राष्ट्रीय डिज़ाइन संस्थान
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN
AHMEDABAD

Dashabatar Cards / Pater Durga

Bishnupur, Bankura, West Bengal

Seats Available 13

OE26G26
Gandhinagar Campus



The legend goes that the 16th century Malla king Bir Hambir, who ruled over Mallabhum, which chiefly covers West Bengal's Bankura district today, was a great friend of the Mughal emperor Akbar. On his visits to Delhi, he would be entertained by card games, which inspired him to create a version of his own. He conceptualised the Dashavatar cards, which are synonymous today with Bishnupur, the capital of the erstwhile Mallabhum.

The finely crafted cards depict the 10 avatars of Vishnu—Matsya, Kurma, Baraha, Nrisingha, Buddha (Jagannath), Baaman, Ram, Balaram, Parshuram, and Kalki. A particular family—the Fouzdars of Bishnupur—was entrusted with the task of crafting the cards and has kept the tradition alive to this day.

Very few people actually know how to play them now, and the cards are chiefly sold as art.



Sital Fouzdar & Papan Fouzdar

He has been making the cards in almost the same way as they were made around 400 years ago.

Sital Fouzdar of Bishnupur, now in his 50s, claims to belong to the 89th generation of the family.