



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

Biswa Bangla is an initiative of the Department of Micro, Small and
Medium Enterprises & Textiles, Government of West Bengal

www.biswabangla.in

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](mailto: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 skills 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 almost-lost 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

SHOWCASE

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.

Join us to make a world of difference!



Bell metal or Kansha

SHI

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.



Sankha Pola with Silverwork

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.

SHOWCASE

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 newly-wed 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.

SHOWCASE

Bengal's heritage products



Bostani Kantha

SH7

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!

SHOWCASE

Bengal's heritage products



Silk Indo-Portuguese Shawl

S9

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



SHOWCASE

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 death, 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

SHOWCASE

Bengal's heritage products



Silk Rose Jamdani saree
SH12



Silk Pietra-dura Jamdani saree
SH13



Silk Macaw Jamdani saree
SH14



Silk Pocket Squares from Bangladeshi Silk
SH15



Silk Jamdani Pocket Squares
SH16A, SH16B, SH16C

SHOWCASE

Bengal's heritage products



Indigo Muslin Jamdani Saree

SH17



White Muslin Jamdani Saree

SH18



SHOWCASE

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

*From left: Green Tea Soap (with Goat's Milk);
Rose soap; Lavender Soap (with Goat's Milk);
Sandal Soap; White Musk Soap*

CH1
Each 100g



SHOWCASE

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



*Mementoos – Dies
for ornaments*
CH10
1in x 1in



Incense sticks
CH11

SHOWCASE

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.



Kushmundi mask

SH19

48in x 30in



Mahiraban mask

SH20

10in x 9in



Terracotta mask

SH21

12in x 8in



Gilded mask

SH22

9.5in x 6in



Rabankata mask

SH23

15in x 11in

SHOWCASE

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 painter-potters 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.



Sasthi dolls

SH24

5.5in x 4.5in



Jute dolls

SH25

5in x 3in



Jo dolls

SH26

5in x 3in



Kanthalia dolls

SH27

7in x 5in



Jhulan dolls

SH28

31in x 7.5in



Palm Leaf dolls

SH29

22in x 12in



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



Dokra Serving Spoon

T5

7.5in

TABLEWARE



Brass & Copper Tea

T7

10in x 9in



Dokra Copper Vessel Set

T8

13in x 12in



Brass Kettle

T9

Height 25cm



Brass Copper Matka

T10

15in x 9in

HOMEDECOR



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 Mahishasurmardini
H12
12in x 12in



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

HOMEDECOR



Dokra Camel Book Holder

H14

25cm x 21cm x 25cm



Dokra Deer Book Holder

H15

23cm x 35cm x 7.5cm



Dokra Elephant Book Holder

H16

35cm x 23cm

*Wooden Box for Ornaments
with Dokra work*

H17

23cm x 16cm x 17cm





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



Dokra Elephant Soap Case

H21

Width 5in

HOMEDECOR



Cushion Cover
H22
14in x 14in



Cushion Cover
H23
14in x 14in



Cushion Cover
H24
16in x 16in



Cushion Cover
H25
16in x 16in



Cotton Gamcha
H26
1m x 80cm



*Cotton
Honeycomb
Towels*
H27
1m x 60cm



Patachitra Painting

H28

61cm x 86cm



Patachitra Painting

H29

47cm x 67cm



Patachitra Painting

H30

46cm x 55cm



Patachitra Painting

H31

34cm x 48cm



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



Chau Mask

H36

34in x 24in



Chau Mask

H37

25in x 15in



*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



Clay Jewellery
A1



Crochet Jewellery
A2



Crochet Jewellery
A3

ACCESSORIES



Mixed Alloy Jewellery
A4, A5, A6

ACCESSORIES



Dokra Jewellery
A7



Dokra Jewellery
A8



*Dhan (Rice)
Jewellery*
A9



*Dhan (Rice)
Jewellery*
A10



Jute/Juco Files
A11
14in x 10in



Jute File with Handmade Paper
A12
26cm x 36cm



*Santiniketan Leather
Piggy Bank (Large)*

A13
7in x 5in



*Santiniketan 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
A17



Santiniketan Leather Bag
A18



Madurkathi Pencil Box
A19
8in x 3in



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

ACCESSORIES



Canvas Backpack - Grey

A21

18in x 21in x 8in



Kantha Purse - Grey

A22

9in x 6in



*Silk Jamdani dupatta/
scarf*

A23

1m x 2m



*Cotton Jamdani dupatta/
scarf*

A24

1m x 2m



Cotton Jamdani dupatta

A25

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

SAREES





SAREES





SAREES





SAREES





SAREES





SAREES





SAREES





SAREES



READYMADES





www.biswabangla.in



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.