

Cultural Crisis, Deteriorating Heritage, and Placemaking: A Study of Rural West Bengal, India

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Abstract

'Culture' denotes the co-shared beliefs, values, ethos, norms, lifeworlds, and activities commonly represent nature-culture reciprocity. In several remote areas of India, folk culture still breaths within its age-old life world. Against this backdrop, the southwestern part of West Bengal, also known as 'Jangal Mahal' has been studied in the present research. In this area, approximately 40% of the population directly depends on indigenous sources of livelihood, and they belong to tribal communities like Mahato, Kurmi, Lodha, Santal, Bauri, and others. These native people are culturally distinct and are identified through their folksongs and dance forms, such as Tusu, Kirtan, Baul, Bhadu, and folk dances, such as Chhau, Khati, etc. However, urban spaces and citizens' choices for entertainment have brought about considerable changes in the culture and life of these people. Resultantly, with the increasing pace, deterioration in the heritage and culture of such groups seems to set in. Thus, this study highlights the changing scenarios of cultural crises, deteriorating heritage values, and placemaking. We have followed participatory methods, including field observation, interviews and group discussions. And a door-to-door survey was conducted in the 12 villages of four districts with a semi-structured survey schedule. Sixty troupes were selected for interview and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). The findings show that values and cultural practices change over time, thereby losing their identity. The placemaking of popular culture results in a deep crisis in livelihood and lifestyle. People are slowly adopting other modes of earning, which further threaten their culture. This study aims to suggest suitable ameliorative measures to preserve the pristine cultural art forms and safeguard livelihood and skill sets.

Keywords: Folk Culture; Indigenous Livelihood; Global Village; Heritage; Placemaking; Regional Identity; West Bengal; India

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Introduction

Cultural norms in any society play a significant role in transmitting traditions through numerous forms that create prominent exposures in every individual, group and community. Each form of cultural practice generates diversity among communities and places. Its expression acts as a medium to implement the fundamental rights of each person, which leads to the realisation and enjoyment of all kinds of cultural rights. As an abstract entity, culture encompasses knowledge of both the present and past. It is a primary carrier of modernity and contemporary values that serves as a receptacle for Aboriginals' voices and feelings. The study of a culture assists in showcasing and exploring a region's areal differentiation and cultural assimilation dynamics. This cultivates an associated echo of past human civilisations. In this light, the current research focuses on this crucial aspect of globalisation¹ against the traditional folk culture, primarily in *Jangal Mahal*, a southwestern forest-covered plateau fringe region of West Bengal. In this region, various ancient and traditional folk songs such as *Kirtan*, *Bhadu*, *Tusu*, and *Baul* along with different folk dances such as *Chhau* and *Khati*, are practiced. These cultural activities are fundamental to the group's identity and its members. Some studies have documented that human being use culture in interactions (Goffman, 1974; Sharma, 2021). Though the rituals and traditional performances are carried out, folklores remain in the backdrop forming the ground for their performance. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1988) stated that, as defined by Charles Francis Potter, folklore is *a lively fossil that refuses to die* (Kapp, 1994). Folklore shares an inseparable ground with social history. These types of folk religious beliefs are undergoing a sweeping transformation within their indigenous forms, often completely evaporating from the surface of the culture in the current era of civilisation. In

amalgamating multiple cultures where new cultural practices influence the old ones forcing them to change or disappear, these beliefs are experiencing a '*cultural crisis*' and thus gradually losing their originality.

We, human beings, live collectively in an interdependent world that is full of innumerable cultural diversities. The cumulative process of globalisation can be widely experienced all over the globe. Each territory has its own cultural landscape replicating the close interaction between the local people and their natural environment for a long time (Lieber & Weisberg, 2002). In many parts of West Bengal, ethnic people still directly rely on nature. The cultural norms and methods are transmitted as oral traditions through several generations and local *Akharas*. An '*Akhara*' is a traditional formal institution where Guruji teaches young learners Lalan Fakir's *Baul* song in a rural setting. These cultural landscapes exhibit diverse types of cultures (Debnath, 2020). Multiple cultural landscapes clubbed with recent thoughts show an irrevocable connection in terms of their cultural heritage. They form a complex and rich cultural gamut of different resources closely interlinked with a person's life. However, there is a complication of the flow of traditional earnings. This has an enormous impact on the lives and lifestyles of ethnic people (Dey, 2012).

The wave of countercultural song traditions of Western nations has impacted Indian culture immensely. Against this backdrop, the villages were essentially and expansively projected as representations of reality and became the epicentres of modern music consumption. By the 1960s, the Nehruvian vision of nation-building and communal harmony overshadowed the socioeconomic challenges and *rock music* (Bhatia, 2014; Chattopadhyay, 2021). Therefore, in recent times, several folk art forms have been facing many problems. Cut-throat competition exists between the folk and mixed forms (fusion). This hybrid form, however, includes

¹ The authors want to draw attention to the harmful effects of globalisation on heritage culture. It exemplifies how contemporary mainstream culture is gaining traction and dominating the market of traditional folk culture by exciting urban audiences through fascinating performances.

numerous assets of localised compounds or landscape features. Most of the cultural songs in *Jangal Mahal* convey their cultural history, the intellectual and traditional knowledge that runs for ages among communities or families. But, it seems that this regional culture is undergoing transformation. The young generation is getting influenced by the novel, innovative ways of popular culture, inviting a shift from the traditional practices of the native people and gradually placemaking of popular culture. This study, therefore, proceeds in this direction by answering the following questions: (i) How does the placemaking of new popular culture happen? (ii) What kind of challenges do they face? (iii) And how can the young generation adapt to folk culture?

This study evaluates the above factors, especially in the context of the *Jangal Mahal*, and attempts to see how the traditional livelihoods and lifestyles of such cultural groups survive in the wake of modernisation and globalisation.² Some works have tried to document several aspects of the livelihood and community living of *Mahato, Kurmi, Lodha, Santal, and Bauri* (Cardinale, 2019; Debnath, 2020; Konar, 2010). Nevertheless, a dearth of literature addresses the crisis of livelihood and how these tribes' strategies to tackle the crisis. Our study thus attempts to throw light in this direction by focussing on the above research questions. The new and mixed culture especially Westernised popular culture, and the cultural invasion can bring about changes and introduce practices that disrupt the economic foundation on which folk cultures depend. The present study on the cultural landscape of *Jangal Mahal* in rural West Bengal unravels the day-to-day issues of marginalised artists affiliated with numerous folk troupes and traditions (Ghosh, 2011). Rich value systems, dignity both inside and outside their locality, growing aspirations, and the fear of abolishment or extinction of old regional culture are being examined in the current study. Some suggestive measures are

given to safeguard the age-old rich culture of the rich with diversity.

The study's trajectory is as follows: we started with conceptualising the significance of folk culture and its centrality in the cultural heritage of a group. We then proceed to explore the connection between life and livelihood of the tribal communities *Mahato, Kurmi, Lodha Santal, and Bauri* of *Jangal Mahal* and read the underlying challenges in the process of placemaking as popular culture. We then briefly discuss the methods of data collection, and the population composition, simultaneously acquainting our readers more with the area and population who practice *Chhau, Baul* and others in the *Jangal Mahal*. Here, we discuss qualitative techniques to understand the sustenance system and crisis of the ethnic people of the area. The analysis section reveals livelihood sources from cultivation, folk dance and performances of the respondents. The result and discussion show the trend of the proliferation of traditional old folk songs, searching for livelihood options, and the government's role in securing the heritage culture. Then we suggest the 4R strategy to tackle the cultural identity crisis and suitable measures to preserve the traditional cultural forms and save the livelihood of ethnic people. Lastly, we conclude that the current trend of re-mixing cultural or folk songs with various instruments limits the scope of performance for folk troupes. As a result, the troupes are losing their much-valued space in terms of audiences and, consequently, their sources of earnings, which aids their identity, cultural and economic crises.

The major objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study why the younger generation abandons practising *Chhau, Baul* and other folk art forms.
- To examine the role of globalisation in culminating cultural crisis.

Research Methods

In this study, participatory methods were employed to understand the sustenance process

for the placemaking of heritage culture. That induced to change the heritage as a form of cosmopolitan culture.

² Modernisation is the way to adapt 'new popular culture', and globalisation supplies the materialistic supplements

of the respondents. This method helps to make a holistic analysis. A bottom-up approach is employed in it. The participatory methods include field observation, interviews and group discussions. This method helps to promote interactive learning and the spread of shared knowledge (Lahiri-Dutt & Samanta, 2005). Initial observations and focus group discussions (FGDs) facilitated the questionnaire draft. The researchers conducted a door-to-door survey in 12 villages from the selected four blocks of the four districts with a semi-structured survey schedule. Both primary and secondary sources of data were referred to. Several field visits were conducted from October 2018 to January 2021 to gather preliminary datasets from the selected folk.

Interviews were conducted with 60 participants aged 30-55 years from the 12 villages of the four CDBs of Binpur-II, Garhbeta-II, Sarenga, and Baghmundi. Five troupes were selected from

each village, and FGDs were held with them. The FGDs were organised at the village Chorida in Baghmundi CDBs, a famous local rural market for *Chhau* Mask in rural West Bengal. Besides, several small group discussions were conducted with all 60 troupes in the selected villages and blocks. These discussions focussed on various aspects of livelihood, recent crises, and causes of vulnerability of the respondents. Each small group comprised eight to ten participants. Five small group discussions were arranged in all. These discussions were done informally, and the participants were informed about the research objectives. We had written the questions in English. However, during the interview, we communicated with the respondents and participants in Bengali. Moreover, the authors recorded their responses in English on the survey schedule. We tried to save time this way, avoiding translating and transcribing from Bengali to English.

Table 1: Block and Village-Wise data on *Chhau*, *Baul*, *Kirtan* Troupes

| Districts | Blocks | Village | Folk Art Forms | Troupes |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| Purulia | Baghmundi | Chorida | <i>Chhau</i> | 5 |
| | | Ajodhya | <i>Chhau</i> | 5 |
| | | Alkusi | <i>Chhau</i> | 5 |
| Bankura | Sarenga | Asna | <i>Baul</i> | 5 |
| | | Jambani | <i>Baul</i> | 5 |
| | | Sarulia | <i>Khati</i> | 5 |
| Jhargram | Binpur-II | Darra | <i>Baul</i> | 5 |
| | | Ergoda | <i>Kirtan</i> | 5 |
| | | Hada | <i>Chhau</i> | 5 |
| Paschim Medinipur | Garhbeta-II | Dhitingi | <i>Khati</i> | 5 |
| | | Kakdaha | <i>Kirtan</i> | 5 |
| | | Dhabani | <i>Kirtan</i> | 5 |
| Total | 4 | 12 | 4 types | 60 |

Source: Authors' Compilation

This study was conducted in the 12 villages of 4 *Jangal Mahal* (JM) districts in the southwestern part of West Bengal. This area presents a culturally rich tribal landscape with diverse folklore, songs and dance forms. This region is located in four districts of West Bengal (that is, Purulia, Jhargram, Bankura and Paschim Medinipur). These districts rank among the least

developed, underprivileged ones in the fourth largest state of India. A significant part of the tribal population of West Bengal resides in the *Jangal Mahal*. Large deep sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests are adjacent to Jharkhand state and Chota Nagpur Plateau. For data collection and analysis, information from four community development blocks—CDBs (Baghmundi,

Binpur- II, Sarenga and Garhbeta- II) was collated from the four districts of *Jangal Mahal*. The study area is depicted in Figure 1. The region contains about one-fifth of the tribal population

of West Bengal. Furthermore, about 45% of the study area's population belongs to tribal communities such as *Mahato, Kurmi, Santal and Bauri* and others.

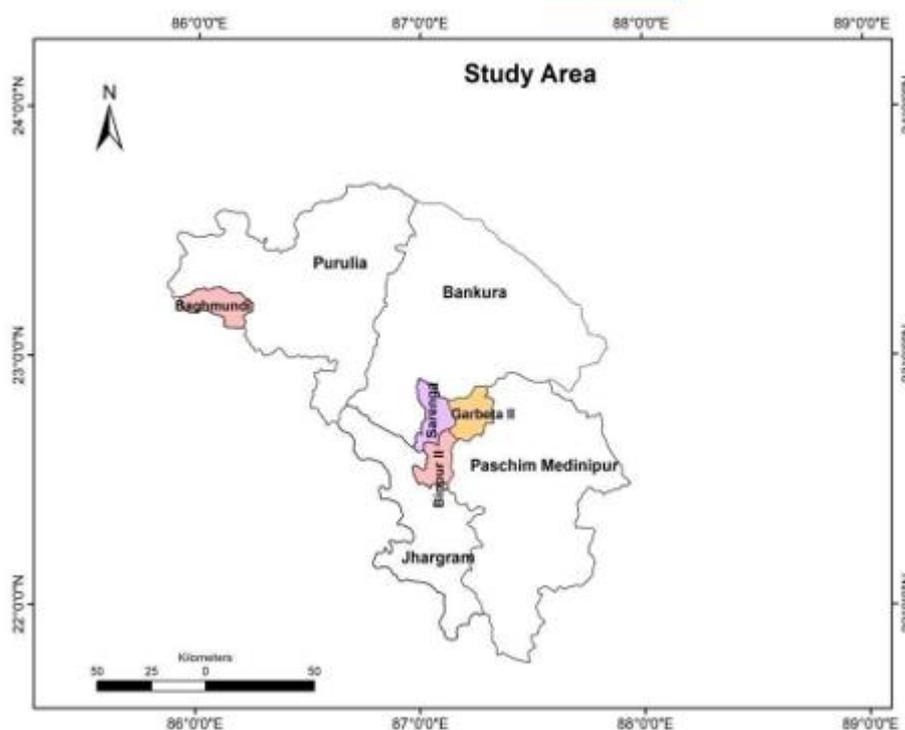


Figure 1: Study Area of *Jangal Mahal* Region in West Bengal

Source: Prepared by the Authors

Demographic Features of the Area of Study

The population composition for each CDB has been highlighted to obtain a transparent outlook of the study area. Besides, this study used data

- Baghmundi Community Development Block (CDB) is located on Ajodhya Hill (712m above sea level) in the Purulia district of West Bengal. The CDB has a population density of 320 persons per sq. km and an area of about 427.95 sq. km. The proportion of scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) populations is 10.36% and 25.11%, respectively, of the total population of the entire block. The block has 27.45% of the population working as cultivators (Table 2). Agricultural labourers constitute about 47.93% of the total population; 22.50% of the people in this CDB do not have fixed jobs. From this CDB, we studied three villages of Chorida, Ajodhya and Alkusi.
- Sarenga CDB is situated on a rugged geographic terrain in the Bankura district of West Bengal. Sarenga CDB has a population density of 470 persons per sq. km. The block spans an area of about 228.07 sq. km. SCs form approximately 29.21% of the population; furthermore, 19.11% relate to STs. In the block, agriculturists form 22.35% of the total population; agricultural labourers constitute about 57.25% of the population of the CDB. Also, 17.20% of the people lack any fixed occupation.
- Binpur-II CDB is situated near Sarenga CDB in the Jhargram district. It has a population density of 280 sq. km and an area of about 583.50 sq. km. The proportion of the SC and ST populations is 15.77% and 39.95%, respectively, of the total population of the CDB. Further,

27.79% of persons in the CDB hold *pattas*.³ The number of agricultural labourers and marginal farmers is 47.32% and 19.70%, respectively (Table 2), of the population of the block. From this block, we studied three villages—Asna, Jambani and Sarulia.

- Garhbeta-II Community development block is located in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal. Its population density is 280 sq. km, and an area of 583.50 sq. km. The proportion of the SC and STs is 26.48% and 19.99%, respectively, of the district's total population. Table 2 shows that 30.31% of people in the block hold *pattas*, 39.44% are agricultural labourers, and 23.90% of the population are marginal farmers. Data was collected from 60 respondents from 12 villages. These respondents were closely linked with *Chhau*, *Baul*, *Kirtan* and *Khati* art forms (Table 1). Detailed information was gathered from each folk troupe in all three surveyed villages of Dhitingi, Dhabani and Kakdaha (Table 1). The respondents were divided into two age groups: 17-35 and 36-64. This was done to collect diversified data from all sections that may be relevant to this study.

| Community Development Blocks | Patta Holders/Small Farmers (%) | Agricultural Labourers (%) | Marginal Farmers (%) |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Baghmundi | 27.45 | 47.93 | 22.5 |
| Sarenga | 22.35 | 57.25 | 17.2 |
| Binpur-II | 27.79 | 47.32 | 19.7 |
| Garhbeta-II | 30.31 | 39.44 | 23.9 |

Source: Census of India Abstract, 2011

Socio-Cultural Aspects

The native people face marginalisation in terms of resource availability and consumption. Due to natural hindrances, the allotment of per capita cultivable land in the region is less than one acre because of various natural hindrances, geographical reasons and locational barriers. This makes it extremely difficult for the people to sustain adequately in the backward region of West Bengal. Distinct traditional and professional troupes perform different folk arts across India, including folk songs and dances (*Chhau*, *Baul*, *Khati*, *Jhumur*, etc.). The folk artists perform with traditional instruments, such as *Dhamsa*, *Madol*, *Khol* and *Ektara*, using their traditional attires. These cultural activities contribute to an essential source of earnings for the people. But the people are experiencing a crisis after the 2000s due to the non-availability of adequate livelihood. Against this backdrop, the current study examines the reasons and suggests solutions and ameliorative measures to

improve the lifestyle and financial position of the people of *Jangal Mahal*.

The Cultural Overview of the Study Area

The Jangal Mahal region, in the southwest part of West Bengal, is home to numerous rich folk cultures. These cultural practices are more prevalent in its forest-covered hilly areas. The tribal people in this region have kept their traditional art forms intact by practising various songs and dance rituals, painting and crafts. These art forms and cultural practices are thematically connected with nature and depend on different elements they get from nature. Over the past years, this area started experiencing technological advancement, paving the way for current trends that clash with pristine folk cultures and invite ignorance of cultural practices (Ghosh, 2011; Mishra, 2012). While studying the region, the following cultural properties of this vast, unique landscape came to light:

³ West Bengal Land Reforms Amendment Act (1979) significantly reduced rural poverty by giving land ownership to the landless and sharecroppers; these people are recognised as *bargadar*. This programme was accomplished by changing landownership with government intervention— Operation Barga, which is called *patta* (entitlement deeds) land.

- The existing landscapes are central to the historical and cultural viewpoints of its indigenous tribes.
- The artistic and cultural practices of the people represent a holistic image of their heritage.
- The art forms exhibit the multi-layered structure of interrelation between the social actors and the environment.

These factors carry a remarkable role in chronicling the cultural history of the study area.

Popular Folk Artists of *Jangal Mahal*

Among the notable folk singers, Purna Das Baul, Jatin Das Baul and Sanatan Das Baul have won many prestigious awards, including the Padma Sri and President of India Award given to some of them. They have even performed on international platforms. Another illustrious artist and tribal dancer, Gambhir Singh Murahas too, enriched the *Chhau* dance.

Movements Related to Safeguarding Folk Culture

In the past, the people of the *Jangal Mahal* region stood united to protect themselves and their cultural heritage vociferously. They launched several movements to safeguard and preserve their cultural and regional identity. The Santhal Hul movement (1855) and the Bratachari movement (1932) are two such social movements. The Santhal Hul movement encouraged indigenous peoples to protect their culture and traditions against deterioration and disruption. The spirit is alive via folklore, such as songs, poems, and plays. The Bratachari movement aimed to instil in people—regardless of caste or religion— a sense of universality and a purpose of national consciousness, promoting traditional and folk culture. Figures 2 and 3 show the *Chhau mask* and performance by the artists of *Jangal Mahal*.



Figure 2: *Chhau* Mask

Source: Collected by the Authors



Figure 3: Chhau Performance by the Artists of Jangal Mahal.

Source: Collected by the Authors

The Placemaking of Popular Culture

Tribal communities inhabiting this disadvantaged, inaccessible, socially secluded and backward region perform folk and popular culture shows. The regional differentiation due to the heterogeneous societies is conspicuous across the *Jangal Mahal*. In small troupes, people practise the age-old popular dance forms such as *Baul and Chhau*. They sing songs with dance performances nationwide to sustain their art and generations and earn their livelihood. Many folk troupes perform in remote, inaccessible areas of West Bengal and display specific socioeconomic characteristics. Both modernisation and globalisation have adversely impacted people's livelihoods in the thrust areas because new types of popular Western cultures, songs and dances are pushing the old traditional art forms to oblivion and posterity (Lieber & Weisberg, 2002). This leads to a conflict between the two art forms of ancient and modern folk dances. Furthermore, the artists face an identity crisis due to an upsurge in 'new popular culture in which songs are sung on beautifully decorated stages with modern dance forms. These performances are directly connected to the global citizens of any country or region through the media, internet and other accessible modes of communication and transportation. With the

increasing urbanisation trends and satellite revolution, indigenous culture faces a severe threat and seems on the verge of extinction. The authors explained how Popular culture is more likely to transmit global values across the people, pushing age-old cultural traditions to the periphery (Dey, 2012; Mishra, 2012). This research discusses this predicament in detail in the following paragraphs. We have highlighted two ideas—

- Attraction and toleration
- Synchronal impulses toward differentiation and assimilation of other cultures.

The spurt in the number of *Bauls*⁴ without spiritual training jeopardises the marginalised *Bauls in rural areas*. They learn the dance under two *gurus* viz. *Diksha* (It means offering the initiatory mantra by *gurus* (masters)) and *Siksha* (The search for the realisation conducted by the worshipper)). *Siksha guru* conducts the worshipper in his search for realisation (Dimock, 1989) as Radha, Krishna's beloved." The "principles of the human body" such as *dehotattvo* (The human body's principle), *premtattvo* (declaration of spiritual love), *Gurutattvo* (the focus of the spiritual preceptor) and *Guhyattvo* (direction of esoteric) are

⁴ The performers of mystical folk songs, wearing a ragged alkhalla (saffron robe), an orange-clad nomad, and playing ghungroo and dotara.

cherished the most. During this stage, *Bauls* perform at the follower's discretion. A *Sadhok Baul*, as a typical artist, consciously interacts and holds up his agency (Debnath, 2020). History started repeating in West Bengal, primarily after the late 1960s. Amateur *Bauls* started claiming reincarnation as *Silpi Bauls*. The late 1970s and 1980s witnessed massive transformations, and Western culture started making headway. The "Minstrels of Bengals" as the ascetics, associated themselves closely with secularism, equity and humanity. *Sadhok Bauls* roamed around (Appadurai, 1996). The traditional *Baul* folk music and current practices of *Sadhok Bauls* have undergone a drastic transformation. Other musicians also endeavour hard to gain popularity among the youth to expand their mass base amid the cultural onslaughts and fusion (Salomon, 1995; Debnath, 2020). Some modern musical bands and groups of singers sing *Baul* songs to attract a wider audience. Several uses of modern musical instruments such as keyboards, guitars (acoustic and bass), drumming kits, etc., for making fusion *Baul* music to improve their performance and cater to the audience's demands. In addition, flute, tabla, harmonium, *ramchaki* and *ghoongroo* are widely used, especially for *Baul* fusion songs. The *Bauls* have undergone modernisation, as they reproduce modern folk songs and adopt a Westernised lifestyle.⁵ Hence, the originality in *Jangal Mahal's* cultural arts, songs and dance forms is gradually diluted. *Silpi*-artist *Bauls*, the cosmopolitan performers, have captured centre stage with their striking performance to entice the urban audience. They lack belief in the original *Baulism* and typical *Baulepana* (the natural craziness in the behaviour of *Baul* artists, often known as *Baul-ness*) flavour. A distinct difference is manifested between the *Baul* songs and the *shilpi* songs. The former is learned in *Akhara* through a *guru* (Debnath, 2020). Therefore, a perceptible transformation and cultural shift are underway in *Baul's* outlook across the *Jangal Mahal*.

Preserving the cultural landscape is broadly a general cultural responsibility. People endeavour hard for centuries and generations to create their unique natural and cultural practices and identities. Thus, sustaining a cultural heritage take ample time, energy, resources, and patience. The locals, specifically the mature age group (40-55 years), want to rely on their age-old traditional culture. Figure 3 shows some traditional *Chhau* dance practices of Baghmundi CD block, Purulia district. The young generation is inclined towards the new globalised cultural trends where they can earn more throughout the year. Therefore, we seek to illustrate the deeper reasons for the oppositional reactions that are sought to be displayed in the current study.

Results and Discussion

The Proliferation of Traditional Old Folk Songs

Our results display a distinct pattern of rise in the number of traditional old folk songs in the study area. Figure 2 shows *Chhau* masks worn by the folk artists in the study area. The performance of the artists with traditional instruments is illustrated in Figure 3. Our findings demonstrate that the changing perception is perhaps responsible for breaking the conventional age-old social, political and economic relationships and folk culture in the study area. In the studied villages, the elderly respondent expressed their resentment against modernity in the group discussions. In addition, 65% of respondents (N=39) attributed acculturation to rapid globalisation. The processes through which cultural groups adapt to one another cause modifications in the original. We discussed how traditional culture is undergoing structural changes, resulting in a confrontation between traditional and contemporary folk art forms.

Furthermore, the artists are experiencing an identity crisis due to the proliferation of "new popular culture." Twenty-seven respondents have attributed technological advancement to their success. These respondents fall in the age

⁵ The new generation of *Bauls* has adopted modern dress patterns, haircuts, body language, instruments, and loud

decorations on stage, indicating the shift from the traditional form.

group of 17-35 years. However, the elderly respondents refused this shift and were found emotionally attached to the conventional way of performing their songs and dances.

Livelihood Assets

A community sustains itself on mixed capital of social, physical, human and monetary assets; their surplus is generated when production exceeds consumption. Thus, we observed some contradictory trends in the cultural landscape of *Jangal Mahal* in the wake of fast globalisation, economic liberalisation and contemporary cultural practices. They promote a consumer-oriented life. Moreover, this transformation has been fuelled by tensions inside Bengali society's metropolitan/provincial cultural divide. People began searching for alternative livelihood methods to seek their livelihood and better their lifestyle and future. The people possess less than an acre of cultivable land, which is insufficient to support a family in the face of growing consumerism and rising costs for all goods. Rephrase the sentence for clarity. People still lack advanced electronic gadgets, though some employ regular mobile handsets. Thus, the study area remains chronically in penury, and the heritage arts, age-old culture, folk songs, music, and arts cannot remove poverty or provide a good lifestyle and improve living standards.

Alternative Sources of Livelihoods

Information technology, television, smartphones and globalisation have added to the localisation of different media merchandise. Some youth in the troupes prefer learning and carrying out traditions. About 44% of the respondents want an alternative source of livelihood because earnings from the traditional cultural performance fail to meet livelihood requirements completely. Besides, proponents of contemporary modern urban spaces and arts ignore the indigenous art forms' heritage and cultural glory. These reasons are also the main factors responsible for the decline in the popularity of traditional art forms in the study area.

The people like their heritage arts. However, it was also noted that during the Kharif crop (June

to November) sowing period only, they engaged in farming or agricultural labour activities on others' lands, which provided only seasonal employment. The people perform *Chhau, Kirtan, Baul, Bhadu, Jhumur*, and others and celebrate several local festivities throughout the year, barring the Kharif season. Therefore, they migrate and travel to different places throughout the year to maintain their regular flow of income and sustain their livelihood requirements. The trend of using modern musical instruments and musical troupes and bands has replaced folk artists in that entertainment space. The commercialisation of performance makes things more painful for these independent folk artists. Therefore, their economic conditions deteriorate. Our findings revealed that approximately 70% (N=42) of the total respondents found that modern drivers of culture impacted their tastes and changed the mentality of youths. The locals should be responsible for deciding on matters of their cultural landscape in the coming time. Thus, it can be said from the present study that the study area's people are not oblivious to the threats to their unique cultural traditions.

Role of the Local and State Government

The Information and Cultural Affairs Department of the West Bengal Government is committed to promoting and preserving the rich cultural heritage in the state. A review of the performance of folk culture and cultural heritage unravelled that folk performers have benefited from the allocated funds, and many musicians fully utilise the platform made accessible by cultural initiatives that foster cultural heritage throughout the nation. Rephrase the sentence for clarity. A particular scheme, '*Lokprasar Prakaipo*' was launched on 27 January 2017 for artists to participate in various campaigns and serve people by motivating them towards promoting and propagating the indigenous cultural heritage of the state.

Suggestions

The study suggests a '4R' strategy incorporating "reason, results, remedies and reduces" may be initiated to minimise the effect of identity and cultural crises (Figure 4).

Additionally, healthy partnerships between the government and community may be promoted through the collaboration of correct cultural and

participatory zoning with duly considering the available resources. This will help improve the perception of local people and assist them in detecting their voices through active involvement in the mapping process. Moreover, the educated young generation needs to be sincere and come forward to preserve the indigenous folk religions (Taylor, 2013).

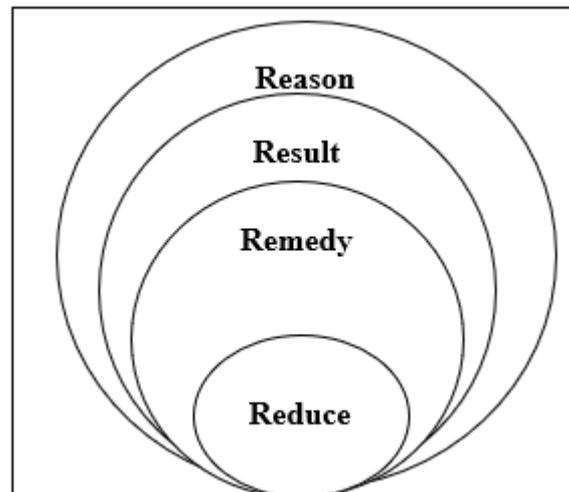


Figure 4: Shows the 4R Strategy to Tackle the Cultural Identity Crisis.

Source: Prepared by the Authors

In addition, the following thrust areas are suggested to be incorporated in the policy formulation and implementation ecosystem to preserve the cultural identity and promote the cultural heritage of *Jangal Mahal*:

- Ground-level awareness programmes are needed to preserve the cultural heritage,
- The young generation must be motivated to broadcast their cultural heritage,
- Make cultural heritage conservation a crucial part of the development process and
- Incorporate the current programmes regarding the identification, evaluation, protection and management of cultural heritage as part of a conservation strategy.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the current study that both globalisation and modernisation are advantageous within economically sound and

progressive communities. Its terrible onslaughts indirectly and adversely impact disadvantaged marginalised people. This research presents this situation vividly in the context of the *Jangal Mahal*. A considerable gap in livelihood opportunities between rural and urban artists has been noticed. Proper health communication and synergy between the two can help bridge the yawning gap between the local rural and advanced urban westernised cultures. Society is experiencing a shift towards a new direction where the main criteria of development are based on using its potential resources resiliently. The current trend of re-mixing cultural or folk songs with various instruments limits the scope of performance for folk troupes. The troupes are losing their much-valued space in terms of audiences. That deteriorates the sources of earnings and adds to identity, cultural and economic crises. However, a holistic change in values can be brought about by promoting a healthy connection between different forces of change, such as identity, aesthetic and cultural-

historical values. The findings also show that the internet, information technology, and social networking have widened the rural-urban gap. Therefore, the shifts and even the digression of cultural heritage are inevitable unless younger generations vehemently protect indigenous cultural practices and heritage.

Overall, the current research findings highlight the critical role of the educated, progressive and conscious citizens who must stand beside these tribal communities unbiasedly by giving them space in this age of fusion culture. Their artistic glory will remain intact if their families and communities embrace the practices inside and outside their localities so that other people can experience their indigenous heritage. Folk songs and folklores contain social elements and traditional knowledge that need to be fully explored. Further research in social science on rural, urban, suburban and tribal areas is underway with the primary objective of studying the potential traditional knowledge and its historicity. Summarising, we are hopeful that this study will contribute immensely to generating awareness about the cultural and social challenges in rural West Bengal, and it is hoped that policymakers, NGOs, agencies, and civil society take conscious steps to preserve and promote the unique art forms and folklores of the region. This study may benefit scholars of cultural studies who may precisely approach to define this region.

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Author Contribution Statement

Babita Chatterjee, the first author, obtained primary data through field inquiry. She performed data analysis, created maps, tables, and figures, and wrote the first draft of the research article. Dr. Amrita Dwivedi, the second author, oversaw the whole research process and

aided in developing the research article after evaluating it.

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