

# Chau Mask

Face of War Dance



**Rural Craft Hub**  
**Charida**  
**Purulia**

Supported by  
The Department of MSME&T  
Government of West Bengal

# Index

the location  
the craft  
the craftspersons  
the raw material  
the process  
the product  
the festival  
directory

The Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises & Textiles, Government of West Bengal in collaboration with UNESCO, has developed a hub of Chau Mask makers at Charida in Purulia.



# 1. the location

**Charida:**

Charida village, home to the Chau Mask makers, is in Purulia district which is a part of the Chotanagpur plateau. The landscape is rocky and undulating. The deciduous forests are rich in biodiversity. Tribal ethos enriches the mystic charm and natural beauty of this land.

**Getting there:**

**By Train:** Purulia is the nearest railway station and Charida is 1 hour drive from Purulia town.

**By Road:** Charida is around 280 kms away from Kolkata.

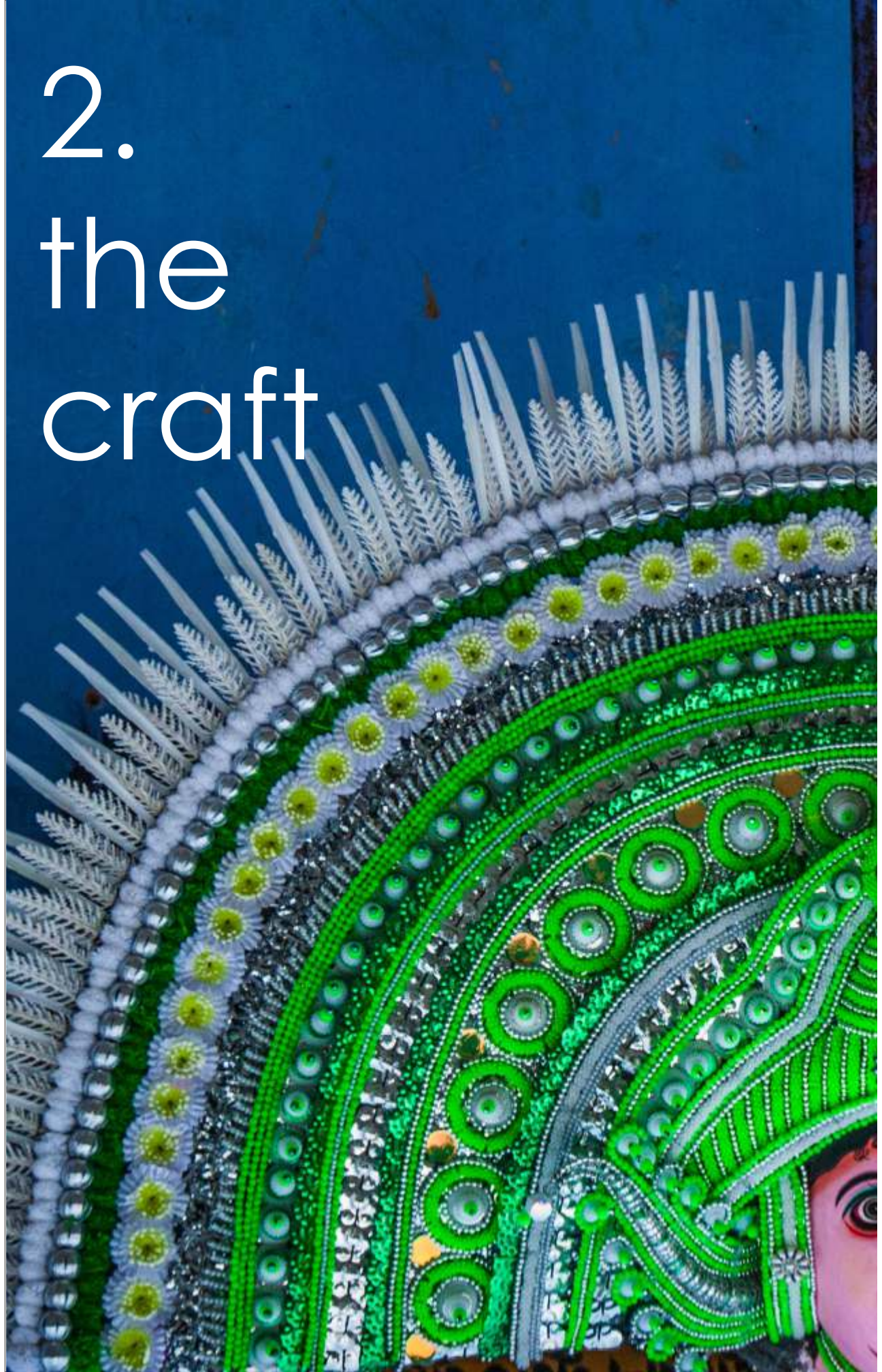
**By Air:** The nearest airports are Andal and Ranchi which are about four and half hours away from Charida by road.

**Accommodation:** There are many hotels in Purulia. There are also lodges at Baghmundi.

**Nearby places of interest:**

- Lahariya Shiv temple located near the PPSP dam provides a panoramic view of the entire region.
- Ayodhya hills and Joychandi hills are ideal for bikers and trekkers.
- The ruins of 8th century temples at Deulghata on the banks of river Kansai is close to Bamnia.
- Murugama Dam on Saharjor River is ideal for a day trip from Purulia or Jhalda.
- 6<sup>th</sup> century Jain temples in Telkupi, Bandhar Deul and Radha Binod temples are close to Chelyama.





## 2. the craft



The art of Chau mask making started in Charida village during the rule of King Madan Mohan Singh Deo of Baghmundi around 150 years back. In modern days, masks for Chau dance still constitute the main market; the mask makers also make smaller masks for home decor and souvenirs.

Chau dance is indigenous to the eastern part of India. It originated as a martial art and involves vigorous movements, skillful acrobatic feats and leaps. In Purulia Chau, the dancers wear large stylized masks. The dance portrays triumph of good over evil. The stories are based on mythological tales that propagate moral and ethical values.

Chau dance was inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. The dance is believed to be over a century's practice, though the specifics of its origin are yet to be ascertained. Besides making masks for Chau dance, the mask makers also make a variety of masks for home decor.

**Chau Mask of Charida received GI status in 2018.**







# 3. the craftspersons

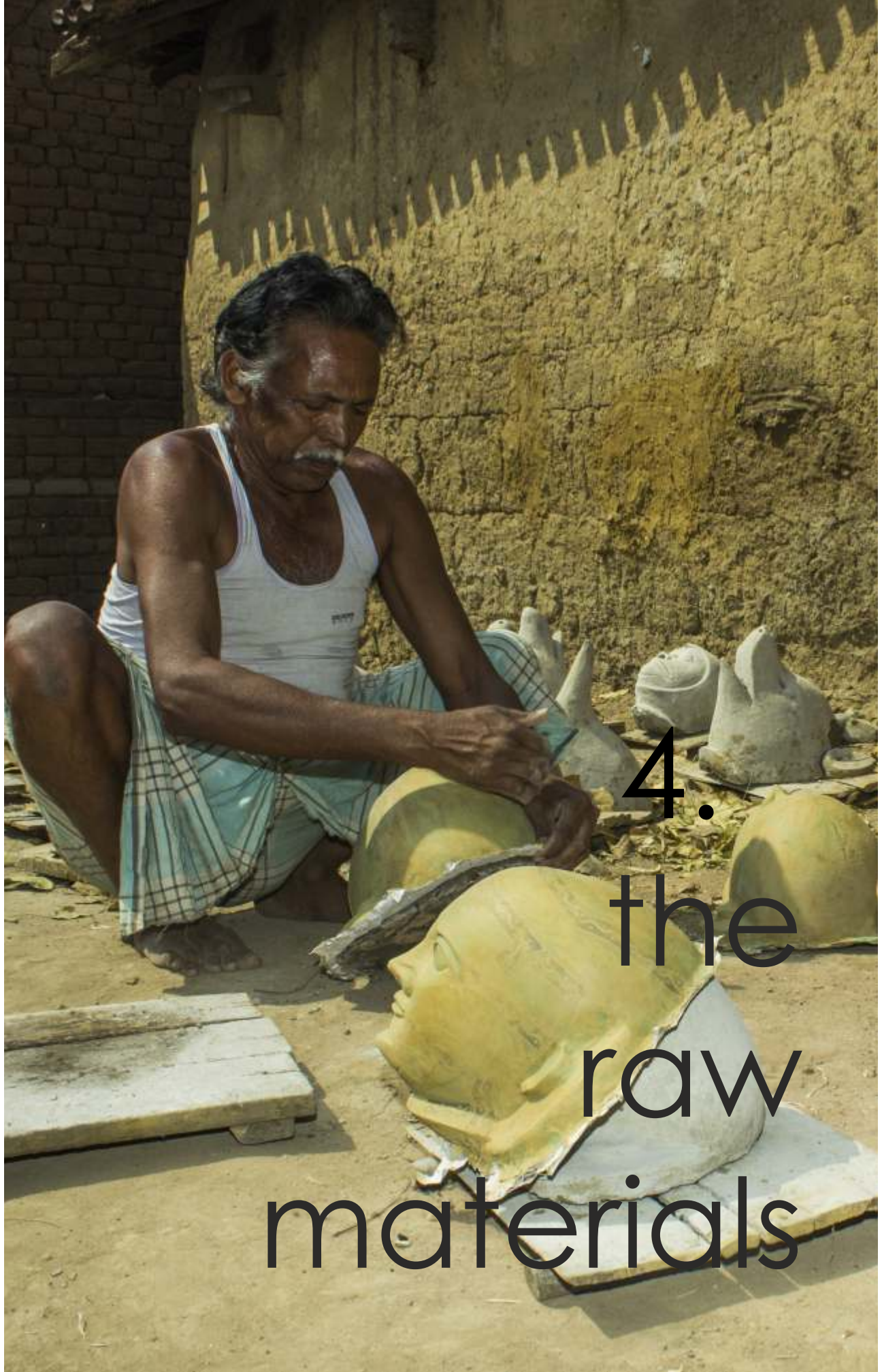
The crafts persons live in Charida village of Bagmundi Block, Purulia.

Mask makers like Manoranjan Sutradhar, Parimal Dutta have received State and District level awards.

Block	GP	Village	# of Households	# of Crafts persons	# of Women
Baghmundi	Sindri	Charida	115	308	100







4.  
the  
raw  
materials

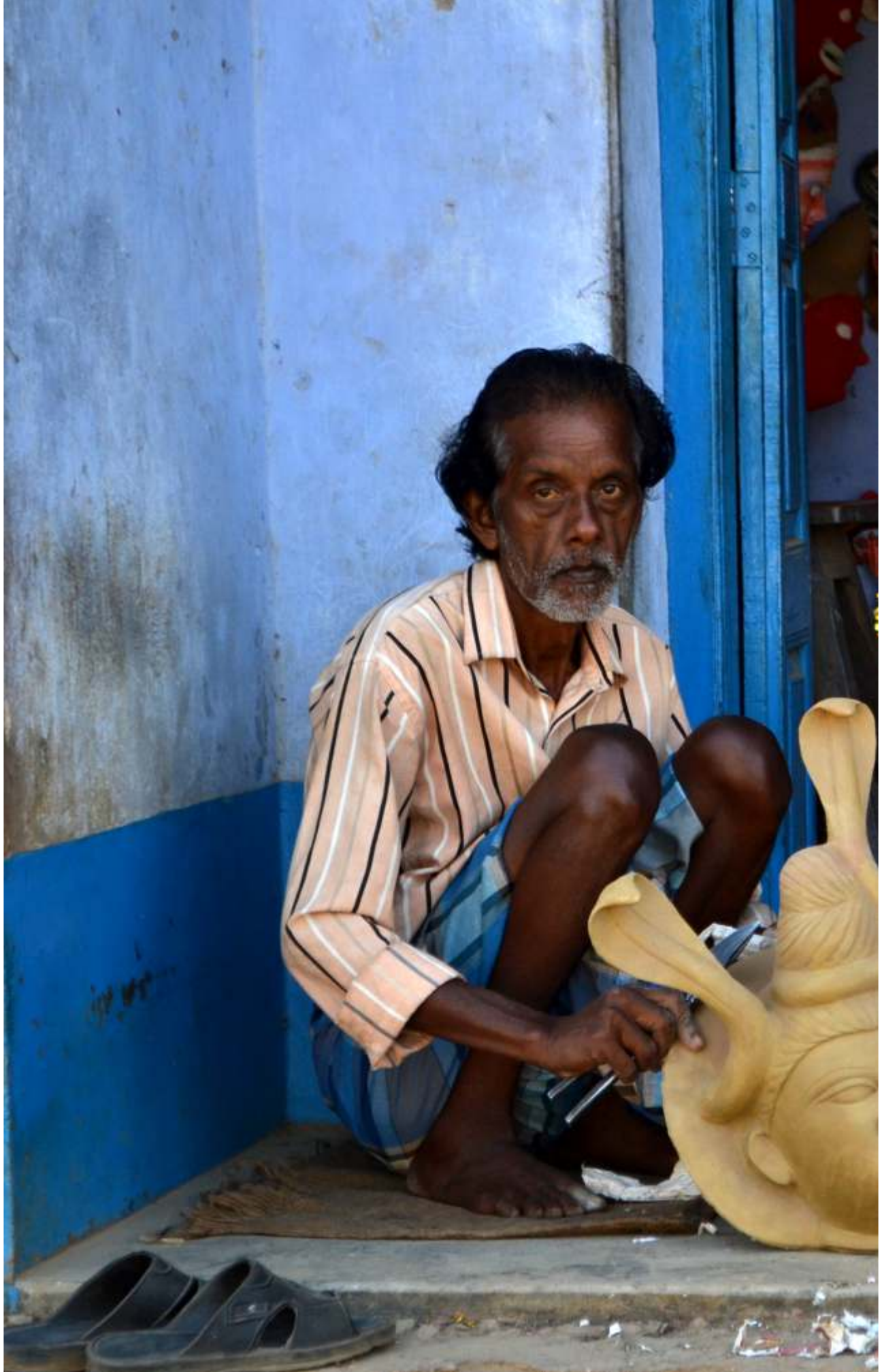


Paper pulp and clay are used to make Chau masks. Clay, paper, natural adhesive and cloth are collected locally. Adornments were earlier done with feathers of pigeon and peacock. They now use plastic feathers and beads, bird feathers are occasionally used. The clay used for mask making is collected from the local river.

## The Tools

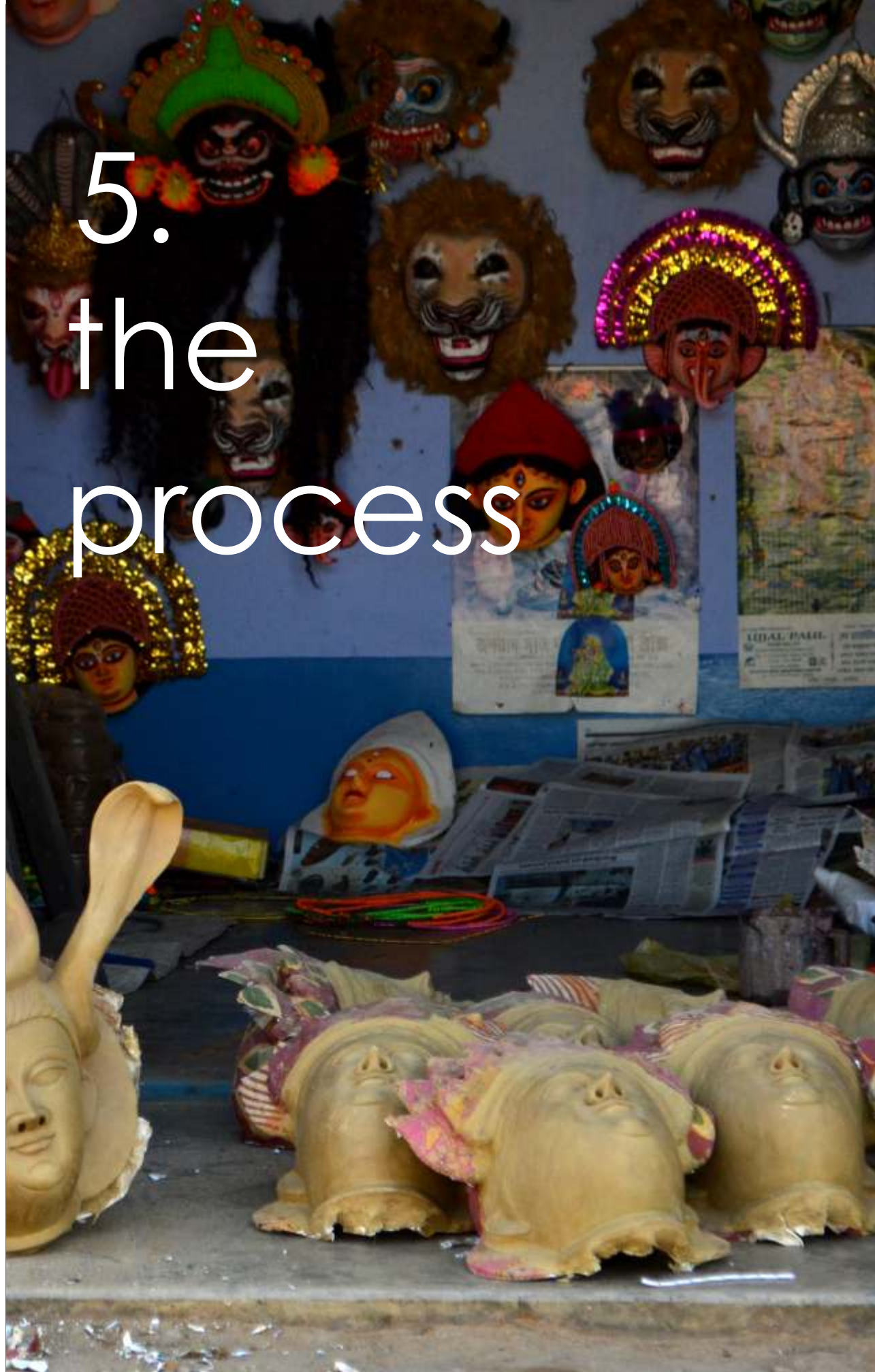
The tools used are very simple and minimalistic. *Thapi*, a small wooden tool used for finishing and brushes are used for colouring the masks.







# 5. the process





1. The clay is kneaded.

2. Clay model of a mask is dried in direct sunlight and covered with powdered ash.

5. It is then layered with pieces of soft fabric.

6. The initial layer of clay is removed.



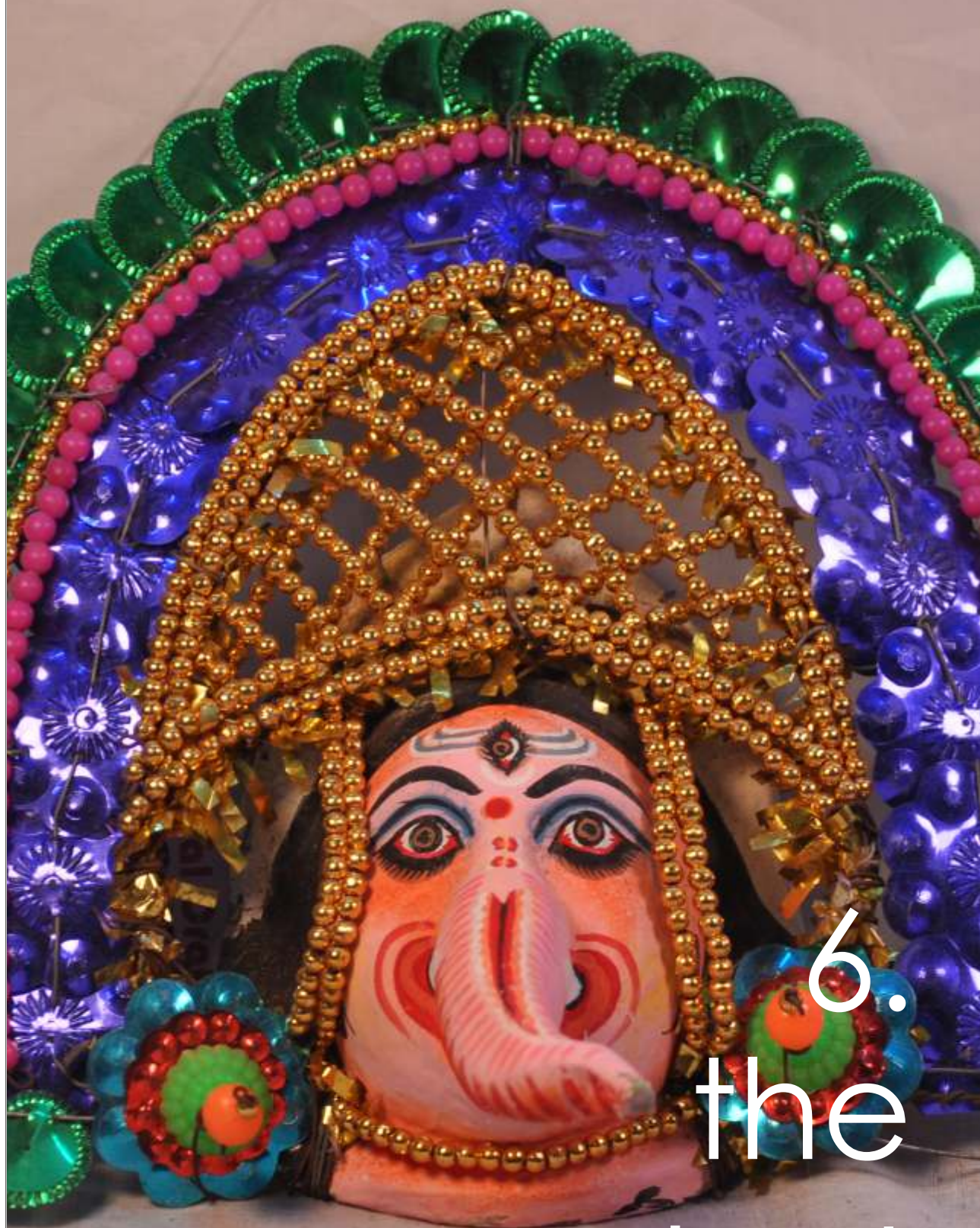


3. Layers of moist paper are pasted on the powdered mask.

4. The mask is again covered with clay.

7. A coat of white paint is applied.

8. The mask is coloured and decorated with embellishments.



6.  
the  
product






The Chau dancers wear ornate and elaborate masks and dazzling costumes made of tinsel and brocade. The masks used in Purulia Chau are elaborate and ornamental. Each of the characters of these play have their distinct masks.

The masks mainly portray mythological figures like goddess Durga, Ganesh and Demons. These masks also depict animal and bird heads like peacock, tiger, monkey, lion etc. With the changing market demands, the mask makers are now designing their traditional masks to fit in as home décor and lifestyle items.

# 7. the festival







A 3 day fair of Chau Dance festival will be held in Maldi, Balarampur, in December.

There is a host of local festivals that are celebrated in the area throughout the year. Some of them are listed below:

- **Baha/ Sharhool:** The spring festival of the Santhals is celebrated with night long song and dance.
- **Disum Sendra / Shikar Parab** is the hunting festival of Santhals in the Ajodhya Hill area celebrated on Baishakhi Purnima, in April - May.
- **Shiber Gajan** is held from mid of March to May end, in rural areas. It is also known as Bhagta Parab, Chait Parab, Chau Parab, Charak Puja.
- **Chata Parab:** started with the patronage of the kings and landlords is still celebrated by the locals.
- **Raasmela / Raas Utsav** is observed to celebrate the meeting of Lord Krishna with Radha and her other companions during the month of November.

# 8. directory

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Face of War Dance



## Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs

An Initiative of Department of MSME&T, Government of West Bengal  
in collaboration with UNESCO, New Delhi Office

