



Promotion of Tourism Through The Rich Folk Culture of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

India with its unique cultural diversity and rich cultural tourism components invites a great number of tourists to visit India. All the Indian states is remarkably good in their cultural representation, thus West Bengal is one of them with rich cultural tourism product. Folk culture creates authenticity and distinctiveness in the global and regional tourism market. Tourism experiences which can connect people and visitors to local cultures are very important in this regard. All folk art and culture forms of West Bengal are ethnic in nature. They remain within a particular geographical region – Bhadu and Jhumur of Bankura, Jhumur and Nanchni of Purulia are the finest example. Folk culture tourism also encourages the continued recognition of culture as economic drivers by local, regional tour operators, local people and tourism marketing organizations. This paper examines how folk culture tourism allows producers and performers keep their trends alive through increasing revenue. This paper also explore the folk and cultural tourism destinations in west Bengal which are managed by folk art hubs and performing artists for preserving and promoting their valuable cultural resources and how folk cultural hubs and villages can be created by taking special initiative and support by several Self Help Groups, banks, cooperative societies, State Government.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic, Resources, Authenticity, Distinctiveness, Experiences

Introduction

Tourism is a worldwide phenomenon. Tourism as an industry has been growing with the pace of technological advancement and people from different countries and cultures are interchanging their views and life styles among themselves. The positive effects of tourism on a country's economy always includes the growth and development of several industries directly associated with tourism industry, such as accommodation, transport, adventure and wild life, arts and culture. This creates new jobs opportunity and revenue generated from foreign exchange earnings, investments and payments of goods and services provided towards the tourists. As tourism has many segments, and the oldest form of tourism is religious tourism which had paved the way of forming tourism as a product.

Cultural tourism is one of the growing sector in the tourism industry and has become more popular after the World War II when people grew more interest in knowing others culture and life style. India with its unique cultural diversity and rich cultural tourism components invites a great number of tourists to visit India. All the Indian states is remarkably good in their cultural representation, thus West Bengal is one of them with rich cultural tourism product. Over the years, the culture of West Bengal has emerged as the perfect blend of modernity and traditions. Bengal donates to the creation of identity is ethnicity. All folk art and culture forms of West Bengal is ethnic in nature. They remain within a particular geographical region – Bhadu and Jhumur of Bankura, Jhumur and Nanchni of Purulia are the finest example. The myths of a certain region form the plot and story of these art forms. These art forms are the totality of the cultural experiences of particular regions. And they are highly popular and religious. Various cultural groups who helped them rise beyond time. Until we mention the tribal population of Bengal the discussion will be incomplete. A large variety of tribes found in almost all the nooks and corners of the state, and adds an exquisite flavour to its culture. About 38 types of tribes which are nearly 2% of the entire population of West Bengal can be seen in this state.

Culture and Folk culture

According to Greet Hofstede '*Culture* is the collective pro-

gramming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values (<http://changing-minds.org/>). A culture is a way of life of a group of people, the behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Folk culture actually is a localized form of culture refers to the identity of a folk group. Folk culture conventionally means products and practices of a group of people who share at least one common factor—be it a language, caste or occupation. As for example, people of a certain district or a certain area or place of a state adherent of a particular religious sector or people belong to a particular occupation. The folk culture is manifested in song and dance, storytelling and mythology, everyday artefacts and clothing, food, habits, social customs, work practices such as farming, craft production and religion. Researchers and collectors from the later 19th and first half of the 20th centuries formulated a notion of "the folk" as relatively untouched by the modern world and of folk culture as precious survivals and relicts from bygone cultures transmitted orally down through the generations (<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/>). Therefore, folk culture is often associated with tradition, historical continuity, sense of place, and belonging.

Importance of folk culture

Folk culture is related to folk people and it may be called as people's performances. This term actually means to perform arts and traditions of a region or state. Folk culture includes folk dance, rural drama and musical variety of the village people. Traditional folk culture just not only describes dance and music, it also includes art and crafts. Indian folk performance is a fine art and it's a creation of art by the fusion of elements from music, dance, versification, epic ballad recitation, religion and festival. It includes ceremonials, rituals, beliefs and the day to day image of the social system. It is just only a glimpse of music, dance, dress and rituals of the people in rural set up. The collection of great mythological heroes, sweet medieval romances, day to day social customs and rituals, people's

beliefs, and great legends are the subject matter of it. As the themes of folk culture are derived from the local forms of art, it is nearly to the hearts of the local people, and appealing and popular to the other people of the world also. These forms are performed by the local people for their own entertainment and necessity and it is also important for social communication and prevention of ancient culture of the region.

Role of folk culture in tourism promotion

Folk culture creates authenticity and distinctiveness in the global and regional tourism market. Tourism experiences which can connect people and visitors to local cultures are very important in this regard. Theme of destinations is also linked to specific folk cultural events which may also play a role of catalyst in the development of tourism. Any product may be man made or nature made, it is not valued to the tourists until it has any cultural importance. Folk culture builds a cultural value and strength and helps marketing the product. It emphasizes the quality and authenticity of the visitor's experience and attracts more tourists to the destination. It also conveys the richness and diversity of a place or culture and meets the visitor's demand and knowledge. Folk culture involves both visitors and host community at the same time and it has a power of creating a new form of tourism without any high capital investment with its dynamic and changing nature. It may develop interpretation programs designed to inform, educate and interest visitors for the various parts of the world and can minimise cultural exploitation by creating awareness among the host community about their own folk culture. It has a great potential for generating income in a particular region and can be one of the prime tools for community development. On the other hand, preservation of traditional folk culture can be done with help of promoting folk tourism as local community starts understanding values of their culture when appreciated by visitors from various countries.

Classification of folk culture of West Bengal

Folk culture of West Bengal is derived from the experiences, customs, traditions, practices and beliefs of particular communities of different parts of the state. Enriched with cultural ingredient and practices of such things West Bengal has an enormous source of cultural tradition, belief, art and performance which can be used as a promotional tool for tourism. The most ancient culture which is not only aboriginal but also a kind of recreation helps us understand the socio-economic situation of our ancestors. Bengal is of course a great source of folk culture and traditions. Here some classified folk cultures of West Bengal are given which carries its own glory throughout the years.

Folk Music: Bengali folk music especially folk songs can be lyrical or subjective. Most of the tunes are limited to the notes of half an octave, some times pentatonic or else confined to two to four notes or "charan" only, which mainly depicts the day to day life of rural people. These all folk music or songs can be classified into below types, and the details of them are given below.

Devotional Folk Music: Being a religious land of Gods and Goddesses West Bengal has a deep impact on devotional songs which influences and enriched folk music. Some of them are described in the foregoing section.

Baul: Baul, came from the word *batul*, means mad. These are "initiates into esoteric practice, who, although they know and some times sing song, do not depend on music for their livelihood. It is perhaps the most famous and well known folk music of Bengal (Openshaw, 2002)". The songs are meant to find god in one's inner self, not to search for any religious places. The singers are called Baul and the songs are called Baul song. The lyrics are highly spiritual and devotional with sweet and sonorous tone. A baul can often be identified by their saffron coloured clothes (*alkhalla*) and the musical instruments carrying by them (*ektara*) which has only one string. Lalon Fakir is considered as the most important and influential poet and lyricist of the baul tradition. In 2005; the baul tradition was

included in the list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Kirtan: The Kirtan is the earliest form of music which consists of sonorous mingles of sweet music and lyrical ballad. Slow measure in ballads is delivered by the main singer of the group and recitation of the same, in same tone and pitch, is defined musically by the rest of the members. The trend follows until the whole song based mostly on mythical episodes or story of God are completed with the same zest and enthusiasm. The musical instruments using by the *kirtania* (performing group) are *Tampura*, *khol*, *box harmonium* and *violin*. In west Bengal most of these kind of famous and popular songs, known also as *harinam*, based on lord Krishna and Radha.

Fakiri and Sufi: Fakiri music is a genre or song based on Sufism and sometimes inspired by Fakirs. This genre is generally meant as an expression of devotion to Allah-the supreme power, but it also can be a way to enhance the connection between the physical and spiritual aspects of the Preacher and his followers. Many fakiri orders perform this style of music in a variety of sub-genres during special ceremonies. Most of these kinds of songs are related to Nabi, the preacher, and his followers.

Vadu: Bhadu Puja is observed in the Bengali month of Bhadra (mid-August-mid-September) and is a very common festival of the villagers of Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum and some part of Paschim-Medinipur. "People believe that worshipping Bhadu Devi enables childless women to bear children. With this belief the women sing Bhadu songs and worship (<http://westbengal-tourism.gov.in>)". Vadu songs are composed and sung on the night of the festival; consider vadu as a little girl. The unmarried girls are sung vadu song with drum.

Tusu: Tusu is a folk festival where the village unmarried girls sing tusu songs during tusu parab. This is celebrated in the month of Paus, in mid January. Tusu songs are sung for whole night of 'Makar Sankranti', the end day of Paus. Women exchange garlands and fry eight varieties of pulses which are given as an offering to the goddess Tusu. A temple like structure, popularly known as "Tusu" made by the unmarried girls are carried to the nearby riverbank accompanied with traditional tusu song and drum.

Social Folk music

Baromasya: Baromasi (song of twelve months) is one of the important branches of folk literature. Baromasi or Baromasya is so called because in these songs the description of apathies of twelve months of the deserted heroine whose husband is in abroad placed chronologically (<http://academia.edu>). "Fullorar Baromasya" and "Behular Baromasya" are the most famous of them. These songs describe the socio-economic condition of the then society throughout the year.

Kabigaan: Kabigaan is a form of Bengali folk singing performance in which the folk poets sing and perform by themselves consequently. It is usually sung by two groups and each group led by a *kabiyal* or *sarkar*-the main singer. The rest singers of the group are called *dohar*, and they repeat in chorus what the main singer have sung. A kabigaan performance starts with a *bandana*-the praise. The *bandana* is sung to praise gods and goddesses like Ganesh and Saraswati, as well as to people, and the audience, or the patron to *kabiyal*. This is followed by a song on the Radha-Krishna theme. Then four subjects: *sakhi sambad*, *biraha*, *lahar* and *khaur* come one by one. In climax, the competition properly starts; in *kabir larai* (fight between poets through songs). Two *kabial* asking questions and giving answer each other in the form of songs, which they themselves compose instantly. A number of *kabiyals* became very popular and famous in Bengal; some of them are *Gonjla Guin*, *Lalu-Nandalal*, *Raghu* and *Ramji*. We can also say the name of famous 19th-century *kabiyals* of *Kolkata* - *Haru Thakur*, *Nitai Vairagi*, *Ram Basu*, *Mukunda Das*, *Bhola Moira* and *Anthony Firinghee*.

Community Folk Music

Bhatiyali: Bhatiyali is one of the most popular folk songs of rural Bengal. The Bhatiyali songs reveals the rich cultural golden era of Bengal. The soft and mellifluous musical composition of the Bhatiyali folk songs brings to us the talents of the not so famous and familiar composers of West Bengal. The word “*Bhatiyali*” means “*Bhata*” - the low tides of the sea and the river. During Bhata or low tide phase, the banks of the river become wider. Bhatiyali songs are generally created orally and sung by the *Majhi* or *Mallahs*, the boatmen and the fisherman of the river. They use to miss their near and dear one on the endless monotonous rivers and sing Bhatiyali songs with a sad tone. Bhatiyali is usually sung solo and not in groups. Abbasuddin Ahmed is one of the singers who collected them and sung and recorded many Bhatiyali songs.

Bhawayya: Bhawayya is a folk musical form popular in the districts of Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, parts of Darjeeling and North Dinajpur in West Bengal. It is a saying that Bhawayya songs origin is in Cooch Bihar area of West Bengal. This folk song is usually sung in a rustic colloquial dialect of Bengali. The particular colloquial language in which most Bhawayya songs are structured is Rangpuri, and “*Rajbongshi*”. The most prominent feature of Bhawayya songs are its typical tonal structure in which the reflection of demographical condition, phonetic and ethnic characteristics and social condition of the region can be found (<http://carnatica.net>; <http://wbpublibnet.gov.in>). Bhawayya songs are mainly sung in time of ploughing for harvest.

Folk Dance

The folk dances of West Bengal hold a special place in Bengali culture. They complement the beautiful culture of the state, by their colourfulness and festivity. Initially, the folk dances were either agricultural or devotional. Gradually, the agricultural dances gave place to dances more inclined towards devotion and religion.

Devotional Folk Dance

Incense Dance or Dhunuchi Nach: Incense dance, mainly known as ‘Dhunuchi Naach’, is a popular dance of West Bengal performed during Durga Puja. The dance has originated from some rituals of balance with *dhunuchi and* performed during Durga Puja. The speciality of incense dance is it is done with effervescent smoke. The incense dance is also called as devotional folk dance in a puja pandal where performers as well as rest participate with equal fervour. Men, women, old and young, everyone dances to the rhythm of dhak that are played along with the incense dance.

Gambhira: The Gambhira dance of West Bengal is one of the popular dance it is being performed by the people who worships Shakti. This dance has derived its name due to the reason that it is being performed at the hall of dance of Chandi Mandir that is called as Gambhira. This dance is being performed over the song bearing the same name. This dance is being done basically by the two dancers who are covered by the chorus. One of these dancers performs as ‘Nana’ (maternal grandfather) and the other one performs the role of the ‘Nati’ (the grandson). The dress of the dancer who plays the role of the Nati is around his ankles in the form of the string of bells. The two dancers basically use the dialogues and express the feelings that show their indulgence in the economic, moral and the social concerns that is about the problems of the society and the culture. The catchphrase of this song is being repeated by the chorus of the people standing behind those two dancers. The musical instruments that are being used during the Gambhira dance are harmonium, drum & flute (<http://bharatonline.com>)

Social Folk Dance

Jhumur: Jhumur is a special type of social folk dance of West Bengal. It can be either performed by a men or by a women or they can perform together. This dance is performed with the help of drums and cymbals in the month of Chaitra in mid April. The other type of Jhumur, known as Chaitra Jhu-

mar, is performed only by women during the special occasion of transplanting paddy. Rice being the chief crop of Bengal, the paddy transplanting is considered as auspicious and very important by the farmers and cultivators. Most of the lyrics are derived from the mythological stories of RadhaKrishna and many other such folk heroes.

Chang: The dance performed by the aboriginal tribe Lodha and Shabar is called ‘Chang’. It is generally held during worship, marriage and sometime during funerals also. A small drum like musical instrument is ‘changu’ and the name Chang has derived from it. Five to Seven Lodha male artists participate in it with their traditional attire. They dance in encircling from evening to midnight in a rhythmic sound of Chang.

Bhung Dance: It is a popular and beautiful folk-dance of the Santals. During Durga Puja specially in the the Vijaya-dasami is the auspicious day for Bhung-dance. It is said that only the male artists wearing dhuties on knee, napkin around waist, red tape in unpolished hair and feathers of peacock on head can dance Bhung. It starts from afternoon and continues till night. This dance is named after a peculiar musical instrument called ‘Bhuang’. The Bhuang is made of pumpkin.

Karam Dance: Karam dance is not so popular folk dance of West Bengal. It is basically an agriculture related festival and it is performed in the time of cultivation. This dance is usually performed by the tribal communities like Oraon, Munda, Santal and Ho. The people of the communities have the belief that by the blessing of the God “Karam” they will get a huge amount of crops and their family will be saved from evil. It is said that this dance form have some mystic powers whereby the crops would be protected from everything and would yield huge productions. The Karam dance is celebrated in August on the night of “Bhado Ekadasi”.

Community Folk Dance

Santhali Dance: The Santhals, like some other state of India, are the important part of the folklore of Bengal. The Santhali dance performed by the community is famous in the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Malda and Burdhaman and Paschim-Medinipur. Dance is an inseparable part of all festivities of the Santhal community followed by instruments like the Madol, Flute, Dhamsa, Jhanj, Kartal. Dances are usually performed on a fullmoon night. The dance is connected with the celebration of certain rituals. The dancers stand in a line holding hands and move to the rhythm of the madol.

Ranpa Dance: The dance is a very rare dance of West Bengal. In ancient Bengal the gang of robbers used to walk with the help of ranpa, made of two long and strong bamboo-stick. Now the artists use ladder made of bamboos while dancing. The attire of folk artists are dhuties, red-napkins, red-tape on the forehead and stockings on their feet. Madol and dhamsas are the main musical instruments for performing the dance.

Kathi Dance: Bratachari Dance or Kathi Dance is a popular folk dance performed in the West Bengal. A beautiful hand and leg coordination is the main key feature of dance. The dance earlier served as the revival of Bengal culture but now it is celebrated for mere amusement and joy of the performers and the audiences.

Martial Art Folk Dance

Raibeshe Dance: Raibenshe dance is a special form of Indian folk martial dance popular in the West-Bengal. Rai means royal, kingly and bansh or bansha means bamboo and the name derived from it. This dance is exclusively performed by men who belong to the bauri and dome community of West-Bengal. This dance is a popular pastime of these communities and this dance reflects their way of life very closely. In the earlier days, Raibenshe dance was performed by Bagdi community, who worked as the bodyguards of the zamindars in medieval Bengal. Presently, Raibenshe dance is mostly performed in the western regions of Birbhum, Bardhaman and Murshidabad.

Chhou: Chhou Dance is one of the most renowned tribal martial dances of India with vigorous movements and leaps. This dance performed with a musk made up paper pulp. Some masks are small and some are too big. The theme is religious or epic story which the perform with a heroic dance with swords, bow and shield and arrow. It can be performed solo or in a group, but the story of Rmayana and Mahavarat are most popular. The dance is known as Seraikella Chau in Jharkhand, Mayurbhanj Chau in Orissa and Purulia Chhou in West Bengal. Since the dance is supposed to have originated in the Purulia district of Bengal, it is known as such in the state. Purulia Chhou danced differs quite a lot from its counter-

parts from other states of India and has distinctive characters of its own. It is internationally renowned for its beauty and perfection (<http://bharatonline.com>).

Lathi Dance: Lathi dance of West Bengal performed on Muharram. This dance depicts the feeling of remorse and anger, associated with this Muslim festival. During the first ten days of Muharram, the Lathi players display their art at several places, like road and country yards. The final performance of the Lathi dance is done at the Karbala ground, with 6-8 feet long bamboo stick, angled with metal tip, which is used like a sword during the performance.

Folk Culture of Bengal (district wise)

Folk Form	Type	District of Performance	Related Festival	Celebration Time
Baul	Song	Birbhum	Poush Mela, Shantiniketan / Jayadeva	Makar Sankranti of Poush (December)
Kirtan	Song	All over south and middle bengal specially in Nodia district	Janmastami and Asstaprahar shatanam of lord Krishna	Maninly on March-April
Vadu	Song	Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura	Vadu Parab	Mid august mid september
Tusu	Song	Purulia, bankura, Birbhum	Tusu Parab	Last day of poush/Jan
Baromashya	Song	North & South Bengal	-----	-----
Kobigaan	Song	All over south and middle Bengal	In major festivals it is performed all over the state	Any time of the year
Bhatiali	Song	South 24 parganas and Koch Bihar	-----	Any time of the year
Bhawayia	Song	Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, parts of Darjeeling and North Dinajpu	In rainy season time of cultivation	Any time of the year
Dhunuchi Naac	Dance	all over Bengal	Durga Puja	Specially in the month of September or October
Gambhira	Dance	Malda	Shib ratri or Chandi puja	January or February
Jhumur	Dance	Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura and Burdhaman	Jhumur festival	Bengali last month Chaitra
Chang	Dance	Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura and Paschim Medinipur	Any tribal community's celebration	Any time of the year
Bhung	Dance	Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura and Paschim Medinipur	Durga puja specially bijaya dashami	Specially in the month of September or October
Ranpa	Dance	Middle and North Bengal	-----	Any time of the year
Raibeshe	Dance	All over Bengal	Any famous festival or cultural programme	Any time the year
Bratachari	Dance	All over Bengal	Any famous festival or cultural programme	Any time the year
Chou	Dance	Purulia	Any famous festival or cultural programme	Any time the year
Lathi	Dance	All over Bengal	In the occasion of Muhharam	Mid October or early November
Jatra	Drama	All over Bengal	Any famous festival or cultural programme	Any time of the year
Putul Naach	Dance	All over Bengal	Any famous festival or cultural programme	Any time of the year

Folk Theatre

Jatra: Jatra, the most popular folk theatre, is performed by travelling troupes of Bengal performing traditional theatre at various places. The Jatra is performed both for entertaining and educating purposes. The chief organizer of the troupe has an immense role to play in the team management and is famously known as Adhikari. In a jatra many musical instruments are used for giving back ground music and in time of songs.

Natok (drama): Natok is one kind of theatre-drama performed in Bengal. The performers act on a small story or they took a social situation and perform a short presentation. This art form may be conclude in one act or may be followed by two or three-four acts.

Dance Drama: Dance drama is another form of folk culture of rural Bengal. Usually it is related with some spiritual saga of Folk Deities like Shtala, Manasha and Chondi. Known as Manasa mangol, Shitola mongol these dance drama are performed in front of the deities as an offering ritual. 'Bisha-Hara Pala' or Manasa Mangal reveals the story of Devi Manasha - the Serpent Goddess and Behula - a pious wife who had lost her husband - Lakhindar due to snake bite on her marriage night.

Putul Naach: Putul naach (puppetry) is a traditional art form of West Bengal and a very ancient form of theatre. A putul made of bamboo, wood etc is a joint venture of strings and sticks of different part of the body. A puppetry band has one main singer followed by the instrument players like clarinet, flute, dhol and kansi. The putul are different types like dang (rod) putul and tar (string) putul. Except Darjeeling district putul naach can be found all over West Bengal. This 14th century old tradition is performed with the story of great epics or story of God and Goddess. "It is interesting to note that puppetry in Bengal is known as a Putul Nach (doll dance), with an emphasis on operatic singing and performance of a folk play. The dancing and the acting elements of the performance hinge on the traditions of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, with the epic themes being made totally assimilated in the climate of Bengal. In fact, all imaginary or romantic allusions outside the Bengal life have never found place in the puppetry here. Putul Nach is more drama than dance – in fact, a small and cheap edition of Jatra (folk play) (Ghosh and Banerjee, 2006)."

Patachitro: Patachitro or pater gaan is one of the ancient arts of West Bengal. The word pat came from the Sanskrit word patta which means cloth. In patachitra the pat-artist draws colourful pictures in a scrolled long cloth using natural colour

made from various trees, flowers, leaves, seeds and clay. The painter, called as patua, unfurls the pot painting and sings a song to show it to his audience. The sweet story telling song sung by the patua is called pater gaan. The main theme of patachitra is mythological story of God and Goddess and tribal rituals. Patachitra is famous in the district of Purba Medinipur and Paschim-Medinipur. One of the important patachitra is founded in Kalighat also known as Kalighat pat (<http://midnapore.in>).

Folk Deities of West Bengal

Shitola Maa: One of the most famous folk goddess in West Bengal is devi Shitola. This deity worshipped on the dry season of winter and spring in the rural villages of Bengal. Shitola, the goddess of small pox, is accompanied by his subordinate Jorasur(fever demon), Ghantu debota (god of skin disease) and Raktabati (the goddess of blood infection). "Sitola was commonly represented as seated on horseback. Small pox is identified with this goddess across much of, Northern India, where she is known as Sitala and often simply as Mata (Raghubir, 1942-99)"

Manasa Maa: Manasa, also Mansa Devi, is a Hindu folk goddess of snakes, worshipped mainly in West Bengal chiefly for the prevention and cure of snakebite and also for fertility and prosperity. (Roy, 2010). This goddess is popularly known all over the Bengal and worshipped in time of April to August.

Dakkhin Roy: The honey collector and fishermen's of sundarban used to face many problems in their day to day life and among them the most dangerous problem is- man eater the tiger. Earlier the habituated with the belief that the Gazis and Fakkirs can shut the mouth of the tiger. Then the son of Dandabaksha Dakkhin Roy came in the delta to protect man and

Folk Deities	District Observed	Related Festival
Shitola	In all districts	Shitala Puja & Festival
Manasa	In all districts	Manasa Puja & Festival
Dakkhin Roy	South 24 Parganas	After harvesting December to January
Banabibi	South 24 Parganas	Poush sankranti or basanta panchami
Bhim	Purba & Paschim Medinipur	Bhim Mela
Sasthi	In all districts of Bengal	Twelve Sasthi Puja in every month in all parts of Bengal.
Olaichandi	In all districts of Bengal	-----

Folk Museums of West Bengal

Gurusaday Museum, Kolkata: The Gurusaday Museum is a treasure trove of Folk and Tribal Arts and Crafts of West Bengal. The museum was founded by Bengal Bratachari Society in 1961 with 2325 items and it is situated in Joka. It has a collection of over 3300 exhibits of folk arts and crafts, showcasing the vitality of rural life, its social traditions, religious beliefs, motifs and cultural influences of West Bengal.

Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Heritage Museum, North Bengal University: The Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Heritage Museum is situated in the University of North Bengal, Siliguri and it was established on February 1965. This museum is also incorporating Raja Rajaram of Museum Collection. It functions as a regional museum and is one of the few University Museums in India.

Archaeological Museum, Tamluk: Tamluk museum and research centre was founded in 1975 with the primary objective of preserving the rich cultural heritage of Tamluk and its adjacent local regions. The museum has gained fame in the realm of terracotta art from the Sunga, Kushana, post Gupta and Pala periods. Another interesting object on display is a Roman amphora, indicating the trade contacts of this region with the Roman Empire. The main attraction is it has a collection of Patachitras – colourful scroll painting depicting puranic and mythical stories.

Amulya Pratnashala, Hooghly: This museum has on display a wide collection of wooden and stone sculptures, coins, terracotta's, manuscripts, old books, dokra, folk art and paint-

women of the area. But some time this God took the shape of a tiger and the legend of Banabibi spread into the society as allah, the almighty, sent her to protect people (Bera and Sahay, 2014)

Banabibi: Banbibi is the famous goddess of south 24 parganas mainly in sundarban who protect people through her supernatural power from all sorts of unusual incidents and happenings. "The offering made to the banabibi is known as hajat, which consists of fruits, batasha, parched rice and puffed rice. Both Hindu and Muslims and also other communities accept the offering as Prasad. The main thing of annual worship of banbibi during pous sankranti or basant panchami-the day of saraswati puja during falgun, is to be read 'Ban Bibir Johurnama' as panchali from back side to the front side as is done in Urdu literature(Bera and Sahay, 2014)."

Satyapir: Barkhan Gaji/Gaji sahib is another presiding deity of tigers of sundarban. He is also regarded as 'pir or saint'. He considered as the protector of jungle goers who have regular concern with the forest (Bera and Sahay, 2014).

Sasthi: Popularly known as Sasthi Thakuran is also a folk deity who makes her place in every home in West Bengal. It is believed that this deity is the protector of newborn babies. Especially Bengali mothers are very much fond of this deity (Roy, 2010).

Maa Olaichandi: She is the goddess of cholera is worshipped by people in the region of West Bengal. The goddess is also known as Olaichandi, Olabibi and Bibima. She is venerated by Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. She is also known for plague, eye problem and cattle disease (McDaniel, 2012).

ings on wooden plates (rath fragments) along with the personal collections of Rabindranath Tagore, P C Roy, Jagadish Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru and other eminent persons, and objects and documents of Indian independence struggle.

Ethnographic Museum, Kolkata: Ethnographic Museum was established in 1955 in Ultodanga, Kolkata. This special museum was built by the Cultural Research Institute of West Bengal government. Objects on view include hunting tools and equipment, fishing gears, dresses and ornaments, utensils, furniture, spinning and weaving aids and also objects relating to art, religion and 'magic'. It stores photograph and tape-records of folk music depicting lifestyle of the tribes of West Bengal (<http://daricha.org>).

Conclusion

Tourists who are now-a-days interested in folk culture and customs tend to have money and are more willing to spend for it which actually supports a trend towards less – intensive and experimental kinds of activities. This form of tourism also creates benefits for the tour operators along with the host communities. Apart for the profit maximization, it improves the quality of life for all. Folk culture tourism also encourages the continued recognition of culture as economic drivers by local, regional tour operators, local people and tourism marketing organizations. Enhancement of academic knowledge of the tourists along with capacity building activities with regards to traditional performance is the other beneficial outcome of this tourism. Folk culture tourism allows producers and performers keep their trends alive through increasing revenue, and new generation becomes interested in learning production method

as they understand the importance of it. Thus, prefers to accept and develop these forms as the way of future occupation. Folk and cultural tourism destinations which are managed by folk art hubs and performing artists can easily target preserving and promoting their valuable cultural resources. Many folk cultural hubs and villages can be created by taking special initiative and support by several Self Help Groups, banks, co operative societies, State Government. The approach is very innovative as it really helps developing community led cultural tourism trails and promotes folk art, culture and tradition.

It really brings a means of livelihood to the local people by preserving their tradition and culture which are at risk of obliteration. A proper strategy of formation of self help groups (SHGs) with folk performers and their subsequent capacity building to become rural entrepreneurs who are running

micro business farms named as Folk Art Business Hubs offering folk performances and cultural tourism as their products and services will be fascinating and appreciable. The precious art forms were getting obsolete because of rapidly changing lifestyle and lack of traditional patronage and interests. Those artists and performers were not seeing any opportunity to practice their art forms as they were busy involving in various occupations to meet their necessary requirements of life, the initiative of promoting folk cultural tourism will rejuvenate the art forms and will bring a new hope to the folk art performers who belongs to extremely poor and backward communities of West Bengal.

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