

CARVE OUT

**Greenwood Masterclass
Workshop & Exhibition**

March, 2017

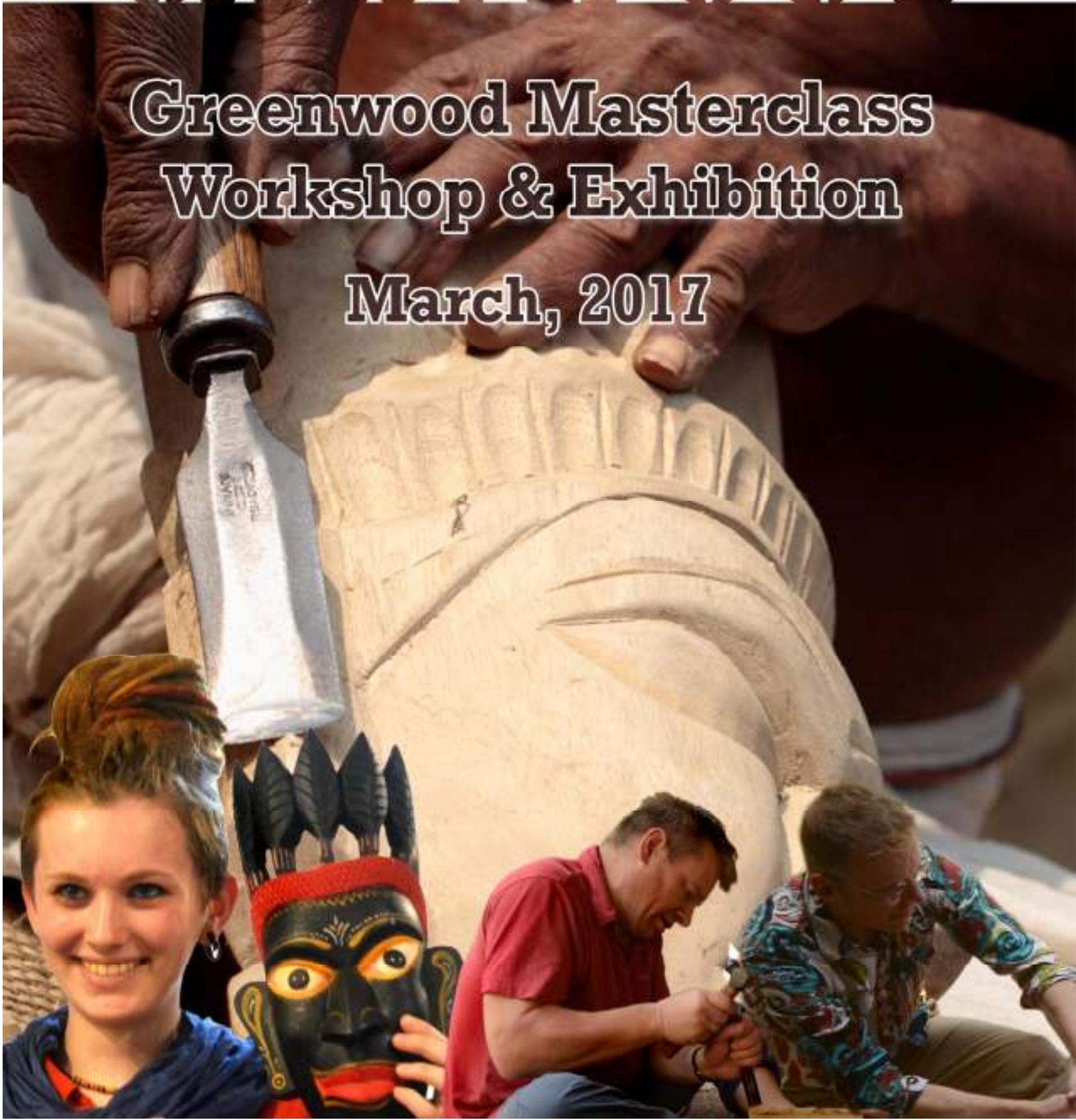


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Background

The Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises & Textiles (MSME&T), Government of West Bengal, in partnership with UNESCO, developed 10 Rural Craft Hubs (RCH) with 3,000 traditional handicraft artists across 9 districts in West Bengal between 2013 and 2016. The project strengthened creative enterprises at the grassroots, helped artists to reach out to global markets, strengthened livelihood, and developed craft villages as cultural tourism destinations.

In February 2016, UNESCO facilitated an International Consultation during which Mr. Eivind Falk, the Director of Norwegian Crafts Institute, visited the Wooden Mask Hub at Kushmandi in Dakshin Dinajpur district. He was highly impressed with the Wooden Mask craft and interactions with the mask makers opened up ideas of future collaborations. During that visit, he conceived the idea of a skill-sharing workshop between the Master Class Artists in Kushmandi and Greenwood craft artists of Europe. His ideas took shape when he met Shankar Das, an eminent Wooden Mask artist of Kushmandi who visited UK to participate in the London Craft Week in 2016.

Eivind came back in March 2017 along with Robin Wood, an internationally recognized traditional woodcarver, and Jojo Wood, a second-generation greenwood carver from the UK and developed magical creations and also tried their hands in carving traditional wooden masks. They were joined by the mask makers from Kushmandi — Shankar Das, Tulu Sarkar, Nandi Sarkar and Dipak Sarkar.



The participants from Norway, UK and India

The initiative is collaboration between the Rural Craft and Cultural Hub of Kushmundi (RCCH), British Council, Norsk Handverksinstitutt, MakersLoft and [banglanatak dot com](http://banglanatak.com).

The Kushmandi Experience

The visiting artists went to Kushmandi and participated in a 4 day workshop from March 16 - 19, 2017. The workshop was held at the Folk Art Resource Centre in Mahishbathan.

The main aim of the workshop was to facilitate a cultural collaboration between Greenwood Master Class Artists of Europe and traditional Wooden Mask Makers of Kushmandi. While Eivind Falk is a specialist in making wooden spatula, fruit knife and butter knife, Robin Wood specializes in carving wooden bowls and Jojo Wood in wooden spoons. All the four Indian carvers specialize in making masks for Gomira dance, a folk art form of North Bengal.

The workshop paved the way for the Indian carvers to know the usage of different foreign tools, techniques, shapes, forms, textures and colours, and learn how to make new products, including daily utility items. For the Europeans, it was an opportunity to learn the traditional mask making techniques of the Kushmandi artists and know their tools and equipment.

Day 1: March 16

The visit to Kushmundi started with a walk around the Gallery and Folk Museum. A formal introduction with local carvers followed, along with an inspection of the local timber used for the craft.

The first brush with local folk element was a *Chodor Bodor* (a folk puppet show) performance by the legend, Daman Murmu. The visitors were awestruck by the skill of the puppeteer, his maneuvering of the puppets, singing — all of it left them mesmerized.

The visit to Bangarh — where the Archaeological Survey of India's excavation led to the finding of relics including copper plate inscriptions, metal coins, pots and such other articles used during the periods of the Maurya dynasty, Palas and Senas — followed. The place is of historical importance. It was from here that a large number of inscriptions dating back to the times of Emperor Ashoka and the Middle Ages were discovered. Several terracotta tiles were excavated from the place, and folklore has it that the mound has a connection with an episode of the epic *Mahabharata*. Sami Briksha was another local attraction that the trio got to see. This huge, imposing tree also has a story related to the *Mahabharata*. The legend goes that the Pandavas hid their weapons in this tree while they were in exile.

On the way back from Bangarh, they stopped at Gangarampur to see how cotton sarees are woven and got a glimpse of Bengal's traditional art of weaving, dyeing and colouring fabrics.

The evening was spent exclusively at the Community Centre, taking a close look at the local carvers at work, including an inspection of their tools and equipments.

Late in the evening, the visitors were hosted by a local artist's family at their home, where they got to know more of the local lifestyle and traditions.



Eivind, Robin and Jojo check out local textiles



The visitors with Tulu Sarkar and his family

Day 2: March 17

The first half of the workshop session included an interaction between the carvers and exploring the local carvers' style of mask making as well as their tools and equipments. The visitors engaged themselves in inspecting the wood, cutting them with their tools, and introducing their carving tools to the local carvers. The local carvers started their part by demonstrating their craft. The workmanship, skill, and finesse of the products left the visitors spellbound. Eivind could not resist himself; he started working hands-on with Tulu as his guide and the local tools as his means to the end. They also watched the local carvers' process of colouring the masks.

In the second session, Robin Wood showed how to make wooden bowls from a chunk of wood with his tools. The Kushmundi carvers tried their hands in carving out bowls of different sizes and shapes. To add the local touch, they intelligently carved small masks on the sides of the bowls.



Robin tries Indian style wood-cutting



Watching the Kushmundi artists at work



Robin and Jojo saw a piece of log



Eivind tries his hand with local tools

Day 3: March 18

During the first session of the day, Eivind Falk told the carvers about using the elements around, like the birds, fishes, etc. in their carvings and how these elements add to the market value of the products. He then asked the carvers to make sketches of the locally found birds, animals and fishes and then replicate the same on wood. Eivind then demonstrated the process of making wooden spatula and decorative butter knife. All the four local carvers participated with great excitement and enthusiasm and the products crafted stood out for the beautiful finishing touches.

In the second session, Jojo Wood showcased her skills in carving wooden spoons. The local carvers took special interest because it was a completely new experience for them.

In the evening, it was time for a beautiful Gomira dance performance. It left Robin with many questions about the history and origin of the art form and the masks that are used in it. Robin had a detailed discussion with the dancers on the origin and evolution of the masks. He was amazed to know that in the initial years it was the pumpkin shells which were used as masks. The use of wood came with Sankar Sarkar, the master craftsman.



Tulu makes a point to Jojo



Making sketches before carving



One for the album: With the Mukha Dancers after the performance.

Final Day: March 19

The last day of the participants and the coordinators had an evaluation-cum- interaction about their works. The British and Norwegian carvers toured the village and visited the local market. They also visited the homes and studios of some of the Wooden Mask makers and some Bamboo Mask Makers as well. They showed old traditional masks and expressed keen interest in historical documents related to the masks. The visiting carvers also gifted their tools to the local carvers. The four Kushmandi carvers who took part in the workshop along with other local Wooden Mask Makers and the Community Centre honoured the three guest carvers and presented them with mementos.

Reflecting on the workshop experience, both the Europeans and the Kushmandi carvers said that they were enriched by the entire exercise.

Robin Wood said, “One of the highlights of my experience here was the opportunity to carve the masks with these great craftsmen... it was very special.” Eivind Falk said, “This was an amazing exchange of knowledge. Working here, out of comfort zone, was quite challenging... especially working with tools and materials we are not familiar with, and doing things differently. But it has been a wonderful way of growing. The Kushmandi artisans have a high performing level.”

“The new tools and new ways of wood craft are the highlights of what we got to learn from this workshop,” said Shankar Das. Tulu Sarkar said, “This workshop has opened a new chapter for our craft.” Dipak Sarkar said, “We learnt to make so many new things... we want more such

workshops.” Taking a cue from him, Nandi Sarkar said, “We look forward to more such workshops. We also want to participate in such collaborations abroad.”



Jojo and Eivind trying out the masks



Eivind and Robin check out an old mask



The visitors in a mask maker's work-space

The Kolkata Experience

The products created at the Kushmandi workshop were put on display at an exhibition held in MakersLoft at 22 Ballygunge Park Road, Kolkata, on March 21, 2017.

The exhibition in Kolkata had Amitava Bhattacharya, Founder-Director of banglanatak dot com, providing with an insight on the venture. The visitors, Eivind Falk, Robin Wood and Jojo Wood shared their experience of working with the mask makers. The Director of British Council (East India), Debanjan Chakrabarti, and Ananya Bhattacharya, Director of banglanatak dot com, spoke to the audience and thanked them for being there at the exhibition. The visitors to the exhibition included noted educationists, carvers and design students from Kolkata. The participants and the visitors: all discussed and agreed to the need for heritage education of the children.

Along with the exhibition, there was a workshop of wood carving held in Kolkata with the local school children as participants. The aim of the Kolkata workshop with urban youngsters was to create awareness about Greenwood craft and inculcate in them an interest in woodcraft techniques and practices followed in Europe and our own country. There were 33 participants at the workshop on March 22, 2017, including a good number of girls. Most of them were school students. All of them were extremely enthusiastic about acquiring the basic skills of Greenwood carving and mask making. At the end of the day, they created simple and popular items, such as spoons, bowls and wooden owl dolls. Nitai Sutradhar, a traditional Wooden Doll maker from Natungram in Bardhaman, joined the visiting carvers and Tulu Sarkar of Kushmandi at this workshop.

Summing up the experience at Kushmandi and Kolkata, Robin Wood said, “First, I would like to thank British Council for this fantastic experience. It’s the first time I am in India and I have absolutely fallen in love with your country and your people. The workshop was very much a two-way learning experience. It was a very wonderful experience for me... it was a very short experience, way too short... just three days at the workshop in Kushmandi... a brief taste. Every evening I would lie back and think about the masks, the traditional masks... in future I would like to come back, stay here for a longer time and dive much deeper into this exploration.”

Jojo Wood said, “There was no woman artist in Kushmandi, but in Kolkata there were many young girls and they were so full of energy and very curious to learn woodcraft. Working with them was great fun.”

“This workshop with the youngsters has been an exciting experience. They are so enthusiastic,” Eivind Falk said, adding, “Three days in Kushmandi was too short a time. Next year, hopefully, we will target three weeks... so that we can really get into the details and make the big masks!!”

Outcome

The workshop at Kushmandi turned out to be a “wonderful two-way learning experience” as Robin Wood said. The European Greenwood carvers caught a glimpse of the world of traditional Indian woodcraft, learnt to work with completely unfamiliar tools and equipment, and picked up a different set of skills. Both Robin and Eivind said that crafting the Wooden Masks jointly with the carvers of Kushmandi was the best part of their experience. They also had the experience of working with Gamar wood, a timber that is naturally termite-resistant and not available in Europe. The workshop was an exchange of knowledge, ideas and tools between the visitors and the local carvers.

The carvers of Kushmandi said that they got an opportunity to learn how to make a new range of products, such as bowls, spoons and butter knives, worked with a new set of tools, and picked up new techniques and skills from the Europeans, even as they taught the visiting woodcraft masters the art of making their traditional wooden masks.

In other words, as Eivind Falk put it, “It was a wonderful way of growing” for the Greenwood masters of Europe and the master Wooden Mask craftsmen of Bengal.

Robin’s words were: It was a very, very short time but we got to know how people live here, in rural areas particularly. Also, as an environmentalist, I liked the life which is very, very linked with the earth... the homes, lots of local materials used to build them... it’s almost like a new way of life... something that we in the West are striving for... and it’s happening there... There is a lot that I will be taking back, especially the life I saw in Kushmandi.

Photos of Exhibition & Workshop at Kolkata



banglanatak dot com's Founder-Director
Amitava Bhattacharya addressing the guests



Director of British Council (East India),
Debanjan Chakrabarti, speaks on the occasion



Director of banglanatak dot com Ananya
Bhattacharya speaks on the occasion



It's time for a group photo after the inauguration
of the exhibition on March 21, 2017



Photo journey of Kushmandi at the exhibition



Products made at Kushmandi on display



Kushmandi masks at the exhibition



Products made at Kushmandi on display



A curious group of visitors at the exhibition



A child toys with a spoon



Clicking the pictures at the exhibition



Visitors appreciate the creations on display



For Eivind, Robin & Jojo: Memories of Kolkata



The entrance of MakersLoft



Visitors appreciating the creations



(From left) Eivind, Jojo, Nitai and Robin at the workshop with the youngsters



Jojo poses with one of her favorite masks



Eivind with Debanjan Chakrabarti

Annexure: Carvers Profile

Eivind Falk is the director of Norwegian Crafts Institute for nine years. He is an expert on traditional crafts, with a background from the University in Oslo, the Telemark University College and Lillehammer University College. He has been responsible for several publications on traditional crafts, folk art and traditional woodwork and has worked on several national and international projects, including on behalf of UNESCO in Georgia. He is the editor of #Heritage Alive, which is a UNESCO-accredited NGOs' journal for sharing experiences from the field.

Robin Wood is an internationally recognized traditional woodworker, known for carving bowls and spoons using simple hand tools. He studies historical, ethnographic and archaeological woodwork and has worked with traditional woodworkers in the UK, Sweden, Romania, the US and Japan. He has a broad interest in all traditional crafts and was the founding chair of the Heritage Crafts Association in the UK in 2012. Before becoming a woodworker, he worked in forestry and has, therefore, an avid interest in trees and woodlands. One may contact him at www.robin-wood.co.uk

Jojo Wood is a second-generation greenwood worker. She has been making woodcrafts almost since she could walk. She spent her early years travelling across the world with her father, Robin Wood, meeting craftspeople and amassing woodwork skills and knowledge, and building the perfect foundation for mastering her chosen crafts. She is now one of the UK's leading spoon-carvers and is training under the last of the English clog makers, Jeremy Atkinson. Jojo hopes to inspire more women and younger people to get into woodworking. One may contact her at www.jojo-wood.co.uk

Shankar Das is a leading Wooden Mask maker from Kushmandi in West Bengal. He has received the State Award and his works are regularly displayed at the CIMA Gallery in Kolkata. He participated in Gannat Festival in France held in 2015. In 2016, he showcased his crafts at the exhibition "Gods & Demons" held at the Nehru Centre London, Edinburgh Museum and in Southside Fringe Festival held at Glasgow.

Tulu Sarkar is a young and promising crafts person and has travelled to several Indian cities to participate in fairs and festivals. He is an active member of the exchange programmes held at the Kushmandi Wooden Masks hub and has students from different design institutes.

Dipak Sarkar is an emerging artist and his skills have evolved over the years. He has visited fairs and festivals in many cities of India and won accolades for his creations.

Nandi Sarkar is an artist by his own right. He is known for his amazing skill in depicting female figures in the masks that he makes.

Participant List

CARVE OUT - Workshop					
Sl. No.	Name	Contact	Email	Age	Organisation
1	Paridhi Goenka	9836054167	paridhigoenka14@gmail.com	23	Interior Designer
2	Pallavi Dhanuka	9830882513		24	Interior Designer
3	Dave Chakrabarti	9051584089	dave@nonprofitable.org		Web Designer
4	Ananya Banerjee	9989990326	ananya2289@gmail.com	28	Teacher at BC
5	Mohena Nagar	8698024376		23	Product Design Graduate
6	Prajwal Nag	9475021079		23	Self Employed
7	Aadil Rashid	9038361993	askywalker080@gmail.com	25	VFX Student
8	Abhisha Ghosh	9831023102		19	Designing Student
9	Susmita Roy	9007058338	susmitaray1216@gmail.com	21	
10	Abhisha Biswas	7686010334	maddyabhisha665@gmail.com	18	
11	Archita Rakshit	9051480322		16	Student
12	Soumojit Das	9007473643		15	
13	Neha Das	7059575753	nehadas273@gmail.com	16	
14	Nafisha Halder	7686954939		19	
15	Dwaipayan Dey	9051732363	dwaipayandey4@gmail.com	15	
16	Aritra Bhatterjya	9903517092		14	
17	Sk.Saquib	9836036696		15	
18	Biswajit Mondal	8013260973		24	
19	Sumit Sarkar	9748577067	sumitsarkar1410@gmail.com	25	
20	Rinku Khatun	3323297478		26	
21	Sourasish Paul	9836480616		13	
22	Aritra Bag	9051797305		14	
23	Mayukh Das	9748763924		14	
24	Partha Paul	9903024350		14	
25	Neha Mallick	9748907077		13	
26	Sneha Das	9007197188		13	
27	Riya Mondal	9748889540			
28	Anuska Saha	7003687292	anushkasaha78@gmail.com	13	
29	Pulak Ghosh	9007869980	tandrapulak@gmail.com	60	Art Teacher
30	Tandra Chanda.	9831195570	tandrapulak@gmail.com		Art Teacher
31	Vishika	9999848077			
32	V. Siddhant Shree				
33	Torin Ray Chowthury	9674835703			

Media Coverage

metro THE TELEGRAPH CALCUTTA
THURSDAY 23 MARCH 2017

MASTERCLASS IN WOOD CARVING

Thirty school and college students picked up the basics of wood carving at a daylong workshop at Maker's Loft on Ballygunge Park Road on Wednesday. Teaching them the skill were makers of traditional Gamira dance masks from Kushmundi in South Dinajpur, two internationally recognised woodworkers from the UK and the director of the Norwegian Crafts Institute.

The workshop, part of Carve Out — an ongoing exhibition of wooden masks, was organised by banglanatak.com, British Council, Calcutta, Rural Craft Hubs of West Bengal and the Norwegian Crafts Institute. The "masterclass with a difference" by Shankar Das, Tulu Sarkar, Nandi Sarkar and Dipak Sarkar — traditional artists from Kushmundi — left Robin Wood of the UK craving for more. "It was only a brief taste," said Robin,




who along with JoJo Wood experiments with the timber of apple, peach, pear and other trees. Both expressed their wonder at *gamhar* wood and the indigenous tools used by the artists.

JoJo wished there were more women mask makers and suggested that the artists diversify from decorative pieces to creating modern utility items. For Eivind Falk of Norway, it was an "exchange of knowledge".

*Reporting by Sebanti Sarkar
Pictures courtesy: banglanatak.com*

খবর **২৬** দিন
কলকাতা | বুধবার ২২ মার্চ ২০১৭
৮ টেজা ১৪২০

মুখোশের আড়ালে



কাঠের মুখোশ... ব্রিটেন, নরওয়ে ও ভারতের শিল্পীদের প্রদর্শনী।

নরওয়ারে কাঠে দিনাজপুরের ছোঁয়া

► একের শাব্যের পর

ইউরোপে যে শ্যাটনের কাঠের কাজ হচ্ছে তার সঙ্গে এখনকার কাজকে মিলিয়ে দেখাটাই উদ্দেশ্য।

সাননের টেনিসে রাখা কিছু কাজ দেখিয়ে বললেন, 'এই দেখুন একটা ট্রে। এটা আমরা হারমেশাই বানাই আমাদের ওখানে। কিছু ট্রেচার যায়ে যা হাতলে যে ডিকাইনটা দেখলে এটা কিছু ক্রুশমাটির শিল্পীরা বনিয়েছেন। একেই পর্মটির একটা উদ্ভরণ ঘটিল। যোগ্য হল। এক বেশের সঙ্গে অন্য বেশ মিলে গেল।'

আইভিভি দেখালেন ব্রিটিশ খাটার নাইক, স্পুন, সর্ক-এর সঙ্গে দিনাজপুরের কাজ মিলিয়ে কেমন কিছু আইটম তৈরি করেছেন রবিন ও জোজো উভ। তাদের কথা বলতে বলতেই হঠাৎ ভুলে এলেন। বেশ উদ্বেজিতভাবে বললেন, কলকাতায় অনেক কিছুতেই খাট হুড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে রয়েছে। 'ক্রো-পট'-এ যা শাব্যের কথা জানালেন। মোশাইলে তার ছবি তোলায় কথাও বললেন। বহুটির নাম 'ক্রাড' শিখে বেশ করেকবার বুলে গ্যাকটিসও করলেন। স্মিটিক কাঠের কাজের কথা এতটা উত্বেজিতভাবে উল্লেখ করতে চাইলেন শব্বর দাস, সুলু সারকার, মনী সারকার, লীপক সারকারদের কথা। এরা প্রত্যেকেই দিনাজপুরের মুখ্য শিল্পী। এরা বিশেষত্বের সঙ্গে ওরফেশের অন্য মাসখানেক কাজ চালানোর মধ্যে ইংরেজি কথা চর্চাও করেছেন। তাদের আভিবেদন্য মুখ উভ মহাশয়। তার



দেবীনে রাখা কাজের মধ্যে

কন্যা জোজো-ও ছবি দেখলেন কেমনভাবে তিনি ওখানকার শিল্পীদের সঙ্গে কাজ করেছেন। বাবা-মেয়ে রীতিমতো উদ্বেজিত। আবারও আনতে চান।

কলকাতার অল এঙ্গে পড়ার পর বারের টায়ের কথা মনে পড়ে গেল আইভিভিভের। তুর্গাপুজো, নতুন জানা, মৃতুর পোকজন... 'মুঠি একেবারে খপিয়ে পড়ল তার কাছে। বললেন, 'অরেকলস, সে-স্বী ভিড় রাখায়। কব লোক। হইইই ব্যাশার। এ বকর কিছু

যায়ে কখনও দেখিনি। স্বী প্রকাও এক উৎসব। দেবীর মুঠি চমৎকার। লক্ষ হাত, শিল্পীর কি অল্পও করনা (হাত নিয়ে লক্ষ হাত দেখানোর চেষ্টা করলেন)।' কনাকটী। বললেন, 'হ্যাঁ, তাও হো করেছি। আসের বার তো আমরা বৌ এসেছিল সঙ্গে। দুটো কটন মেটেরিয়াল-এর শাফি কিনে দিয়েছিলাম। (একটু মনে করে বললেন) যোগ্যই তাঁদের শাফি।'

দিনাজপুরে দু'বার ওয়ার্কশপ করলেন, খন, খাটীরা শোনার-সেবার



অভিজ্ঞতা হয়েছে নিশ্চয়ই। আইভিভি বললেন, 'অবশ্যই দেখেছি। অনেক কিছু শিখেছি। এবার যেমন সবাই উজকে নিয়ে এসেছি, তেমনই বিশ্বের আরও অনেক উজ্জলশিল্পীকে এই প্রোজেক্টে যুক্ত করার ইচ্ছা আছে।' মানুষ হিসেবে আইভিভি বেশ ইংগারেন্সি। সেসে থাকেন যখন, তখন অবসর সময়ে গিটার বাজান, নাচ করেন, সাইক্রিং করেন। আর বাকি সমস্তা বেশ বিশেষের কাঠের কাজ নিয়েই ব্যস্ত থাকেন। পড়েন। লেখেন। নিজের হাতে পড়েন।

দিনাজপুরে এই যে কাঠের কাজের অগান-গগন ঘটল তাকে এখনকার শিল্পীরা লাভবান করেন। আইভিভি মনে করলেন, ইউরোপের সাননের প্রায়ের কাঠের কাজ হয়েছে রাখার ব্যাশারের হুড়ুর উৎসাহ আছে। তাই দিনাজপুরের শিল্পীদের কাজ-সেবেসে শৌখে নিতে পারলে বিক্রিগাটা হবে, শিল্পীরা অবশ্যই লাভবান হবেন, তবে ব্যাপারটা বাস্তবায়িত হতে বেশ কিছুটা সময় লাগবে।

ক্রুশমাটি থেকে যা শিখলেন তা কেমনভাবে প্রয়োগ করলেন বলে জাপছেন। বললেন, 'ভাবছি দিনাজপুরের মুখ্যশেখের শ্যাটনের সাউন্ডসের মুখ জানাবো। সেটা নিয়ে আন্দাজের কলকাতার বহুদিনের সময় আসবে। কেমন আইভিভি। বেশ ভরবে না।'