

Role of the West Bengal Government for the Development of Handicrafts in Post Colonial Bankura (1947-2025)

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Abstract:

agriculturally and industrially underdeveloped, the location of Bankura district was not very conducive for trade. A large part of the people of the district have been dependent on handicrafts for a long time. Just as the Central Govt. took various measures for the development of handicrafts in the district, various social service institutions also came forward for the development of handicrafts. After independence, the West Bengal Govt. has measures taken for the development of handicrafts in Bankura district has discussed through this article.

Keywords: Artisans, Handicrafts, Benefited, Institution, help etc.

Research questions:

1. What was the role of the West Bengal Government for the development of handicrafts in Bankura district ?
2. The West Bengal Government took some measures for the development of handicrafts?
3. How much the artisans benefited from taking these initiatives by the West Bengal Government?

Research methodology:

The entire research paper is mainly based on the primary sources. For this many times the help of field survey and personal interview has been taken. Again in many cases the help of various books, assembly proceedings, district gazettiers, census etc has also been taken.

Bankura is a developing district located in South West Bengal. The agriculture of this district was not so developed and as the district was not favourable for the development of large industries, there was not much improvement in trade and commerce. Hence, a large part of the district have been depending on handicrafts for their livelihood for a long time. According to the statistics of 1901, 15.9% of the people of the district were dependent on industry¹. But later due to various reasons the number of people dependent on industry decrease to 8.23%² and increased slightly to 8.7% in 1961³. Subsequently, the number of people dependent on industry in the district further decreased to 5% in 2001⁴.

¹ Lsso. Malley, *Bankura district Gazetteers* (Calcutta, 1908) 126.

² India, West Bengal District Census handbook, *Census of India 1951*, series 20, (Calcutta, Sree Saraswati Press Ltd., 1953) xiv.

³ Amiya Kumar Banerji, *Bankura district Gazetteers* (Calcutta, 1967) 270.

Table 1, Registered Artisans of Bankura District

year	Industry	Registered artisans
1999	10,581	51,309
2000	10,887	52,864

Source: Paschimbanga Sarkar, *Paschimbanga Bankura Zilla Sankhya* ,(Paschimbanga sarkar,Calcutta,1409B.S) .318.

Beyond this registered number, a large number of artisans in the district depended on handicrafts. Those who have never registered their name in handicraft department. Also , large scale industry did not develop in the district, it can be assumed that most of these artisans were dependent on handicrafts. But while doing handicraft work, the artists faced many kinds of problems. Central government, state government and various social service organizations all came forward to solve these problems of artisans. The steps they took this time were as follows-

1. **Central Government:** Since independence, the central Government adopted policies such as annual budget, five years plan, Janata Dhoti and saree plan, loan facility, Dindyaloo Hotkhorka protsaha yoyana, various award scheme etc.
2. **Social service organization:** Institution like Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Samayata Math, Bangla Natok dot com etc have helped the artists by providing training,supply raw materials and even necessary equipment etc.
3. **Various eminent persons** like Aswani Raj, Utpal Chakraborty,etc came forward for the development of handicrafts.
4. **Various media** such as All India Radio, Praser Bharati, D.D. Bangla etc T.V. channel and various news paper like Ganashakti, Anndabazer came forward for the development of handicrafts. I am discussing the role of the West Bengal government in the development of handicrafts through this research paper.

Role of West Bengal Government in development of handicrafts in Bankura district:

1.Annual budget: Since the independence of India, the Government of West Bengal created a department called Department of small and cottage industries. An independent minister of state has been appointed and even this department has been passing an independent budget for handicrafts. Specific employment targets were set through the budget pool. It is discussed below.

Table 2, west Bengal budget

year	Total budget	Budget for small scale industries	employment	Attainment of Bankura
1973-74	13,02,24,76	3,30,48,000	3602	
1974-75	14,04,06,07	3,36,29,000		
1976-77	16,62,92,43	4,48,11,000	17,635	
1980-81		10,61,68,000	24,268	1) Arrangements were made to supply sterile tussar eggs toTaldangra in Bankura district.
1981-82	57,44,49,07	10,40,08,000	17,626	A decision was taken to set up a

				spinning mill at Barjora in Bankura.
1982-83	79,85,40,95	6,18,16,000		
1984-85		14,32,04,000	42,000	Production of woollen blankets started in Bankura.
1985-86		18,86,71,000	1,48,000	1. At Rampur in Bankura district, the dokra artisans cooperative society was thought to develop this industry through high quality design. 2. Tussar cultivation of Bankura district was further encouraged. 3. Silk Bank was established in Bishnupur.

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal Legislative Assembly, Calcutta, vol.50, no.I, 1973, P.640, VOL.58, NO.I, 1975, P.364, VOL.61, NO.I, 1976, P.488, VOL.7, NO.II, 1980, PP.885-891. VOL.74, NO.III, 1981, PP.662- 690 VOL. 79, NO.I, 1983, P.1200, VOL.80, NO.I, 1984, PP.. VOL.81, NO.IV, 1984, PP.447-485. VOL.83, NO.IV, 1985, PP.110-147.

Based on the above information, it can be said that after independence, the West Bengal Government spent every year for the development of handicrafts. As a result taking up new projects daily, the handicrafts of West Bengal and Bankura districts were developed. Even as a result of the projects being accepted through DIC, employment and growth in Bankura and West Bengal every year. Also, the artisans were happy in their artistic work as the artisans received this allotted money. But in reality it can be seen that this allotted money of the government was never more than two percent of the annual budget. But the amount of money allotted for the rest of the Government departments was much higher. But if the State Government had helped the artists by giving 10,000 rupees, then it would have been possible to create employment very well. It can also be said that although the two post-colonial Governments (Congress and CPIM) have promoted the development of handicrafts, there has been very little reflection in reality.

2. Provide training: All those who were interested in handicrafts were provided training at the expense of the West Bengal Government. Also, a training center was built in 1955-56 at Khatra in Bankura district so that the students could receive good training. Here the use of Lac to varnish, use of sealing wax etc. were taught⁴. Besides, a training center was opened in 1990-91 at Chhatna, Bankura. Here the students were trained for a year mainly in lac work. In the first two years, 10 artisans were trained, but after that, 20 artisans were trained every year. About 300 artisans have been trained through this training center for about 15 years⁵. This training of artisans was not limited to the lac industry. Training camps were also created to train the stone artisans of Sushuniya. Here arrangements were made to train 40 artisans in 4 batches of 10 artisans each year. That is why Darairajan, an expert in stone art from

⁴ Amiya Kumar Banerji, op.cit, p.277.

⁵ Personal interview collection from Partha Chakraborty, Chhatna, Bankura. (Ex-trainer of lac industry) dated on 9/7/2023.

Tamilnadu, was brought into train him. Not only that, the artisans also received a stipend of Rs.75 per month during training⁶.

3. Temporary training centre: Such training arrangements were undertaken with the active cooperation of District industrial centre. Through such training, 10 artisans were trained in 1984-85, 22 artisans were trained in 1985-86 and 68 artisans were trained in 1986-87.

Table 3, Artisans training through Bankura DIC 1984-87

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Terracotta	5	5	
Dokra		7	14
Stone carving		5	5
Balchari sari	5	5	10
Brass and bell metal			5
conch shell			5
Wood carving			12
Playing card			7
Garland made of woods			10
Total	10	22	68

Source: Zilla Silpa Kendra, *Bankura Zillar Kutir o Khudra Silpa 1987*, (Zilla Silpa Kendra, Bankura, 1987) p.4.3

Based on the information obtained, it can be assumed that many artisans were benefited by arranging such training through the state Government and Bankura DIC. Seeing the artisans who received training, many artisans became interested in training to improve their skills.

4. Provision of mobile training centres: Many times the artisans could not stop their production of handicrafts and receive training. So the instructors went by car to the remote villages of the district industrial center and arrange to train the artisans in the villages⁷.

5. Susanhata Mritsilpa Prasikhan prakalpa : A scheme called integrated pottery scheme was taken up for the development of pottery in Bankura district. The successful implementation of this project was for the development of terracotta industry at Panchmura in Bankura district. 4,00,000 rupees was spent by the West Bengal State Government for this in 1986-87⁸.

Workshop on handicrafts design and its application methods: Workshops were organized in 1986-87 to make the various handicrafts produced in Bankura district more attractive to buyers. 10,000 rupees was spent by the DIC of Bankura for the successful implementation of this workshop⁹.

6. Financial Assistance Scheme : The state Government sometimes provide necessary capital to the artisans to encourage them in their art work. Through this project, weavers of Sonamukhi police station

⁶ Achintya Jana, *Bankura zillar arthanitite loksilpa*, (Rarh Academy, Bankura, December 1994) 27.

⁷ Personal interview collection from Prasun Nayak, Bankura DIC, dated on 12/8/2020.

⁸ Zilla Silpa Kendra, *Bankura Zillar Kutir o Khudra Silpa 1987*, (Zilla Silpa Kendra, Bankura, 1987) p.4.4.

⁹ Ibid p.4.4.

of Bankura district received a grant of 34,12,141 rupees from 1972-74¹⁰. Also a grant of Rs.18,310 was made till 24th February 1978-79¹¹.Based on the information obtained, there is no doubt that many artisans of bankura district have benefited at various times through this project.

7. Supply of scarce raw materials: Handicrafts usually used the raw materials of the industry like silk, conch, copper, brass, etc. In the event of shortage of all these necessary raw materials, arrangements were made to supply them under Government initiative by the West Bengal State Government. There was a system of giving subsidy from the Government for this. For example, in 1978-79,9 lakh rupees,19 lakh rupees in 1979-80 and 78 lakh rupees in 1980-81 were given as raw material to conch artisans¹².Based on the data obtained, it can be assumed that the amount of raw material provided through Government grants has increased subsequently. From this it can also be assumed that the artisans subsequently became aware of the Government privileges and they were also able to avail these privileges. Also the number of takus of West Bengal Co –operative spinning mill at Srirampur was increased from 6600 to 25,000 to supply low cost yarn to the weavers. A spinning mill with 25000 spindles was constructed at Barjora in Bankura district¹³.There is no doubt that the state government has always tried to supply raw materials at low prices for the development of handicrafts.

8. Supply of electricity required for artisans: District level local advisory Committee was formed by the Eletricity department under section 17 of the Eletricity supply Act in 1948, to ensure that the artisans get the electricity they need for their industrial work. The General Managers of District Idustrial Centers were members of this committee. The purpose of this Act was to bring under the power connection those organizations which were without electricity connection in the district¹⁴.Even electricity prices were reduced so that artists could use electricity properly.

9. Financial assistance for construction of houses and workshops for artisans: The poor weavers were specially helped by the state Government to build their houses. Between 1985-86 and 1987-88, 1876 houses were constructed. In 1988-89,a plan to build 1000 houses was adopted. For this, the State government provided financial assistance of Rs. 9000 per house¹⁵.Based on the information obtained, it can be assumed that, then state Government had a view of humanity towards the artisans, so this kind of policy was adopted.

10. Production and screening of short films:

In order to make handicrafts more popular, a few short films was made and shown by the state government.

Table 4, Short film produced by Government

Title of the short film	Production year
Banglar Madur Silpa	1962-63
Bastra Silper Nabadiganta	1972-73

¹⁰ *Assembly proceedings official report* ,West Bengal legislative assembly, Calcutta,vol.56,no iii,1976,pp.646-648

¹¹ Ibid. vol.70,no ii,1979,pp.567-68.

¹² Ibid.vol.70,no ii,1979,pp.567-68.

¹³Ibid.vol.79,no ii,1983,pp.1246-47.

¹⁴Ibid. vol.83,no iv,1985,p.906.

¹⁵ Ibid. vol.90,no iii,1988,pp.32-33.

Ceramics	1972-73
Doll maker of Krishanagar	1968-69
Eutu shilper kahini	1961-62
Kansari	1959-60
Lokshilper teracottai Ramayana	1962-63
Puruliar chow	1969-70
Sankho o sandhani	1961-62
Shilpay nari	1960-61

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal legislative Assembly, Calcutta, Vol.73, No. I, 1982, pp.722-726

Among such short films were notable. About 50 such films were produced after independence, which helped the common people to gain knowledge about handicrafts and create a market for them¹⁶.

11. Arranging exhibitions and prize giving. Handicraft competition was organized every year in the month of October to encourage the artists for the development of handicrafts in West Bengal.

Table 5, lists of awarded artisans

Artans name	Awarded year	National/state	Industry
Biswanath Khan	1987-88	national	Silk weaving
Shyama Nandi		national	Conch shell
Laxmi kanta Nayak		national	Conch shell
Pasupati Kumbhakar	1982-83	state	teracotta
Dhirendranath Kumbhakar	1986-87	state	teracotta
Jayanti Kumbhakar	1997-98	state	teracotta
Taraknath Kumbhakar	1994-95	state	teracotta
Budhadeb Kumbhakar	1985-86	state	teracotta

Source : Field survey investigation

A total of 12 artists were first awarded at the district level and later they participated in the state level competition. An important step in the development of handicrafts in the state after independence was the establishment of the museum. The award recipients were initially awarded four Rs 250 and four Rs 150 and four Rs 100. At the state level, the artistes used to get awards of Rs 1500, Rs 1000 and Rs 500 respectively¹⁷. State level artists could later participate in national level competitions and would be rewarded if successful.

12. Organizing seminars and workshops:

Several seminars and workshops were organized by the state government for the development of handicrafts. Through such seminars and workshops, the artists discussed their daily problems, how to increase the sales market of the produced medicine and how to improve the quality of handicrafts.

¹⁶ Ibid . Vol.73, No. I, 1982, pp.722-726.

¹⁷ Liflet collection from Bankura Dic on state level Handicraft competition, 1989.

Table 6, seminar/Workshop in Bankura

Seminar/Workshop	Dated	Place
Seminar,sub: Bankura Zillar Tantider Samassya	4 th April,1992	Bankura
Wokshop sponsored by Tantushshree,Institute of Jute Technology and Rajagram co-operative weavers society	6 th April,1993	Rabindrabhaban, Bankura

Source: *Samabay Sambad* ,Pratham Sankhya June 1992,p.8,Ditiya Sankhya, September 1993,Bankura, pp.5-6.

13.Pension Grant Policy:

The state government had formulated a policy to grant pension to the artisans for their future security. As a result of this, on the one hand, the sincerity of the artists towards handicrafts was created and on the other hand, many people benefited from the security of their future life. The government's adoption of this policy benefited artists in two ways. The artistes awarded by the state government had the opportunity to receive awards from the state government. As a result, apart from the one-time financial assistance, the artists would get lifelong pension benefits after the age of sixty.

Table 7,Prominent among such artists Pension holder are

Artisans name	For which industry	Pension amount
Sankar Das	Weavers artisans	1,000
Arun Das	Weavers artisans	1,000
Nanda Kumbhakar	Teracotta	1,000
Helaram Kumbhakar	Teracotta	1,000

Source: Field survey investigation Panchmura,Bhalukbansa,Bankura.

14.Financial assistance from the government for construction of houses and workshops for artisans.

The poor weavers were specially helped by the state government to build their houses. A total of 1873 houses were constructed between 1985-86 and 1987-88 with the active support of the state government. And in the next year 1900-89 also a plan to build 1,000 houses was accepted by the state government. For this, financial assistance of 9,000 rupees per house was given by the government¹⁸.Based on the information obtained above, it can be assumed that the then state government had a humanitarian vision towards the artisans, so such a policy was adopted.

15.Emergency grant:

The West Bengal government used to provide financial assistance to the handicraftsmen in spite of natural calamities like drought, flood etc. For example, during the flood in 1978, artisans in Bankura

¹⁸ Op.cit., *Assembly proceedings official report* Vol.90,No. III,1988,pp.32-33.

district faced a lot of damage. In order to protect the artisans from this loss, a policy of financial assistance was also adopted by the State Government.

Table 8, Financial assistance in 1978 flood for Artisans of Bankura district

Panchayet samity	Amount as a grant
Bankura i	3,85,911
Bishnupur	1,88,836
Barjora	63,586
Chhatna	1,88,618
Gangajalghati	1,74,443
Indus	30,350
Indpur	4,59,216
Khatra i	14,400
Khatra ii	20,871
Kotulpur	33,169
Mejia	19,306
Onda	2,54,343
Raipur i	11,370
Raipur ii(Sarenga)	33,962
Patrasayer	27,429
Simlapal	1,05,500
Saltora	5,256
Sonamukhi	86,433
Ranibandh	14,400
Taldangra	2,20,426
Bankura ii	1,54,079
Total expenditure	24,91,898

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal legislative Assembly, Calcutta, Vol.72, No.v, 1980, pp.513-514.

The money due to the Panchayat Samiti was again divided among the various Gram Panchayats. For example, the amount due of Indpur Panchayet Samity was Rs.4,59,210¹⁹.

Table 9, Grants distribution of Indpur panchayet samity

Grampanchayet name	Amount received
Raghunathpur	94,700
Indpur	1,88,270
Hatagram	13,150
Gourbazer	10,200
Bhaduasole	1,13,355

¹⁹ Ibid. Vol.72, No.v, 1980, pp.513-514.

Brajarajpur	11,655
Brahmandiha	27,800

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal legislative Assembly, Calcutta Vol.72, No.v, 1980, pp.513-514.

Handicraftsmen of Bankura district benefited greatly from receiving such financial assistance. But this money was distributed among local people by local political leaders or panchayat members. They mostly adopted the principle of sajan poshan or putting the close people first. Those who were associated with opposition political parties were also deprived in various ways. However, there is no doubt that many weavers enjoyed this privilege.

Artisans also received a grant of eight thousand rupees for building and repairing the workshops of those engaged in the work of brass and brass industry²⁰.

16.The West Bengal State to the Industries 1931:

Poor artists usually could not raise any guarantor for taking loans from banks. In 1968, according to this act, artisans could take loans up to 400 rupees without needing any guarantor. According to this law, DMs could give loans up to 5000 rupees for which security was required. Also, cooperative societies could take loans up to 10,000 rupees. 3 lakh 43 thousand 845 rupees was given to Bankura district between 1957-58 and 1964-65 through this act. In 1964-65, a grant of 1, 49,052 was given to the handicraftsmen of Bankura district as a result of which 604 artists were benefited. 1,00,282 rupees was given as advance till 31st March 1965 in Bankura district²¹. As a result, many more artisans benefited. The expenditure incurred by the Government of West Bengal through this scheme was as follows

17.Subsidized donation scheme:

Through this scheme, both the state and central governments provided financial assistance to artists. Through this scheme 9 entrepreneurs received assistance of 2,82,929 rupees from the central government in 1985-86. An aid of Rs.1, 71,815.92 was given by the State Government by which five artisans were benefited²².

18. List of loan recipients from various commercial banks, West Bengal Financial Corporation and NSIC:

Through these schemes 101 artisans received financial assistance in 1985-86 and 100 artisans received financial assistance in 1986-87²³. Below is a list of some of the artisans who have benefited from them.

Table 10, Assisted artisans

Artisans name & address	Handicrafts name	Helped amount(Rs)
Bhajan Kaity, Kenjakura, Bankura	Brass and bell metal	12,500
Bhaskar Kaity, Kenjakura, Bankura	Brass and bell metal	12,500
Bangsi Kaity, Bishnupur, Bankura	Brass , bell metal and german silver	9,000

²⁰ Personal interview collection from Pradip Kuchlyan, Chhabra, Onda, Bankura. dated-14/08/2024

²¹ Op.cit., Amiya kumar Banerji , p.277.

²² Op.cit.zilla silpa kendra, pp4.8-4.10.

²³ Ibid., pp.4.10-4.17.

Asoke Kumar Karmakar, Bishnupur,Bankura	Brass , bell metal and german silver	9,000
Dilip Karmakar, Bishnupur,Bankura	Brass , bell metal and german silver	9,000

Source: Zilla Silpa Kendra ,Bankura Zillar Kutir o Khudra Silpa 1987,(Zilla Silpa Kendra,Bankura ,1987)p.4.10-4.17

Through this scheme, many artisans of the district used to get low interest loans.

Also, at that time many artisans tried to get loans from here so that they could not get loans from any other ²⁴place. An important step in the development of handicrafts in the state after independence was the establishment of the museum.

19.Establishment of museum:

These exhibitions were first held at the district and later at the state level. A museum called Karu Angan was established in Kolkata's Salt Lake with the active support and grant of the West Bengal State Government. The main task of this institution was to collect works of art created from ancient times to the present day and arrange to display them to the public. The adoption of such policy by the state government made the artistes interested in doing better work. There is no doubt that due to the adoption of such a policy by the government, Bankura i.e. West Bengal has greatly enriched the handicrafts of West Bengal. As a result, there is no doubt that the market for the sale of handicrafts has also increased a lot.

20.Marketing system:

Many institutions were created by the Government to sell handcraft products more, among them Manjusha, Tantuja, Tantushree etc.

Manjusha: This organization was established in 1976 by the Companies Act,1956 of the Department of MSME&T. This institution used to supply raw materials and necessary equipments to the artisans in different places of West Bengal and sold their products in Different parts of Bengal and India²⁵. An account of the sale of Manjusha is given below-

Table No. 11: Sell of Manjusha

Year	Net sale
1985-86	33,28,00,000
1986-87	41,00,00,000
1987-88	41,09,00,000
1988-89	65,58,00,000
1990-91	40,54,70,000

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal legislative Assembly, Calcutta vol.90,No.ii,1988,p.768 &vol.98,no.iv,1991,pp.278-79.

²⁵ Personal interview collection from Prasun Nayak ,Bankura DIC,Dated on 12/8/2020.

²⁵ Op.cit. *Assembly proceedings official report*,vol.90,No.ii,1988,p.768.

Tantushree: It is also an organization under West Bengal State Government which used to sell handloom fabrics as well as readymade garments in exhibitions. In 1994, this organization had 77 permanent marketing shop. The sales counter of this institution were Ballyganj, Dakshinapan, Shyambazer, Sealdah, Maniktala, and outside west Bengal including Delhi, Tamilnadu, Tripura, Bihar etc.

Table 12, Sell of Tantuja

year	Sold amount
1985-86	10,54,00,000
1986-87	12,50,00,000

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal legislative Assembly, Calcutta vol.90, No.ii, 1988, p.768.

Paschimbanga Khudra silpa Corporation: This organization is also an important institution for selling handicrafts of West Bengal. The sales volume of this organization was as follows-

Table 13, Sell of Paschimbanga khudra silpa corporation

Year	Sold amount
1976-77	639.98 Lakh
1977-78	438.68 Lakh
1978-79	803.48 Lakh
1979-80	1437.61 Lakh
1980-81	1600.00 Lakh

Source: *Assembly proceedings official report*, West Bengal legislative Assembly, Calcutta, vol.74, No.iii, 1981, p.676.

21.Organizing the fair: The GOVT. of West Bengal organized several fairs for the promotion of Handicrafts.

1. Dakshin Kolkata Tant and Kutir Silpa mela, Busdroni ,Kolkata.
2. Saradiya Mela, Busdroni , Kolkata.
3. Loksanskriti utsav, 23-26 February 1989, Jhilimili, Bankura.
4. Bishnupur Mela, Bankura, Every year 25th December -1st January²⁶. There is no doubt that the market for the sale of handicrafts has greatly increased due to the organization of such fairs by the Govt.

Conclusion:

Finally I feel that the artisans of Bankura district have benefited a lot from the adoption of the above measures by the state Government of West Bengal. Having these facilities made the artisans interested in doing better and more work. As the artisans performed well, their income also increased. As artists' incomes increased and they sought to improve their personal lives, local markets centred around artists' villages. In his way the economy of Bankura district is gradually progressing towards development.

²⁶ Field survey investigation Bishnupur mela, Bishnupur ,Bankura, Dated on 27/12/2023.