographically a flourished landscape in India. it covers a vast region in the eastern India, stretching from the Himalayan Mountainious range of North to the Bay of Bengal in the South. It covers 87853 Sq. Km. land area and is situated between 21°30' North to 27°10' North latitude and 85°50' East to 89°53’ East longitude. The tropic of cancer (23°30’ N) acrosses the districts Nadia, Barddhaman, Bankura and Puruliya.

Physically West Bengal can be divided into three major geographical units viz,
A) Northern Mountains Region.

B) The Alluvial plains of Tista-Mahananda and Bhagirathi-Hoogli River.

C) The Western Semi Plateau region.

A) Northern Mountainous Region:

As an important part of eastern Himalayan Region the region occupies mainly the northern portion of West Bengal. The region includes Darjeeling and northern Jalpaiguri district.

The River Tista has divided the region into two parts. One is Darjeeling hill region and the other one is the eastern bank of the river Tista.

B) The Alluvial Plains of West Bengal:

The alluvial plains are the largest geographical zone of West Bengal. Except the northern mountainous region and Western table land, the entire region is under the alluvial plains which are formed by the alluviam of the river Ganga and a number of tributaries and distributaries of it. The region has stretched from the south of the Himalayan Mountainous region in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. Bangladesh is situated to the east and Bihar and Western table land are to the west of the region. The alluvial plains can be divided into two major parts in respect of the Gangetic river basin. Viz: The Northern Alluvial plain and Southern Alluvial plain.

C) The Western Semi Plateau region:

The western semi plateau of West Bengal is a spur projection of Chhotonagpur Plateau of Jharkhand. It bears the entire Puruliya district, Western part of Bhirbhum and Western part of West Midnapur. Perhaps it may be mentioned that the table land covers a vast area of the South-Western part of the province. The region is bounded to the north, by the Chhotonagpur Plateau and the Bhagirathi Hoogli alluvial plains, Jharkhand Plateau (Chhotonagpur Plateau) and a part of Orissa. The Bhagirathi-Hoogli alluvial plan form the eastern boundary of the Western table land.

Chapter III, makes an over view of major traits of folk crafts of West Bengal. The style, manufacturing technique, availability of raw materials, the impact of the crafts on the contemporary life, condition of artisans, and the changing phases of folk culture will be discussed in this chapter.

Dokra Metal Casting

Cire - pardue or lost wax metal casting is a very ancient folk art in the world History. In West Bengal this indigenous metal craft is popularly known
as Dokra and the artisan is called Dokra Kamar. The dokra objects are not too large rather small in size & specially made of brass. Metal castding is a very primitive art which has been continuing since five thousand (5000) years. According to the scholar, Probhas Sen, "The art of casting metal into different objects of use developed as man stepped into the copper stone age from that of burnt clay pottery." The dokra metal crafts and its casting technique are very primitive tribal origin. Some ancient texts like 'Silpasastra', 'Bishnu sanghita' and the Puranas like 'Agnipura', 'Matsapurana' etc. support the presence of such metal crafts in ancient India which were prepared through lost wax metal casting process upon clay models. In spite of its tribal originate Dokra was a well known craft among the general population in Ancient Indian Society. 'Manasollas Sastra', a part of the core literatue 'Abhila sitartha Chintamoni', written by the Challuykya King 'Someswara' in twelvth century A.D. presents the popularity of the craft in ancient Indian Society.

CONCH SHELL

Conch shell is nothing but the hard outer covering of conch which is made of calcium carbonate (CaCO3). The shell is used as an airophonic-instrument from very ancient time. It is inseparable from Indian Culture. In Indus Valley Civilization conch shells were used popularly. Nageswar was an important Gastropods shell craft centre in the middle era of 3rd millennium B.C. from where a large number of Turbinella pyrum and its fragments were collected. The artisans prepared shell objects like bangle, ladle, pendent, inlay pieces etc. of Chicorius Ramous shells.

In 'Mahabharata' and 'Brahma Baibarta Purana', there are impotant evidence of widespread use of SANKHAS as an war instrument. Jems Harnell explains in the Memories of Asiatic Society Journey. There were important conch cutting industries in the ancient Pandyan kingdom in Tamil Nadu is the early centuries of Christian era. Generally conches are used in the temples for ritualistic purpose and he bangles are used by the Hindu married women. Not only the general Hindus but also Koch, Polia, Rajbansi, Santal, Kumri etc. community use the Sankhas.

SOLAPITH

The word 'sola' is derived from salila which means water. The plant sprouts grow up in the water naturally. In English the plant is called 'sponge' wood and botanically it is known as Aeschyno meha aspera. The plant grows up in the marsh without any cultivation. The plant can be classifed into two groups according to the nature of wood like hard sola (Kath sola) and soft sola (Phul sola). Among them only the soft sola is used to prepare different type of crafts. The plant grows about 4'-8' ft. long and 4"-7" in breadth. After
dry up of the stalk is becomes 1:5 "-3". This dried stalk is used to prepare the crafts of solapith.

MASK

To the world of traditional folk art mask no doubt bears an important role from the pre-historic period. In the cave painting in Spain etc. there we find the presence of masks. Among the ancient human society imitativeness invents the mask culture to serve different purposes like craftsmanship, to please the Gods or Goddesses, witchcraft, acting etc. Now it is popularly used as dancing mask and also to serve the cover to face. The mask reflects the personality of the said God or Goddess, demon common people or animal character.

Generally the carpenter and potter classes prepare the mask in West Bengal. There appear different types of mask made of wood, bamboo, paper, paperpulp, clay, goard etc. Whereas the margo fig, peepul, kadamba, chhatim, gamer etc. Wood are used to prepare wooden mask. Most popular dancing mask in West Bengal are Mukha-Khail of Koch-Bihar and Dinajpur (North & South), Gambhira of Malda and Chhoue of Puruliya.

BAMBOO & CANE

The Bamboo and cane crafts have been flourished in rural Bengal from the earliest Chapter of Civilization. The products of Bamboo and cane are related from house hold to marketable articles. Different types of geometrical designs are prepared by twisting and interweaving or weaving them in horizontal and vertical lines. Sometimes the animal figures and floral motives are performed on the articles.

Bamboo & cane products are executed in rural areas all over the state, though these are much popular in Birbhum, Maldah, Medinipur, Siliguri and Darjeeling etc. More than 3500 artisans practice this crafts in rural Bengal.

CLAY AND TERRACOTTA

Traditional clay and terracotta objects of West Bengal are really interesting and represent vast and ageless characteristics. Clay is the earliest raw material of figuring. Though wood, cloth, sola, paper, cane, bamboo etc. are used to prepare folk figurines. Early clay figurines. Early clay figurines were very simple and Sun baked, but in course of time their nature became more complex and to increase their durability the objects were baked in fire. The term 'terracotta' is an Italian joint word (terra + cotta), which means 'burnt earth'. The tradition of Bengal Terracotta is a continuation of earlier civilization.
Technically the traditional terracotta objects belong to three classes like handmade, wheel made and molded. Sometime handmade and wheel made both the techniques are applied or artistically decorated with several motifs or with slip coloured before fringes. Clay and terracotta articles are prepared frequently in the rural area all over the province. The principal terracotta centres in West Bengal are as follows :-

A) Archaeological site: Bangarh, Barachampa, Tamluk, Mangolkot, arinarayanpur, Atttgharas - Sitakundu, Jagojibanpur etc.


C) Contemporary terracotta: Panchmura, Sonemukhi, Bishnupur, ajagram in Bankura districts, Krishnanagar in Nadia, Joynagar - ajilpur in 24 Parganas.

Beside the above mentioned objects I have also discussed about Sara, Ghat and Ornaments also.

Chapter IV, deals with folk museums and their collections, their prospects depending on the growing interest of folk art and culture in the current society.

Museum is a socio-economical institution. Folk art museum is a sacred place to the research scholars, students and also the art conscious people. Museum may play an important role to promote the public education, art-awareness, consciousness and also the national integrity. Museum may increase popularity of folk art & crafts and the artisan classes also through proper scientific presentaton in the gallery. In this context the emergence of folk art museum is very important. But it is deplorable that there are very few folk art museum in our country and this is not enough. Above all, most of the museums posses archaeological objects, which are exhibited through the museum galleries whereas the folk art objects are simply displayed only in a remort corner of a gallery or in a separate gallery without modern display technique. Not only that the organic folk art materials are going to an end due to proper conservation.

Chapter V, proposes to highlight the marketing prosperity of the folk objects through folk art museums. Folk museums are the only institutions which can throw important light both on the culture and the craft materials of a particular region. The folk museums have enough scope for promoting West Bengal’s art and crafts. Thus present dissertation makes some observations on this aspect and offers some suggestions for better functioning of folk museums and their marketing schemes for folk materials.
Folk art museum can play a significant role in highlighting the cultural heritages of Bengal. From this class of museum, when visited; a visitor can get an idea about the folk life, culture and religion etc. Since there are very few folk art museums in West Bengal, it is necessary to take some immediate steps for promoting and developing an over all awareness in our society for the growth of this type of Museum.

Folk Art Museum can be classified into two categories viz. State Regional Folk Museum which can reflect the integrated approach of folk culture heritage of the state as a whole or regional folk Museum highlighting the specific cultural heritage of a region or a particular population.

Secondly the folk museum of national level highlights the national integrated cultural aspects. For this purpose, a separate Directorate of Folk Museum can be established which can give all sorts of help to the Folk Art Museum. Folk Art Museum should take certain measures for the preservation of Folk Art Culture of West Bengal.

It is clearly evident that the folk art and craft is of immense importance in ensuring national integrity, communal harmony, diversified socio cultural identity of the various corners of our country and our adherence to the traditional value system of our nation. The present study is of immense importance because, it has made an attempt to review the current status of folk art and crafts in West Bengal. It has tried to explore the utility of Govt. schemes in preservation, promotion of folk art and culture. The direct interaction with village people and the folk museums involved in promoting the folk art is expected to throw light upon the significant issues, critical problems and challenges relevant to the subject of study.

In this environment of social imbalance, political disturbances, terrorist attacks, population explosion, struggle for existence, human mind is confused. Where folk museums is highlighting our rich culture, that can mould a positive attitude towards life. Visitors may form a true idea of life. Traditional art forms have survived for centuries and they will survive in future for their flexibility. They could be the media for the social change in rural West Bengal.

Folk art in West Bengal has a great potential in the internal market because of its traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity. Folk art and crafts has also progressed considerably due to the constant developmental efforts of the Govt. and other organizations.
METHODOLOGY

In order to solve the problems related to the present study I have discussed the terminology, both in the field of our cultural heritage and marketing, where I have analyzed and outlined some basic features in both the sectors, for instance related to the overall role and vision, social responsibility, the cross-cultural perspectives and finally the public dimension. The research work is based on various sources. For the theoretical part of my research work I have gone through the recent documents published from different folk art museums, state directorate and state marketing report. Then I studied various books and articles dealing with the relationship between folk cultural heritage and marketing books on museum management. Also I have gone through the published materials like memoirs, annual report, brochures of folk museums. For reappraisal the art of this region, the works of past and present by competent authorities available in different libraries and educational institutions are taken into consideration. Multidisciplinary approaches combining archaeology, history, geography have been taken to achieve the objectives of the research work. More over discussed detailed photographic documentation, maps are given for better understanding.

I have undertaken for research work an extensive field survey of different craft villages and folk art museums in West Bengal. Then interaction with museum personnels and village artisans & their family members of different art objects, has also been done.

I have done the research study followed through an extensive field survey. Data related to the research topic are also collected from internet updates.

REFERENCES


