





## CONTENTS

- About Daricha Foundation  
Page 3
- Year in Review  
- Highlights & Achievements  
Page 4
- Financial Sustainability  
Page 10
- Looking Ahead  
Page 10

A magnificent six-foot Durga and her family carved by master artisan Uttam Bhaskar of Natungram, Bardhaman

*Patachitra of Manasa on front cover reproduced with the permission of the artist, Seramuddin Chitrakar of Naya, Pashchim Medinipur. All rights reserved by the artist.*

## ABOUT DARICHA FOUNDATION

Daricha Foundation was established in reaction to our vanishing folk arts and the paucity of knowledge and awareness of both the arts and its practitioners. It was registered as a not-for profit Society in April 2013 and followed up in February of the following year, with the launch of [www.daricha.org](http://www.daricha.org), an authentic, in-depth, content rich online knowledge portal, promoting the rich heritage of our folk and tribal arts. This was at a time when there was practically no online presence for structured, in-depth information on our folk and tribal culture.

Founded by Ratnaboli Bose, the society's Secretary, the members of Daricha Foundation's governing body are Goutam Ghose (award winning film maker) - President; Jaideep Ganguli (management consultant) - Treasurer; Subir Das (chartered accountant & Clean Energy activist); Prattyush Banerjee (Indian classical musician) - Assistant Secretary; Subir Datta (retired professor); Prosenjit Dasgupta (author & folk researcher) and Anandi Ghose (film maker).

Our mission has primarily been to document, disseminate and promote public consciousness of India's folk and tribal art and culture. We feel that in creating awareness, we help create demand and ultimately, revitalization, by connecting artists with potential buyers, researchers, organizers et al on both national and international fronts. It is also our mission to help create sustainable and dignified means of livelihood for artists through activities that help revive and promote their arts.

We decided to focus on West Bengal, our home state, to begin with and our small organization has continued to research and document this state's folk and tribal arts, especially genres that are vanishing or have received less exposure. Our web portal is an online multimedia folk encyclopedia of sorts, which features to-date over fifty different folk and tribal art forms. We plan to not only maximize representation of West Bengal's folk arts on our portal but to also gradually introduce glimpses from other states, a little at a time, until we can, with the necessary resources, attempt to simulate the West Bengal model, for other states.

Over and above the art forms we document and disseminate through our portal, we showcase an artist each month on our portal and have connected artists with researchers, buyers and event organizers through our portal. We have also been documenting various aspects of Santal culture. We plan to increasingly focus on such activities in the coming years.

For the past couple of years we have been organizing workshops cum training programmes primarily in the villages, taking a step forward in our goal to help preserve traditional knowledge. We also have begun to market, in a small way, some of the products made by Santal women and other crafts persons, primarily through our Instagram page.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Key Highlights & Achievements

With the COVID lockdown extending into the new financial year and accompanied by the trials and tribulations associated with it, our activities were pretty much restricted to begin with. Our field trips to document various traditional rural arts and artists and to conduct workshops in villages had entirely stopped for the time being. That is when we decided to stay in touch with our artists by trying to showcase their products on social media. Our vehicle for this was our Instagram page.



Chho masks of Ganesh and a traditional "Kamranga" Krishna by Falguni Sutradhar of Chorida village, Purulia



Lampshade crafted from sholapith by master artisan Ashis Malakar of Bardhaman

As a result of our efforts via Instagram, we were able to interest buyers in a variety of folk products including sholapith, patachitra, painted wooden dolls and carved wooden figures, chho masks and sherpai bowls.

Mr Ludwig Pesch, Secretary of Amsterdam based Tribal Cultural Heritage in India Foundation, and a musicologist, educator and musician has long appreciated our efforts on Santal documentation and shared many links from our website on the Foundation's web pages. In May, he invited us to an online

meeting with members of the Foundation and those of the Arnold Bake Society along with Mr Boro Baski of the community-based organization Ghosaldanga Adibasi Seva Sangha in Birbhum. The President and Treasurer, Elisabeth den Otter later wrote to us complimenting us on our puppetry videos which she said were well done and informative. Elisabeth is a specialist in the performing arts (music, song, dance, puppetry) of non-western peoples, as well as audiovisual anthropology.




Since the Covid lockdown last March, 64 year old Brindaban Chanda, the last lac doll master craftsman in West Bengal, has been struggling to make ends meet. In desperation, he even began working as a daily wage earner, cleaning roads under the MGNREGA scheme. It broke our hearts when we heard this.

To support Brindaban in a small way, and to keep his art alive, we are offering a set of three beautiful lac dolls for Rs 500/- only. Sales in India only. Shipping extra. Please inbox us for details.

Make a gift today.

In August, we came to know that Brindaban Chanda, the last of the lac doll artists and an artist we often collaborate with, was in dire straits and had been compelled to seek work under the MGNREGA 100-day scheme. But the hard manual labour proved too difficult for the master artist and he had to give up. We decided to help out.

We put together a poster on Instagram, requesting people to buy a set of 3 lac dolls for Rs 500, shipping extra. Our service of organizing, packing, boxing etc was gratis. There was a good response and we managed to give Brindaban over Rs 10000 in addition to the cost of his dolls. Sales continued over several months.

A master wood carver from Natungram, Bardhaman had been requesting us for a while to help him sell a six-foot Durga that he had made before Covid struck. Being made of expensive gamhar wood, he was in considerable difficulty with so much money blocked.

It took us a few months of asking around, until we found a collector in Bangalore who wanted delivery by pujas – giving the artist less than 10 days to add the final touches, make a special



wooden box and ship. Needless to say, both buyer and artist were happy, as were we. And Durga reached her new home exactly on the day of Ashtami.

In December, before Christmas, we decided to help a shola flower maker, by placing an order of shola fairy lights and flowers. Sales though by word of mouth, were fairly brisk and brought some succour to the artist's family.

In October, we received a request from the Bangalore based the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP) to use a clip from our Sohrai Likhna documentary on Santal wall paintings. Permission was granted and they kindly made a donation to go towards the Santal women.

Master glove puppeteer Ramapada Ghoroi was our Artist of the Month for November on our portal. Promoted as usual on our social media pages, this led to several requests for him to perform at winter weddings in Kolkata. Rampada, accompanied by his dhol player, Ajoy Ghoroi kept the wedding guests entertained on a lovely December morning. The remaining performances sadly had to be cancelled on account of Covid. Later in February, we also got him to perform at the Sasha store at one of their monthly events. We have been helping market our Santal artisans' leaf ornaments through Sasha for some years now.



February also saw us finally on a field visit after a hiatus of two years. Our destination - Bankura district. Our purpose was to document some Santal instruments not commonly used by the Santals and specific to only a few regions. We had also wished to document the Jadupatuas who live on the Susunia Hills, but the elders in the village refused permission at the last minute.

Our first stop was to Hijoldoba village in Onda block where the men make the Buang, a one string fiddle made using a dried calabash gourd, and played specifically at the Dasae festival. They demonstrated the process from scratch and ended the day with a performance. Though Dasae is celebrated across the Santal community, all the musical instruments that are used to accompany the dances are not the same. The Buang is used only in some regions. It emits a deep drone like sound when the string is struck.

The Sarpa is another instrument that is specific to some Santal regions. It is a percussion instrument used in a women's dance, also called Sarpa. The women play the Sarpa and dance at the same time. We visited Jharia village in Taldangra block and documented both the making of the instrument and the performances and songs.





The basic form of the Sarpa. The women later decorate this with tinsel paper and small bells



The Sarpa dance performed by the women of Jharia village

We also visited Kripamoyee Karmakar, Pata Durga artist at her home in Bonbirsingha village, Patarasayer block. Bankura has a unique tradition of Pata Durgas – paintings of Durga which are actually worshipped in the temples of the Malla rajas. While Kripamoyee paints every year in a particular style for the Rajeswari temple at Jamkuri, for descendants of the Malla kings, Sital Fouzdar, renowned for his hand made Dashabatar playing cards, too paints Pata Durga for the Mrinmoyee temple at Bishnupur, for another branch of the descendants of the kings. Three paintings are made on the eve of Durga Puja each year by the artists and handed over to the family in a ritual manner. Pata Durgas are also found in a few villages in Birbhum.





Kripamoyee Karmakar displays a copy of the Pata Durga for the Rajeswari temple

Our final stop was at the dhokra village of Bikna where we observed artisans at work and interviewed master artisan Dhiren Karmakar.



Dhokra craft on display at Bikna village

In March, we were requested by Sushila Birla Girls' School to facilitate an online workshop for their students. We chose two performing artists, Rampada Ghoroi, the glove puppeteer and Amar Singha from Darjeeling district who demonstrated the dotara and Sarinda instruments, specific to North Bengal. The session was much appreciated by students and teachers alike.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Daricha Foundation commenced operations with donations mainly from its members and their families and well-wishers and continues to do so. This and small grants continue to be our chief source of sustenance. This past financial year however, because of the Covid related situation, funds were sparse and we had to plan our activities very creatively.

However, with the economy gradually opening up, we hope to be able to take up new projects and resume our fieldwork. With our Section 12AA Registration under the Income Tax Act, 1961 and approval to receive donations eligible for Section 80G deductions under the Income Tax Act, 1961, we hope to receive enough donations to help us continue our work in the following year. Meanwhile, small donations from friends and family have kept us going with regard to the running of the website and documentation work for it.

## LOOKING AHEAD

With the pandemic hitting us hard, our future plans will necessarily have to be fluid and need based. What we would like to achieve over the coming years continues to be:

- Facilitate workshops by master artists/artisans at the grassroots level, within folk and tribal communities, to help preserve the legacy of traditional knowledge. In particular, we hope to be able to conduct workshops for the last Sherpai artisan.
- Resume field trips, particularly to villages of lesser known ethnic communities who are gradually losing their identity.
- Collaborate with organizers of fairs and festivals so that craftspeople/performing artists find newer opportunities
- Consider direct marketing of folk and tribal crafts either through our own portal or an existing e-commerce platform. We will also look at connecting with domestic craft stores.

