



Biswa Bangla Catalogue
Handcrafted lifestyle products, clothing
and accessories from West Bengal

Go to http://bit.do/My-Bengal for the online catalogue

How to use this catalogue

Items in the SHOWCASE and The Chitpore Collection were facing uncertain futures before Biswa Bangla stepped in. To know more about them, click on the description given beside each item.

For orders & enquiries

When ordering, please specify product code, product name and quantity

For orders, contact:

+91-8336992546 or Email at gifts@ biswabangla.in

We welcome enquiries on product combinations and gifts

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Biswa Bangla: For those behind the weave and the craft



Bengal's folk art defies easy categorization. The designs are often particular to a specific region; some pieces carry the imprint of outside influences, ancient and modern. Sometimes an entire village will specialize in a particular craft tradition, with artistic styles and techniques passed from one generation to the next.

It was this rich tradition, its Intangible Cultural Heritage, that Biswa Bangla (BB) is working to revive, preserve and promote. BB, which was set up in 2014, is a social enterprise by the Department of MSME & Textiles, Government of West Bengal, India. On the larger scale, it is an initiative to raise the level of development among Bengal's artisans and weavers so that they can operate autonomously and flourish.

It harnesses strategic market linkages to facilitate their big leap from drudgery, poverty and daily wages to the dignity of an artist. A series of interventions at the back-end supports the artisans grow into entrepreneurs. Biswa Bangla ploughs its profits back to these people at the bottom of pyramid whose kills and expression are pivotal to the initiative's success.

Quality first, customer first

BB reaches out to thousands of craftspersons and weavers in the state to develop handicrafts and textiles that stand out in quality and uniqueness. The products are tested by world-leading, third-party certifiers for assurance of quality and benignity to health and environment. While the products retain the deep-rooted elements of Bengal's heritage, they are shaped in contemporary designs to suit the needs and preferences of 21st-century citizens.

Biswa Bangla's 'social business' runs parallel to a number of collaborative initiatives aimed at skilling people in the niche art and crafts of Bengal. This has not only helped to revive almostlost art and conserve heritage but also improve the standard of life of artisans. BB employs social and environmental safeguards in sourcing and production, and raises the bar constantly to align its operations to global standards.

One of the initiatives that needs special mention here is the Rural Craft Hub, a collaboration between the Government of West Bengal and UNESCO. Fifteen Rural Craft and Culture Hubs, comprising nine traditional crafts spread across West Bengal, have been set up as model cases of culture-based rural development. The hubs integrate culture and artistic skills into an entrepreneurship development strategy and is helping 20,000 craft families.

Some of the other notable initiatives are: Project Muslin to revive muslin covers 2000 families of muslin artisans; Project Baluchari to revive an exquisite saree art form; the Integrated Handloom Cluster Development programme; and Karma Tirthas which are rural marketing outlets.

CRAFT PROCESSES



Jamdani weaves



Baluchari weaves



Kantha stitch



Wood carving



Patachitra paintings



Metal work



Terracotta



Dolls and Masks

Biswa Bangla's heritage products: Reviving, preserving and promoting Bengal's unique handloom and craft items

One of Biswa Bangla's initiatives is to revive and preserve its unique products, some of which are on the verge of extinction. On the larger scale, it is also an initiative to raise the level of development among Bengal's artisans and weavers so that they can operate autonomously and flourish.

The heritage items pictured in the following pages are just a few of the many items that Biswa Bangla is attempting to revive. Some of them are a fusion of the crafts that are in practice today. The artistic heights and detail that Bengal's artisans and weavers are able to reach in these works of beauty are the best ways of telling the world why these crafts must never face uncertain futures.

The impressions that one carries back after encountering these heritage products will, in a very special way, make the lives of thousands of its weavers and craftsmen a little better.

Ioin us to make a world of difference!



Bell metal or Kansha

Various forms of Kansha or bell metalware were very popular among Bengal's elite families during the middle half of the 18th century. Handed down by artisans through generations, these products in Bengal were meant for special domestic and religious occasions.

The traditional Kansari artisans made handcrafted ware from scrap metal. Interestingly, during the Second World War, rejected bullets available at Dhubulia Military Camp, just adjacent to the cluster, were used as raw material.

However, this traditional craft activity received a setback due to the advent of stainless steel and other alternative products.

Biswa Bangla recreates this traditional charm of Kaansha-ware with contemporary designs, handmade in the districts of Burdwan and Bankura.



Dokra Napkin Holders

SH2

3.5in x 3in

Dokra craft, the ancient, lost-wax method of metal casting, goes back as far the Mohenjodaro period, and has a rich legacy in the history of Bengal's handicrafts. Dokra artifacts are admired all over the world for its primeval simplicity and enchanting folk motifs.

The traditional ironsmiths of Bengal, known as Kamars or Karmakars, in the districts of Bankura, Midnapore, Purulia, Birbhum and Burdwan excel in this exquisite art of metal casting.

Biswa Bangla today is attempting to reinterpret this craft by integrating it into contemporary utility items such as cutlery sets, serving spoons, and napkin holders.



Ceramic Tray with Dokra Handles SH3

17in x 9.5in

In an age where aesthetics has become so important in contemporary home décor, Biswa Bangla adds novel craft ideas for the modern consumer. With the Ceramic Tray with Dokra handles, Biswa Bangla has re-interpreted the traditional craft of metal casting and added a new dimension to it.

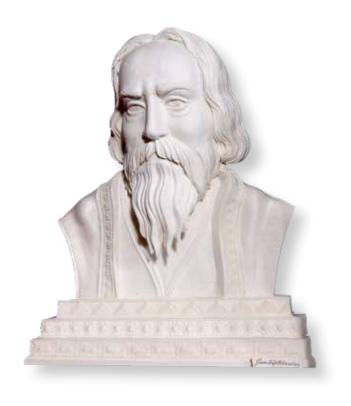


SH4

The conch shell crafts of Bengal are not only beautiful and delicate art pieces, they are also considered to be extremely auspicious. Conch shell bangles establish the marital status of a Bengali woman.

Biswa Bangla has merged the two craft forms of Sankha Pola and silver craft and has found a new avenue of expression for it.

Bengal's heritage products



Solapith statue and Portrait

SH₅

16.5in x 20.5in

Solapith or the Indian cork is a milky-white sponge-wood which is carved into delicate and beautiful object of arts. Sola is a plant that grows wild in the marshy waterlogged areas of Bengal, Assam and in the eastern marshy Gangetic plains. Artisans use it for making artefacts used for decoration and ornate head-gear of bridal couples. The finest examples of craftsmanship are seen on the idols of gods and goddesses during festivals, specially the massive decorative backdrops made for Durga Puja celebrations.

This craft is mainly practised in the districts of Burdwan, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia and Hooghly and in some other parts of the state. The people engaged as solapith craftsmen are known as Malakars, meaning garland makers.

Biswa Bangla has added new facets to the 'solapith' craft with sculptures of the famous personalities of Bengal.



Engraved Conch Shell

SH₆

30cm x 40cm

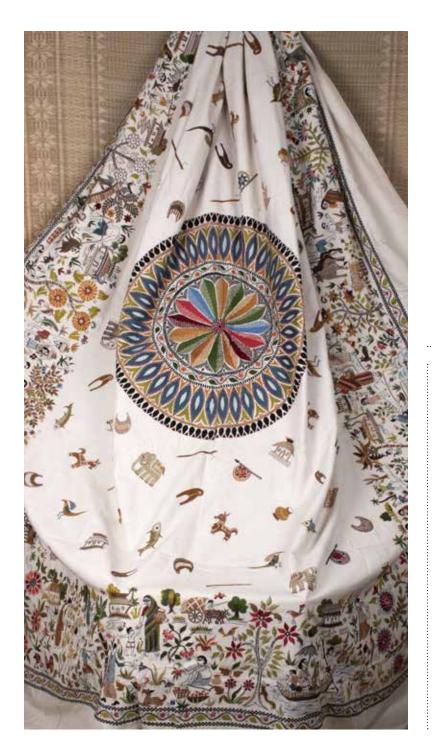
The conch shell has been long associated with Bengali rituals and – from newlywed women to religious ceremonies.

Conch shell craft is basically the art of engraving beautiful images on shells obtained from the ocean bed. This craft has been practiced here for centuries.

Although it is very difficult to carve a conch shell – it takes a minimum of two to three months to design a single shell item – every artisan has his own unique pattern of carving the shell. While some craftsmen carve images of Lord Shiva on the shells, others create entire episodes from the Mahabharata on them.

Biswa Bangla is attempting to transform these into lively articles of possession, with intricate designs and carvings.

Bengal's heritage products



Bostani Kantha

This type of embroidery from West Bengal is generically called 'kantha' embroidery, and is traditionally made of worn-out cotton saris and dhoti. Coloured threads were extracted from the borders of the old saris to provide coloured areas, although in recent times specially purchased coloured threads are used. Kanthas are made up of several layers of cotton cloth, stitched together by designs in simple running stitch, and designs are added using pattern-darning stitch, satin-stitch and button-hole stitch. Kanthas are used for a multitude of household functions: the small size and square format of this one suggests that it was either an all-purpose wrapper 'bostani'. Biswa Bangla has reinterpreted this exquisite craft in a contemporary way.



Jamdani Meenakari Shawls SH8

Made on the complex Naksha loom, the awe-inspiring black and white designs of Jamdani shawls were to a large extent, Kashmiri in spirit with elaborate borders. But this masterpiece from Bengal faded into obscurity in the 18th century.

Now, Biswa Bangla is recreating these Jamdani masterpieces!

Bengal's heritage products



Silk Indo-Portuguese Shawl

The Indo-Portuguese Shawl is an example of the level of sophistication that textiles in India had reached in the 16th and 17th centuries – a time when the Mughal demand for luxury was peaking.

The shawls were made from monochrome and embroidered tussar silk on cotton muslin in the district of Hooghly which was then under the rule of the Portuguese. The shawls were made for a select upper-class client in India and Europe during the reign of Akbar the Great, Jahangir and Shahjahan.

The tussar silk-embroidered shawls represents one of the most important schools of Indian embroidery, which was flourishing even before the arrival of the Portuguese. Under their patronage, the designs became increasingly Christian reminiscent of Italian Renaissance ornamentation.

The figures are drawn with a naïve innocence and animation. Structured elements, such as houses and boats, are more formalized, the faces of people in full frontal view and animals have side profiles. A shawl takes almost six months to make by artisans of South 24 Parganas.

Muslin Indo-Portuguese Shawl SH10



Bengal's heritage products

Balaposh SH11

The historic 'Balaposh' quilts once used by the Mughal aristocracy and Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula are almost extinct. With its typically contrasting borders, the sweet fragrance of attar sprinkled on a layer of cotton-wool between two layers of silk almost lent a lyrical touch to the Balaposh. All the three layers are kept together with just stitches at the edges, and yet the cotton-wool inside wouldn't move or lump up!

Not many would know the exclusivity of these soft, sweet-smelling silk quilts, today! The only *karigar* left in Bengal was Sakhawat Hussain Khan of Murshidabad, and Biswa Bangla had collaborated with him to revive the Balaposh. After his deaith, the Balaposh legacy is being carried forward by his son and daughter.



Sakhawat Hussain Khan of Murshidabad, the only practitioner of the craft of Balaposh (scented quilt). After his death, his son and daughter carry forward the legacy

Bengal's heritage products



Silk Rose Jamdani saree
SH12



Silk Pietra-dura Jamdani saree SH13



Silk Macaw Jamdani saree SH14



Silk Pocket Squares from Banglasree Silk
SH15



Silk Jamdani Pocket Squares SH16A, SH16B, SH16C

Bengal's heritage products



Indigo Muslin Jamdani Saree SH17

White Muslin Jamdani Saree SH18



Bengal's heritage products



The Chitpore Series

'Attar' or 'ittar' is an Arabic word derived from the Persian 'atr' meaning 'fragrance'. In ancient India, attar was prepared by placing flowers and sacred plants into water or vegetable oil. After the plants and flowers had slowly infused the water/oil with their delicate fragrance, the botanical material would be removed leaving an aromatic and highly concentrated liquid. Attars are 100 per cent natural, devoid of alcohol or any other harsh chemical.

Chitpore Road, a unique old road and a melting pot of people, cultures, vocations and the arts, and once home to the Tagores and the Nawab of Chitpore, is Kolkata's attar street. The attar sold from these shops – some dating back to 1824 – represented the lifestyle of the local population.

Biswa Bangla rediscovers the richness of Chitpore attar and other products and has re-branded and re-packaged them. Global certification agencies have been brought in to ensure quality.





Rollon Attar – Brown CH2
Each 6 ml





Rollon Attar – Yellow CH3 Each 6 ml



Bengal's heritage products





Green Tea Attar CH4 5 ml



White Musk Attar CH5
5 ml



Jannatul Firdaus Attar CH6 5 ml



Rose Attar
CH7
5 ml



Hayati Attar CH8 5 ml



Green Tea Attar CH9
5 ml



Mementoes – Dies for ornaments CH10



Bengal's heritage products

Masks of Bengal

Mask or mukhosh, as it is known in Bengal has a mysterious history, too vague to be chronicled in perfect sequence, both in terms of advent and influence. Rumour has it that in ancient times, witches started the practice of wearing masks. To camouflage themselves, the witches built a sublime weapon, a facial veil that prevented them from being exposed. They wore colourful, ornate faces made from wood or paper, a bait to attract innocent people, who were then sacrificed so that the witches would be granted immortality.

There are various other theories regarding origin of masks in Bengal. Notwithstanding the ambiguities about the origin of masks in Bengal, it is evident that masks were of great religious importance owing to the belief in spells. Tribal priests would wear these masks and exhibit various magical skills.

Thus masks became a popular prop in Bengali culture, many of them being used in various dance forms performed to appease the demon gods and to usher in peace as well as prosperity.

Mask artisans shape out models from materials like bamboo, wood, sponge wood, clay, paper, etc., and then paint them in various colours. Each mask is different in craftsmanship technique and is typical of a community of artisans of that place.

The masks of Bengal are acclaimed for their craftsmanship. However no concrete initiative had been taken so far to revive and market this art form. Each of these techniques of mask making survived in localized pockets. Under the aegis of Biswa Bangla this signature craft of Bengal is being showcased across the globe.



Mahiraban mask **SH20** 10in x 9in



Terracotta mask SH21 12in x 8in



Kushmundi mask SH19 48in x 30in



Gilded mask SH22 9.5in x 6in



Rabankata mask SH23 15in x 11in

Bengal's heritage products

Dolls of Bengal

Bengal has a rich and ancient heritage of dolls. From the agricultural society of Mehergarh to the urban civilization of Sindhu valley, the peculiar feminine model of fired clay, discovered from excavations or by chance, from various corners of Bengal, are a standing testimony to the craft of doll-making.

Dolls are customarily crafted by women from the potter communities. Apart from fired clay dolls, statues of deities are also made from rice powder soaked in water. During the festival of Kali Puja, the worship of Lakshmi-Alakshmi requires an unsightly model of Alakshmi to be made from cow dung. Various figures of deities crafted by the painterpatuas are also used in households during festivals.

Besides their religious importance, dolls have been made for children too. This is evident from discoveries made from excavations in the Sindhu Valley. These fired clay dolls are the ancestors of India's ancient terracotta art. Potter communities nestling around these excavation sites still manufacture such dolls.

In addition to clay, artisans also create colourful dolls made of wood, metal, sponge wood, palm leaf, jute, etc. Urbanization has slowed down the pace of doll-making, but it has not been able to bring it to a halt. From fair-grounds to modern showrooms, the year-round bustle is enough to warm the hearts of these artisans. Their meagre income might not be sufficient for sustenance, but these craftsmen hold up to the art, out of sheer dedication and love.



Ihulan dolls

SH₂₈

31in x 7.5in

Palm Leaf dolls
SH29
22in x 12in



Sasthi dolls
SH24
5.5in x 4.5in



Jo dolls
SH26
5in x 3in



Jute dolls
SH25
5in x 3in



Kanthalia dolls
SH27
7in x 5in



Shellac dolls
SH30
5in x 4in



Dancing dolls
SH31
20in x 10in

TABLEWARE





Kantha Table Cover with set of Runners T1
Set of 6



Kantha Table Cover with set of Runners T2
Set of 6



*Terracotta Bottle*T3
10in x 5in



Ceramic Cup T4 4in x 3in



Silver-plated Jungle Safari Brass Bowl T6 5.5in x 8.5in



TABLEWARE



Brass & Copper Tea
T7
10in x 9in









Dokra Elephant Diya (Lamp) H1

14cm



Dokra Tortoise Candle Stand H2 4 in



Dokra Five Diyas (Lamp) H3

4in



Dokra Mari Cha Lion Diffuser H4 34cm x 32cm x 19cm



Dokra Kamadhenu H5 26cm x 30cm



Dokra Tribal Couple H6 Height 15cm



Dokra Baul H7 Height 16cm



Dokra Tribal Couple H8 Height 15cm



Dokra Man with Spade H9 Height 12cm



Dokra Bodhisattva H10 23cm x 48cm x 15cm



Dokra Nataraj Dancing on Apasmara H11 15cm x 33cm x 12.5cm

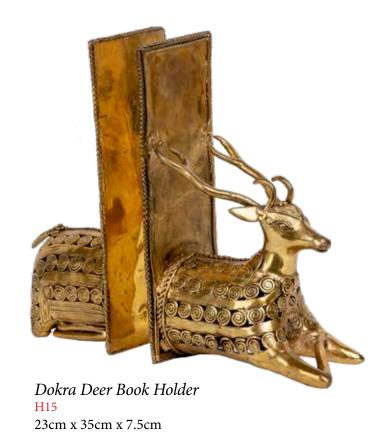


Dokra Bull and Bear Fight H13 25cm x 21cm x 25cm





Dokra Camel Book Holder H14 25cm x 21cm x 25cm









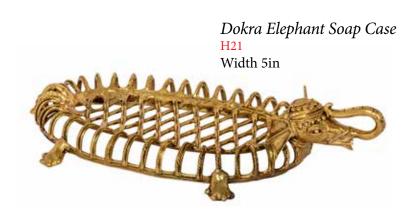
Dokra Varaha Avatar H18 14.5in x 10in x 6in



Dokra Nandi with Cobra Hood H19 31cm x 32cm x 15cm



Dokra Mahisasurmardini Night Lamp H20 12in x 12in







Cushion Cover 14in x 14in



Cushion Cover 16in x 16in



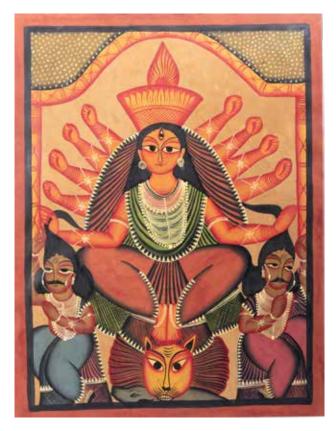
Cushion Cover 16in x 16in



Cotton Gamcha H26 1m x 80cm



Cotton Honeycomb Towels H27 1m x 60cm



Patachitra Painting H28 61cm x 86cm



Patachitra Painting H30 46cm x 55cm



Patachitra Painting H31 34cm x 48cm



Patachitra Painting
H29
47cm x 67cm



Patachitra Stool H32 15in x 15in x 3in



Chau Doll H33 18in x 9in



Gold Chau Durga H34 19in x 18in



Silver Chau Durga H35 11in x 12in







Miniature Musical Instrument (wood carving) H38 Height 13in



Dokra Howrah Bridge H39 7in x 4in x 2in



Horse (wood carving) H40 Height 6in



Ashok Stambh (wood carving) H41 Height 8in



Ashok Stambh (wood carving) H42 Height 4in



Jute Wall Hanging H43



Jute Wall Hanging H44



Shola Mayurpankhi H45 21cm x 7.5cm



Shola Durga (wall hanging) H46 19cm x 28cm



Shola Durga (wall hanging) H47 38cm x 7cm



Buddha (wood) H48 Height 8in



Metal Etching of Chowringhee – William Daniell H49 44cm x 34cm



Thread painting of Rabindranath Tagore H50 41cm x 46cm



Thread painting of Kazi Nazrul Islam H51 41cm x 46cm





ACCESSORIES









Jute File with Handmade Paper A12
26cm x 36cm



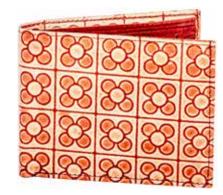
Santinikatan Leather Piggy Bank (Large)

A13 7in x 5in



Santinikatan Leather Piggy bank (Small) A14

6in x 5in



Santiniketan Wallet A15
9in x 3.5in



Santiniketan Wallet A16
9in x 3.5in



Santiniketan Leather Bag



Santiniketan Leather Bag
A18



*Madurkathi Pencil Box*A19
8in x 3in



Santinitketan Leather Pencil Case A20 Case 20cm x 7cm x 3cm



Canvas Backpack - Grey 18in x 21in x 8in



Kantha Purse - Grey A22 9in x 6in



Silk Jamdani dupatta/ scarf A23



Cotton Jamdani dupatta A25 1m x 2m



Cotton Jamdani dupatta/ scarf A24 1m x 2m



Silk Kantha shawl/dupatta A26 1m x 2m

CONSUMABLES



Darjeeling First Flush Goodricke

C1

100 gm



Darjeeling First Flush Happy Valley

C2

100 gm



Darjeeling First Flush Makaibari

C3

100 gm



Darjeeling Second Flush Makaibari C4

100 gm



Darjeeling First Flush Mim C5
100 gm



Darjeeling Second Flush Mim C6
100 gm

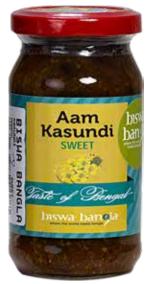
CONSUMABLES



Kasundi C7 200 gm



Mouban Honey C8
250 gm



Aam Kasundi (Sweet)
C9
250 gm



Aam Kasundi (Sour) C10 200 gm



Banalaukhi Gawa Ghee)
C11
100 gm



Organic Black Rice C12A 500 gm



Organic Black Pops C12B 200 gm



Organic Black Poha C12C 200 gm



Gobindobhog Rice C13A 500 gm & 1 kg



Tulaipanji Rice C13B 500 gm & 1 kg



Citronella Oil C14 50 gm & 100 gm



Nalen Gur C15 100 gm











































READYMADES











This catalogue brings together products from a range of crafts producer groups that have been selected after a stringent evaluation process. A brief profile of these craft groups and the various craft traditions they represent are included in the catalogue.