



NADIA

GNANAMI
GANGE

Documentation of Ganga from Gomukh to Gangasagar



Report submitted by:

Intangible Cultural Heritage Division

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CHAPTER 2 : NADIA THROUGH AGES

2.1. If we delve into the history of Nadia we shall find many political changes, devastations and attacks have ripped through the place yet its development was uninterrupted be it in the fields of education, religion or industry. The primary base of the economy was upon agriculture and cottage industry. The facts related to ancient history of Nadia are mostly lost hence there are much confusion relating to name and origin. There is no mention of Nadia village in the travel or other documents of the ancient foreign travellers and historians. Even the ancient Greek and Roman documents are silent to origin.

2.2. There is no hint of Nadia, Nabadwip in the works of Chinese globetrotters Fahien or I-Eu-En-Tsang where they had mentioned about Bengal. Either the places did not exist then in their present identity or they were not so remarkable to find a place in history. But in the Baisnab literature there has been mention of Nadia. The chants prove it further. The historians have concluded that Nadia and Nabadwip were synonymous then. But which name actually acceded to the current name is unknown. It is true that Nabadwip meant Nadia in earlier time. Nadia could have become Nabadwip as a result of malapropism. In times of Gour kingdom northern part of Nadia was part of the kingdom. During the Pal dynasty the rulers had set up another capital. Raja Laksman Sen had set up his capital at Nabadwip (1179- 1206 AD). The muslim historians had mentioned that the king had his capital named as Nadia. Hence Nadia and Nabadwip are same places. Later it must have become Nudia or Nadia. Many people conclude several meanings to these two names. Nabadwip is called as the collection of 9 islands by the famous writer on Baisnab culture Narahari and many other authors. He has mentioned in his book 'Nabadwip Porecromapadhyati' :

*II "Nadia Prithak Gram Noi
Nabadwip Nabadwip Bestito Je Hoi "II
"Noi Dwip E Nabadwip Ivaam"
"Prithak Prithak Kintu Hoi Ek Gram "II
"Joiche Rajdhani Kono Sthan
Jodwopi Totha Ek Naam "II*

The Ruins of Ballal Dhibi

The Kolkata Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India excavated the mound, during 1982-1988, and “exposed huge brick structures and various antiquities datable to c. 10th to 12th cent. AD. The brick structure include shrines on sides and a massive construction within an enclosure.” The antiquities indicate the possibility of Buddhist affiliation. The structural complex covers nearly 13,000 m². Experts opine the “stupa(vihara) of eighth/ ninth century was perhaps a seat of learning and pilgrimage up to the end of the 11th century.” It is about 25 km from Krishnanagar.

The ASI has divided the site into two parts – the mound and the remains of a fort. Both the sites are identified as Monuments of National Importance



Plate 1 : Ruins of Ballal Dhipi , Source : Nadia Municipality

According to Some Scholars, the meaning of Nabadwip is new island (dwip=island). In earlier days it was an island in the middle of Ganges surrounded by Ganges Jalangi Rivers. Later the river had changed its course and the island further. Gradually it changed into populated place that became the capital of kingdoms. The new village that was established upon the island was called 'Naba-dwip' . Some say that the name Nadia is derived from the collection of lamps (dia or pradip). According to Dr. Khudiram Das, Nadia is the derivative from the spelling of Nabadwip=n-o-di-o-Nadiaa=Nadia. The maiden mention Nadiaho or Nudia is in the muslim literary work Tabakat-I-Nasiri (1250 A.D.). As per the documents of Dr. Khudiram Das Nabadwip is actually an island surrounded by Jalangi and Bhagirathi rivers and the name Nadia was derived from it which later was identified with the entire district.

2.3. FAME OF NADIA : The history of Nadia is just not of Nabadwip. The history starts from the time of decline of the capital Nadia of Lakshman Sen. This is because history of Nadia during the medieval age is in total darkness. No body could say since when it was identified as a distinct place of importance. In the prehistoric time Nadia was supposed to be under the sea as assumed by the geologists. The deposition of silt by the Ganges and other rivers had given rise to this delta with silt, sand and gravels. In this regard the excerpt from J. H. E. Carrett is relevant- There can be little doubt that the delta through which the Ganges flows was built up from the sea in prehistoric times by the silt which the various distributaries of that river brought down from the plain and mountains for island. Historian Ptolemy has asserted the same in the map he had drawn the 2nd century. In those times Nadia was a marshy land and crisscrossed by many small rivers. 11 In the words of Carrett - "This marked the first stage in the reclamation of the land from the sea, and Nadia in those days appears to have been a fen country intersected with rivers and morasses, and probably inhabited by a few scattered settlements of fishermen and boatmen."

It is evident that even in ancient time Nadia was part of Bengal though it did not have any separate identity as at present. When the Maurya Empire was founded whether Nadia was part of its kingdom or not is not known. During the rule of Chandra Gupta - II, Bengal came under the rule of the Gupta Empire. After Skandagupta, the decline of the Gupta Empire had started. Independent Bengal was created between 525-75 AD. It is accepted that the present Nadia was a part of the independent Bengal then. In 750AD during the reign of raja Gopaldev

Nadia was a part of his kingdom. Presence of many idols and evidences of Buddhist sanghas from the time of Pal dynasty proves that it was under the rule of the Pal dynasty. Later during Sen rule and from the time of the muslim rule, the history of Nadia began. The history of Nadia can be divided into three phases. The 1st phase is between the times of attack by Ikhtiyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khalji to the arrival of SriChaitannya from 13th to 16th century AD. The history of the Nadia's education in the society to Krittibash Kahini of Fulia marks the 2nd phase 16th -18th century AD. The frequent change in the historical context--rise of Baro-Bhuiyan, decline of sultanate, rule of subedars under Mughal empire and beginning of Nawabi rule and later the advent of the British rule and how all these have affected Nadia

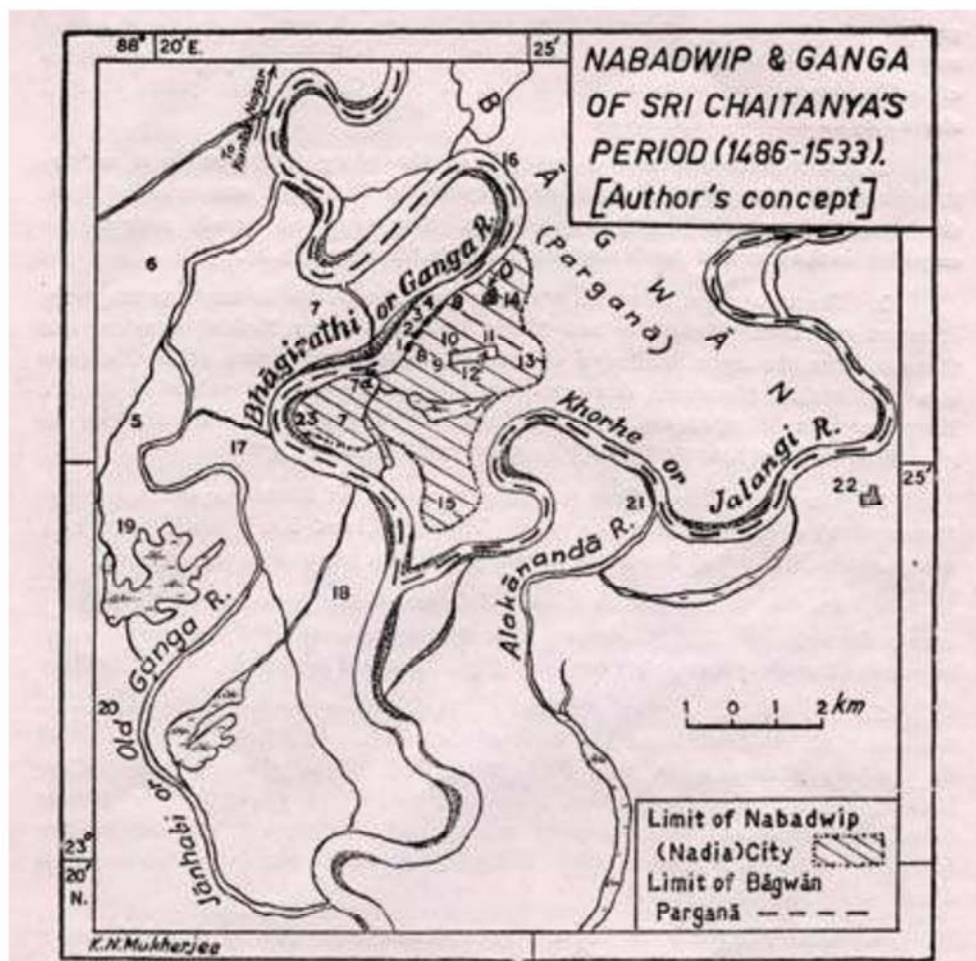
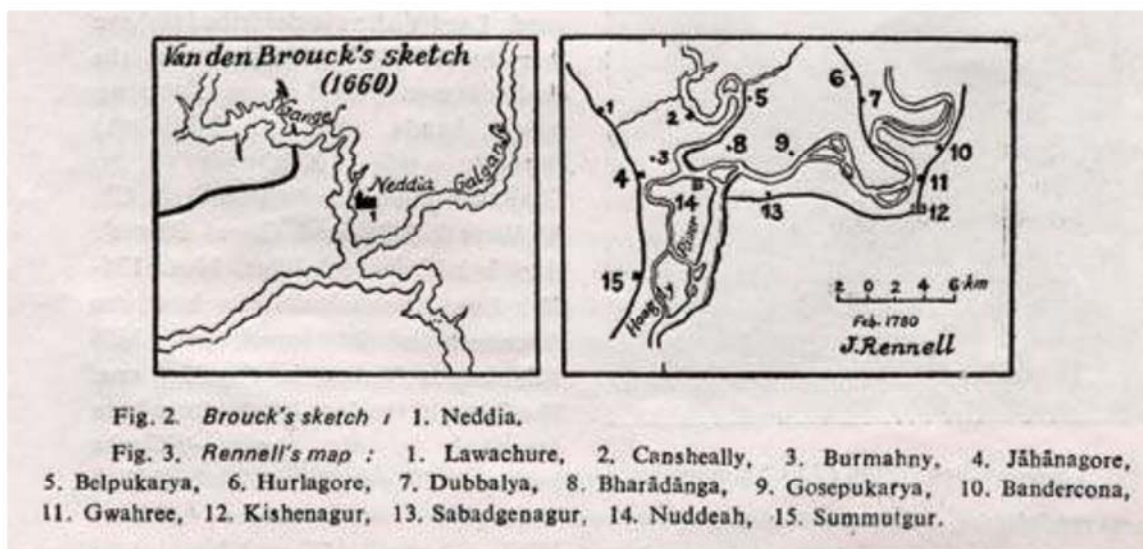


Fig. 8. Nabadwip and Ganga in 15th & 16th Century (author's concept) ; 1. Apan ghat, 2. Mādhāi ghat, 3. Hārakona ghat, 4. Nagaria ghat, 5. Janhunagar, 6. Purbasthali, 7. Rudrapāra, 7a. Char Nidaya (Nidaya ghat), 8. Ganganagar, 9. Nimāi's house (present Jogapith), 10. Shribās house (Angan), 11. Meternal aunt's house (present Sri Chaitanya Math), 12. Ballāl Dighi, 13. Mollāpara, 14. Simulia (present Bāmunpukur), 15. Gāidigāchha, 16. Belpukur, 17. Bāblāri, 18. Kullā, 19. Bidyānagar, 20. Samudragarh, 21. Subarnabihar, 22. Krishnanagar, 23. Present position of Ranchandrapur, O. Ballal palace ruins (Dhpi).

cannot be known in detail. But what can be known is how the Bhuiyans of Jessore had helped Mansingh against Pratapaditya and was Bhabananda Majumder was awarded the Farm an (1606, 1631 forman granted by Mughal Emperor) or title to the place and this Jed to the establishment of the royal kingdom of Krishnanagar according to 'Khitish Bangshabalicharit'. But what can be known is how the Bhuiyans of Jessore had helped Mansingh against Pratapaditya and was Bhabananda Majumder was awarded the Farm an (1606, 1631 forman granted by Mughal Emperor) or title to the place and this Jed to the establishment of the royal kingdom of Krishnanagar according to 'Khitish Bangshabalicharit'. The famous Krishnanagar royal family had produced equally prominent kings like Raja Krishnachandra who had patronized poet Bharatchandra the composer of 'Annadamongol'.

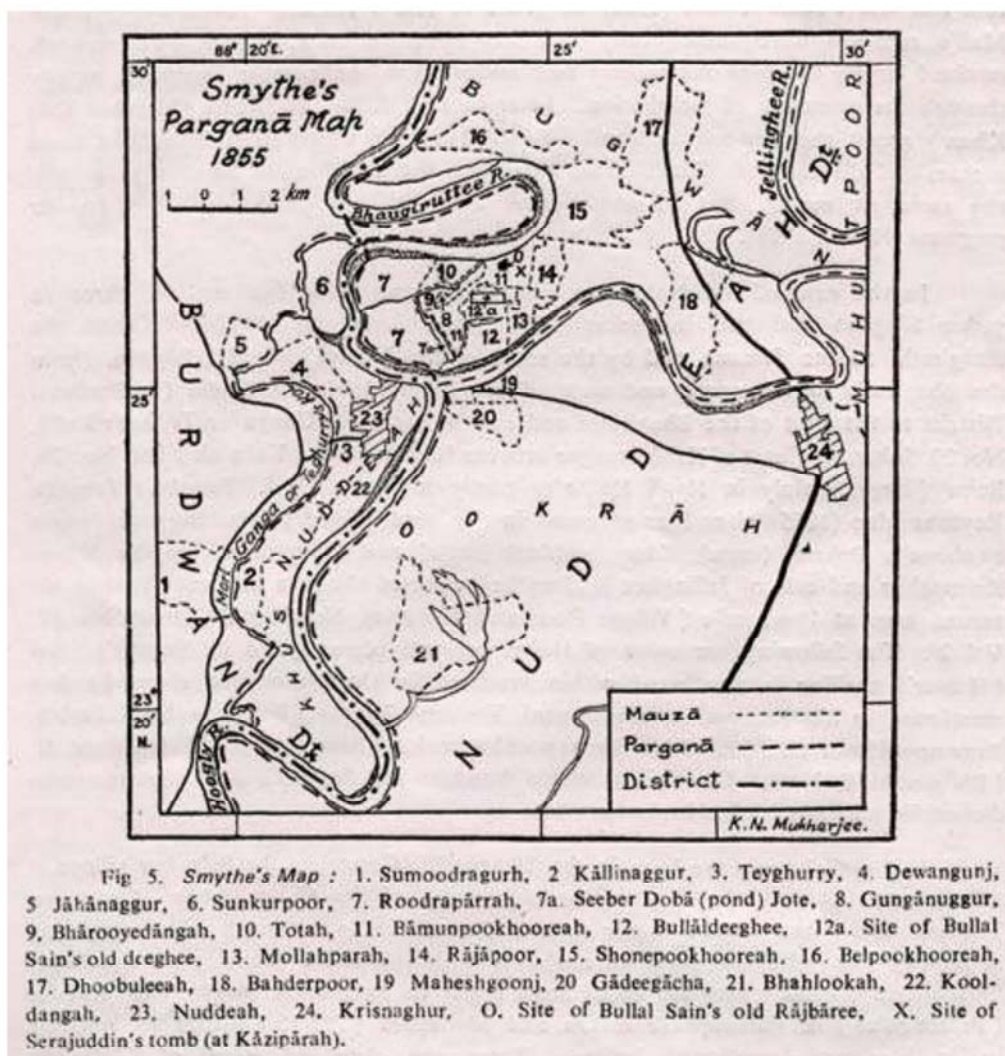
2.4. Geographical Boundaries: While writing the history of Nadia the foremost challenge is to define its boundaries. has constantly changed with time. There are many reasons to that. The boundary that was till 16th century had extended further with the establishment of royal



kingdom in the 1st half of the 17th century. Earlier it has been mentioned that Bhabananda Majumder had secured title to Nadia, Mohotpur, Marupdaha, Lepa, Multanpur, Kashirnpur, Boyesha, Mosunda etc of total 14 parganas in 1606 AD and established his rule. From this time Nadia was ruled independently by this dynasty.

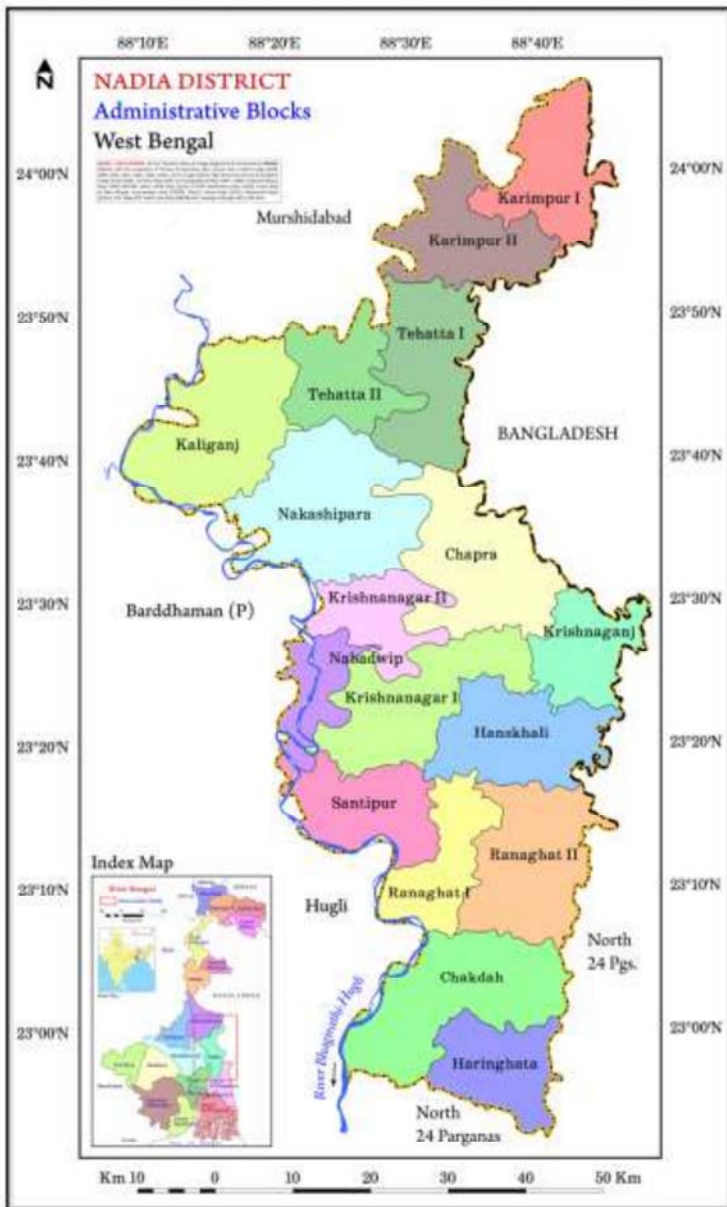
Again the boundaries changed between 1765-1883. In 1772 AD the map of Renell shows a bigger place as Nadia and included the current North 24 parganas, Hooghly, Jessore (Bangladesh) and parts of Murshidabad. In 1793 parts of Basirhat, Jessore district, Anarpur,

24 parganas were added. Like this in 1795 Burdwan and Hooghly, 1796- Murshidabad, 1835- Barasat, 1882-Jessore again, 1888-Burdwan again and parts of Nadia were added. In 1947 out of five mahakuma or divisions of Nadia, Kusthia, Choyadanga, Meherpur were added to East Pakistan. The independent India formed Nadia with the remaining two divisions Krishnanagar and Ranaghat. Under the rule of Pakistan the divided parts of Nadia was also called Nadia district in that country. The Indian side named the Nadia district as Nabadwip district. Later when the Pakistani side was named as Kusthia in Bangladesh India renamed the counterpart as Nadia.



During the rule of **Krishnachandra** it had Plassey in the north, Bay Bengal the south, Dhuliapur in the east, Bhagirathi in the west. Nadia was then formed with the 84 Parganas. Currently Nadia is only 3927 sq/km. It has Bangladesh to its Murshidabad in the northwest,

Bardhaman and Hugli in the West, North 24 Parganas in the South and the southeast .. The district is cut across by the tropic of cancer in two equal parts. For official work Nadia got its identity as a separate in 1787, 5yrs after the death of king Krishnachandra. The district shares boundary with Bangladesh border for 265km. It has 17 blocks of which 7 blocks are on the Bangladesh border and they are KarimpurI, Karim pur-II, Tehatta-I, Ranaghat-II, Chapra, Krishnaganj, Hanskhali.



Map 3 – Administrative Map of Nadia showing the following blocks



Plate 2 : Confluence of Jalangi and Bhagirathi



Plate 3 & 4 : Krishnanagar Palace , the seat of culture in Nadia District. Previously, the city (village) was called 'Reui' (রেউই). The Rajbari built here during the reign of Zaminder Krishna Chandra Roy



CHAPTER 3 : CELEBRATED CITIZENS

Be more humble than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, always offering respect onto others and never expecting any in return- Shri Chaitnya Mahaprabhu.

Chaitanya movement, is an intensely emotional movement of Hinduism that has flourished from the 16th century, mainly in Bengal (centering Nadia) and eastern Odisha (Orissa) state, India. It takes its name from the medieval **Saint Chaitanya** (1485–1533), whose fervent devotion to the god Krishna inspired the movement. For Chaitanya, the legends of Krishna and his youthful beloved, Radha, symbolized the mutual love between God and the human soul and were its highest expression. Bhakti (devotion), conceived as complete self-surrender to the divine will, superseded all other forms of religious practice for Chaitanya.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533) : Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu a.k.a. Mahāprabhu or "Great Lord") was a 15th century Indian saint and founder of **Achintya Bheda Abheda**. Devotees consider him an incarnation of Krishna. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mode of worshipping Krishna with ecstatic song and dance had a profound effect on Vaishnavism in Bengal. He was also the chief proponent of the Vedantic philosophy of Achintya Bheda Abheda. Mahaprabhu founded Gaudiya Vaishnavism (a.k.a. Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya). He expounded Bhakti yoga and popularized the chanting of the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra. He composed the Shikshashtakam (eight devotional prayers).

He is sometimes called Gauranga or Gaura due to his molten gold like fair complexion. His birthday is celebrated as Gaura-purnima. He is also called Nimai due to him being born underneath a Neem tree.



Plate 5 : "Sangkirtan" by Chaitnya-Mahaprabhu

Chaitanya was born as **Biswambhar Mishra** in 1486 as the second son of **Jagannath Mishra** and **Sachi Devi** in the town of Navadvipa in Nadiya, West Bengal, India. In his youth, Chaitanya was an erudite scholar, whose learning and skills in argumentation were next to none. Though religious at heart, Chaitanya did not display an active interest in the Vaishnava religion in his younger years.



Plate 6 & 7 : The sacred birth place of Mahaprabhu



b.Krittibas Ojha : Mahakavi Krittibas Ojha (1381–1461) was a medieval Bengali poet. His major contribution to Bengali literature and culture was Indian epic Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali. His work , the Śrīrām Pācālī , is popularly known as the **Krittivasi Ramayan**. His work, edited by Jaygopal Tarkalamkar, was published by the Serampore Mission Press. Krittibas Ojha was born in a Brahman family at Fulia village of modern-day Nadia district in the Indian state of Paschimbanga (West Bengal).He was the eldest among his father Banamali Ojha's six sons



Plate 8 & 9 : The Memorial of the Great Poet Krittibas , Phulia

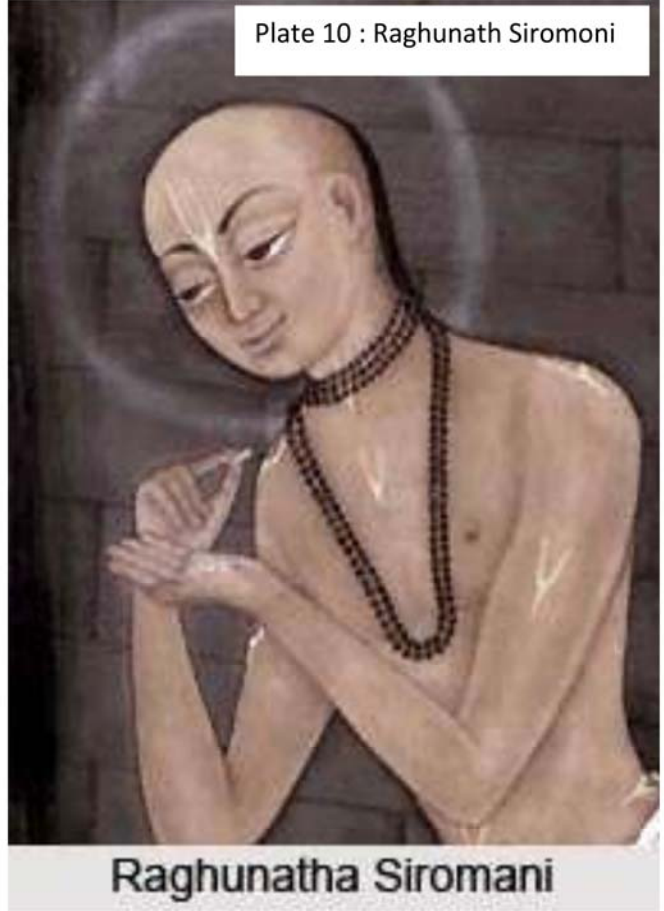
and one daughter.The word "Krittibas" is an epithet of Hindu god Shiva. It is known that



when Krittibas was born, his grandfather Murari Ojha was preparing for a pilgrimage to Chandaneswar in Odisha, hence the child was named after Shiva, the predominant deity of the nearest Odisha pilgrimage to Bengal. At the age of 11, Krittibas was sent to North Bengal (in other opinion, to Nabadwip) for higher studies. After finishing studies he was traditionally

honoured by the King of Gauda himself by the offerings of a garland, some sandal water and a silk scarf. Upon returning to his home at Fulia, he translated the Valmiki Ramayana into Bengali.

Raghunatha Shiromani (c. 1477–1547) was an Indian philosopher and logician. He was born at Nabadwip in present-day Nadia district of West Bengal state. He was the grandson of Śulapāṇi (c. 14th century CE), a noted writer on Smṛti from his mother's side. He was a pupil of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma. He brought the new school of Nyaya, Navya Nyāya, representing the final development of Indian formal logic, to its zenith of analytic power. Raghunatha's analysis of relations revealed the true nature of number, inseparable from the abstraction of natural phenomena, and his studies of metaphysics dealt with the negation or nonexistence of a complex reality. His most famous work in logic was the *Tattvacintāmaṇidīdhiti*, a commentary on the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* of Gangeśa Upādhyāya, founder of the



Navya Nyāya school. . A descriptive information of Raghunatha with some controversial issues (his connection with Mahaprabhu Shri Chaitanya) and bibliography are to be found at *Raghunatha: A Name of Negatives*. The contemporary deployment of a new category, *svatva* (endowment, possessed-ness, entitlement, my-ness), introduced by Raghunatha, is discussed in *Language: From I-identity to My-identity*

c. Aulchand : Aulchand (1686–1769) was a Bengali Hindu spiritual leader who founded the **Kartabhaja philosophy**. Kartabhajas consider Aulchand to be an incarnation of Vishnu and therefore think him one with Krishna and Gouranga. In 1694, Mahadeb Barui, a resident of Ula in Nadia discovered an abandoned male child in a betel plantation and decided to adopt him. At that time, the child was about eight years of age. He named the child Purna Chandra and raised him for 12 years. At the age of 20, Purna Chandra left his house. Thereafter he stayed in the house of a Gandhabanik for two years and then in the residence of a landlord for another one and half years. At the age of 24, he completely denounced the material life and went about wandering from place to place. He travelled to various regions especially in the districts of Nadia, 24 Parganas and the Sunderban area. In 1769, Aulchand left for his heavenly abode in the village of Boalia near present-day Kalyani. He was cremated in Parari village near Chakdaha in Nadia district.

d. Murali Pal : Sahebhdhani is one of many minor religious groups or traditions (sampraday) that came into being between the 17th and 19th century in Bengal. The first guru of Sahebhdhani, Murali Pal, received his mantra from a Sufi mystic living in Nadiya, a central district of Bengal. For the next three generations his sons continued the tradition as gurus, having established a centre of Sahebhdhanis in Brittihuda village, not far from Navadvip, a renowned centre of Vaishnavism. The philosophy of Sahebhdhanis is a mixture of Tantric, Vaishnav, Sahajiya Buddhist and Sufi ideas with a great emphasis on rejecting the holy scriptures of Hindu and Muslim communities. The religious practices of Sahebhdhanis focus on the human body, regarded as a microcosm. Sexual yogic practices (maithuna) are described in an intentional language (sandhya bhasa) in the songs composed by two poets Kubir Gosai and Jadubindu. Sahebhdhanis believe that the union of a man and a woman is necessary to achieve the state of non-duality. It is noteworthy that Sahebhdhanis, as well as other esoteric religious traditions of that time, arose - to some extent - as a low caste opposition against the oppression of orthodox Hindu and Muslim communities. Sahebhdhanis, now almost extinct, have left over 2000 songs that along with the songs of Bauls belong to the most interesting specimens of esoteric Bengali literature. The traditions of Sahebhdhanis and other communities that originated in Nadiya are an example of the rich cultural heritage of Bengal, its originality and very subtle philosophical thoughts.

c. Fakir Lalon Shah : Lalon also known as Fakir Lalon Shah, Lalon Shah, Lalon Fakir (October 1774 – 17 October 1890; Bengali: 1 Kartik 1179) was a prominent Bengali philosopher, author, **Baul** saint, mystic, songwriter, social reformer and thinker in British India. Regarded as an icon of Bengali culture, he inspired and influenced many poets, social and religious thinkers including Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Allen Ginsberg although he "rejected all distinctions of caste and creed". Widely celebrated as an epitome of religious tolerance, he was also accused of heresy during his lifetime and after his death. In his songs, Lalon envisioned a society where all religions and beliefs would stay in harmony. Lalon founded the institute known as **Lalon Akhrah in Cheuriya**, about 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) from Kushtia railway station (erstwhile Nadia now in Bangladesh) . His disciples dwell mostly in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Every year on the occasion of his death anniversary, thousands of his disciples and followers assemble at Lalon Akhrah, and pay homage to him through celebration and discussion of his songs and philosophy for three days. In 2004, Lalon was ranked number 12 in BBC's poll of the Greatest Bengali of all time.

Everyone asks, "What religion does Lalon belong to in this world?"

Lalon answers, "What does religion look like?"

I've never laid eyes upon it. Some use Malas (Hindu rosaries), others Tasbis (Muslim rosaries), and so people say they belong to a different religion. But do you bear the sign of your religion

when you come (to this world) or when you leave (this world)?

— Lalon

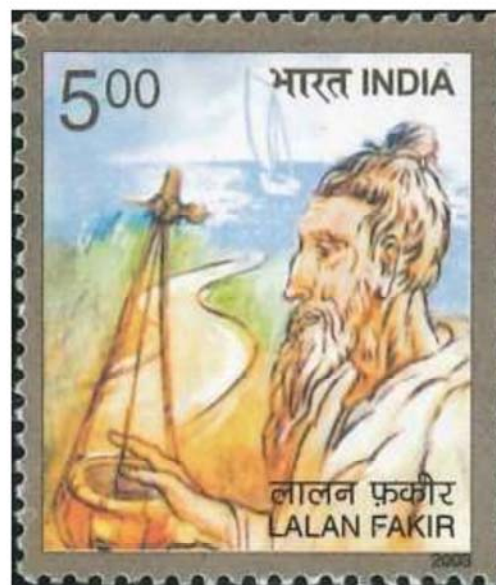


Plate 11&12 : This is only portrait of Lalon made during Lalon's lifetime, sketched on a boat at River Padma by Jyotirindranath Thakur. A commemorative postage stamp of :Lalon Fakir was issued by Govt. of India in 2003. The sketch was drawn by Nandalal Bose.

Lalon composed numerous songs and poems, which describe his philosophy. It is estimated that Lalon composed about 2,000 - 10,000 songs, of which only about 800 songs are generally considered authentic. Lalon left no written copies of his songs, which were transmitted orally and only later transcribed by his followers. Also, most of his followers could not read or write either, so few of his songs are found in written form. Rabindranath Tagore published some of the Lalon song in the monthly Prabasi magazine of Kolkata.

Among his most popular songs are

Shob Loke Koy Lalon Ki Jat Shongshare,

Khachar Bhitor Ochin Pakhi kyamne ashe jaay,

Jat Gelo Jat Gelo Bole,

Dekhna Mon Jhokmariay Duniyadari,

Pare Loye Jao Amai,

Milon Hobe Koto Dine,

Ar Amare Marishne Ma,

Tin Pagoler Holo Mela

Dhonno Dhonno Boli Tare

Emon Manob Jonom Aar Ki Hobe

The songs of Lalon aim at an indescribable reality beyond realism. He was observant of social conditions and his songs spoke of day-to-day problems in simple yet moving language. His philosophy was expressed orally, as well as through songs and musical compositions using folk instruments that could be made from materials available at home; the ektara (one-string musical instrument) and the duggi (drum).

Songs of Lalon were mainly confined to the baul sects. After the independence of Bangladesh, they reached the urban people through established singers. Many of them started using instruments other than the ektara and baya. Some started using classical bases for a polished presentation to appeal to the senses of the urban masses.

According to Farida Parveen, a renowned Lalon singer, the pronunciation of the words were also refined in order to make their meanings clearer, whereas the bauls' pronunciations are likely to have local influence.

d. Balaram Hari (1825 –1890) was a prominent Bengali saint, religious leader, songwriter, social reformer in Bengal of British India. He established the Balarami sect in Meherpur village of Nadia Bengal Presidency, British India (present-day Meherpur District, Bangladesh) The ideal of the Balarami is to lead a pure and simple life, above greed and sensuality. The most important feature of his cult was the hatred that he taught his followers to entertain towards Brahmans. Their religion is based on an expression of the body (deho sādhana). Balaram Hari won about twenty thousand followers among the low-caste population and Muslims. Balahadis are still to be found throughout the both Bengals. He was a lyricist and also composed the songs for his sect. The philosophy of his established Balarami sect is pure, simple life above greed and sensuality. He was the against the caste system of the Hinduism especially to the Brahmans. The certain common attributes of the religious like preachers or 'gurus', avatar was not present in his Balarami sect.[1] The followers of Bala Hari have no peculiar sect marks or uniform. Their religion is based on an expression of the body (deho sādhana). According to the Balaram Hari, the human body is made with eighteen attributes . Balaram Hari won about twenty thousand followers among the low-caste population and Muslims. Hindu disciples call their deity Hadirama, while Muslim disciples use the term Hadi-Allah. Some members of the sect are in the habit of begging for food from door to door. The Balaramis are still to be found at some places like Meherpur of Bangaldesh and Nishchintapur, Shabenagar, Palishipara, Natna, Hawlia, Arshinagor, goribpur in Nadia, Daikiari in Purulia, Shalunigram in Bankura of India etc. Some of his notbale disciples and songs

c. Swami Nigamananda Paramahansa (born Nalinikanta Chattopadhyay; 18 August 1880– 29 November 1935) is a Sadguru, yogi, guru and mystic well known in Eastern India.

He is associated with the Shakta tradition and viewed as a perfect spiritual master of tantra, gyan, yoga and prema or bhakti. His followers idealized him as their worshipped and beloved thakura. Nigamananda was born into a Bengali Brahmin family in the hamlet of Kutabpur in Nadia district (at present Meherpur district Bangladesh). He was a sannyasi from Adi Shankar's dashanami sampradaya. After his ordination as a sannyasi, he came to be known as Paribrajakacharya



Plate 13 : Swami Nigamananda

Paramahansa Srimat Swami Nigamananda Saraswati Deva. Nigamananda achieved siddhi (perfection) in four different sadhanas (spiritual disciplines): tantra, gyan, yoga and prema. Based on these experiences, he wrote five Bengali language books: Brahmacharya Sadhana Yogi Guru Gyani Guru Tantrika Guru and Premik Guru. Nigamananda reportedly experienced the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

After retiring from Saraswata Matha, Nigamananda spent the last fourteen years of his life in Puri. Durga Charan Mohanty, a school student, met him at Nilachala Kutir in 1930 and recognized him as sadguru. Mohanty became Nigamananda's disciple and wrote books for Nigamananda's establishment Nilachala Saraswata Sangha and translated Nigamananda's Bengali books into Odia. Under Mohanty's encouragement, more than 100 ashrams operate in Odisha. Mohanty continued to spread the message of Nigamananda until his death on 7 December 1985.

c. Kartikeyo Chandra Roy (1820-1885) : Roy, (Dewan) Kartikeya Chandra (1820-1885) lyricist, writer, classical singer, served the Nadia Raj family as a private tutor and music instructor and finally as the diwan or principal revenue officer. As a performer of KHEYAL, Kartikeya Chandra introduced this branch of music to the court of NADIA and was also instrumental in popularising this genre in Bengal. He composed many popular songs which he published under the title of *Gitamanjari* (1875).

Kartikeya Chandra Roy played a crucial role in the making of his son, DWIJENDRA LAL ROY, the great lyricist and composer. However, perhaps his greatest contribution to Bengal history is his *Atmajiban Charita* (An Account of My Life) in which he candidly described the social scenario of early nineteenth-century Bengal. This book serves as a unique source of information for the social and cultural historians of nineteenth-century Bengal. [Sirajul Islam]

d. Dwijendra Lal Roy (1863-1913) Roy, Dwijendralal (1863-1913) poet, playwright and lyricist, was born on 19 July 1863 at Krishnanagar in Nadia district, where his father, KARTIKEYA CHANDRA ROY, was the dewan. His mother, Prasannamayee Devi, was a descendant of Adwaita Prabhu. Dwijendralal graduated in arts from Hughli College in 1883 and obtained his MA degree in English from Presidency College a year later. He then travelled to London where he obtained the FRAS in agriculture and the MRAC and MRAS from the Royal Agriculture College and Agricultural Society. Returning to India he received training in survey and revenue assessment in Madhya Pradesh and was appointed a deputy in the government. He was later appointed a deputy magistrate in Dinajpur. In 1890, while serving as a settlement officer at Sujamuta pargana in Burdwan estate, he came into conflict with the governor on the issue of peasants' rights.



Plate 14: D.L.Roy

In 1905 Dwijendralal established a literary society, **Purnima Milon**, in Kolkata. He became the editor of the monthly **BHARATVARSA** in 1913. Dwijendralal had a literary bent of

mind and started writing poems while still in his teens. While still a student he wrote Aryagatha (part 1, 1882). During his stay in England he wrote The Lyrics of Ind in 1886. Among his other books are collections of poems and songs: Aryagatha (part 2, 1894), Hasir Gan (1900), Mandra (1902), Alekhya (1907), and Triveni (1912). His sketches and satires include Ekghare (1889), Samaj Bibhrat O Kalki Avatar (1895), Tryahasparsha (1900), Prayashchitta (1902), and Punarjanma (1911). He also wrote plays, many of which are included in university syllabi. Among his mythical plays are Pasani (1900), Sita (1908) and Visma (1914). His social plays include Parapare (1912) and Banganari (1916). He also wrote a number of historical plays: Tarabai (1903), Rana Pratapsingh (1905), Mebar Patan (1908), Nurjahan (1908), Sajahan (1909) and Chandragupta (1911). Most of his plays were successfully staged in Kolkata and elsewhere. He is specially remembered for his historical plays. He was also a well-known composer of modern songs; *dwijendragiti* still form a regular feature of radio and television programmes. He was known also for his commitment to the uplifting of women, and his strong stance against Hindu religious orthodoxy and ritual. His collection Hanshir Gaan was a satire against upper-caste Hindu dominance of religious practices. He died on 17 May 1913 in Kolkata.

e. Iswarchandra Gupta (1812– 1859)

Ishwar Chandra Gupta (March 1812- January 23, 1859) was a Bengali poet and writer. Gupta was born in the village Kanchanpolli or Kanchrapara Chabbis Pargana (currently in the state of West Bengal, India).

কে বলে ঈশ্বর গুপ্ত, ব্যপ্ত চরাচর,
যাহার প্রভায় প্রভা পায় প্রভাকর।

*Ke bole Ishwar Gupta, byapta charachar,
Jahar prabhaye prabha paye Prabhakar..*

'Ishwar' means God, 'Gupta' means hidden and
'Prabhakar' is the sun. So a translation runs:

*Who says God is hidden? He is omnipresent
From Him the Sun gets its luminescence.*

Also, Ishwar (Chandra) Gupta ran the journal *Prabhakar*. So a second meaning of the poem, making a tongue-in-cheek reference to the author, runs: Who says Ishwar (Gupta) is hidden? His reach touches the world For his brilliance makes the *Prabhakar* luminescent.



Plate 15 : Iswarchandra Gupta

f. Jatindranath Sengupta : Sengupta, Jatindranath (1887-1954) a pessimist poet, was born at Shantipur in the district of Nadia of WEST BENGAL. After receiving the BE degree (1911) from Shibpur Engineering College, he joined Nadia District Board and then Kasimbazar Raj-Estate as an overseer. He entered into the literary world by writing poems and soon came to be recognised as a major poet. Although he wrote verse in the age of Rabindranath, he was able to break face of his influence and earn fame for his distinctive style.



Jatindranath was a creative writer who made society and contemporary life his theme. He ed these subjects satirically. All his poetical works reflect a deep pessimism that life is full of ow and happiness ephemeral-seem to be his viewpoint. But the conclusion that life was full of ow was not for him the result of an outburst of emotion; on the contrary, he judged life in the : of his experience and observation. He published the following collections of ns: Marichika (Mirage, 1923), Marushikha (Flame of the desert, 1927), Marumaya (Illusion of desert, 1930), Sayam (Evening, 1940), Triyama (Night, 1948), Nishantika (End of the night, 7).

g. Dinabandhu Mitra (1831-1873) : Mitra, (Rai Bahadur) Dinabandhu (1830-1873) eminent dramatist, was born in 1830 at Chouberia in Nadia, and was the son of Kalachand Mitra. His given name was Gandharva Narayan, but he changed it to Dinabandhu Mitra.

Dinabandhu Mitra's education started at a village *pathshala*. His father arranged a job for him on a zamindar's estate (1840). But the small boy fled to Kolkata, where he started working in the house of his uncle, Nilmani Mitra. Around 1846, he was admitted to the free school run by JAMES LONG. Dinabandhu was a bright student and won a number of scholarships. In 1850, he enrolled at Hindu College and was awarded scholarships for academic excellence. However, he did not appear in his last examination, and, instead, started working as a postmaster at Patna (1855). He served in various posts in the Postal Department in Nadia, Dhaka and Orissa.



Plate 17 : Dinabandhu Mitra

In 1870, he was made supernumerary post- master in Calcutta. In 1872, he joined the Indian Railway as an inspector. Dinabandhu started writing while still at college. Inspired by ISHWAR CHANDRA GUPTA he began writing poems which were published in different journals. His poems attracted the attention of intellectuals, but his favourite genre was the drama. His work in the postal department had taken him to various parts of the country where he had come in contact with different sorts of people. These experiences were reflected in his plays. Among his books of poems are *Suradhuni Kavya* (first part in 1871, second part in 1876), *Dvadash Kavita* (1872). His plays include *Nildarpan* (1860), *Nabin Tapasvini* (1863), *Biye Pagla Budo* (1866), *Sadhabar Ekadashi* (1866), *Lilavati* (1867), *Jamai Barik* (1872), *Kamale Kamini* (1873), and *Jamalaye Jibanta Manus*. He also wrote a novel titled *Poda Mahehshvar*.

Dinabandhu is, however, primarily known for his play about the plight of indigo farmers *Nildarpan*. MICHAEL_MADHUSUDAN_DUTT translated the play into English and Reverend James Long published it, an act for which Long was fined. When the play was staged, ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR was so taken in by the realism of the performance that he threw a shoe at the actor. The actor accepted the shoe as a compliment. BANKIMCHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY compared *Nildarpan* to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its role in arousing people's awareness of the evils of indigo plantations. Dinabandhu was awarded the title 'Rai Bahadur' by the British government for services rendered at the Battle of Lushai. He died on 1 November 1876.

h.Jagadananda Roy (1869-1933) : Jagadananda Roy was born in a landed aristocratic family of Krishnanagar, Nadia. He taught in a local missionary school for some time. His flair for writing on scientific matters in a simple and lucid style brought him into contact with Rabindranath who was then the editor of *Sadhana*. Rabindranath found these writings very attractive and when he found that Jagadananda was in dire straits, he offered him a job on his estate. Knowing that this work was not appropriate for someone like Jagadananda, he also asked him to teach his children. When the Brahmacharyasrama was founded, he brought Jagadananda over to Santiniketan as a teacher. He was the first Sarvadyaksha of the school. A dedicated teacher, he taught continuously till his retirement in 1932, after which he continued to take Mathematics classes voluntarily.

He wrote a number of books on popular science, his mission being to propagate scientific truth in simple Bengali in the manner of Ramendrasundar Trivedi. *Graha-nakshatra*, *Prakritiki*, *Vaijnaniki*, *Jagdishchandrer Avishkar*, *Banglar Pakhi* were some of his books.

i. Soumitra Chattopadhyaya, Soumitra Chatterjee (also spelt as Chattopadhyay; 19 January

1935 – 15 November 2020) was an Indian film actor, director, playwright, writer and poet. He is best known for his collaborations with director Satyajit Ray, with whom he worked in fourteen films. Starting with his debut film, *Apur Sansar* (The World of Apu, 1959), the third part of The Apu Trilogy, as adult Apu, he went on to work in several films with Ray, including *Abhijan*

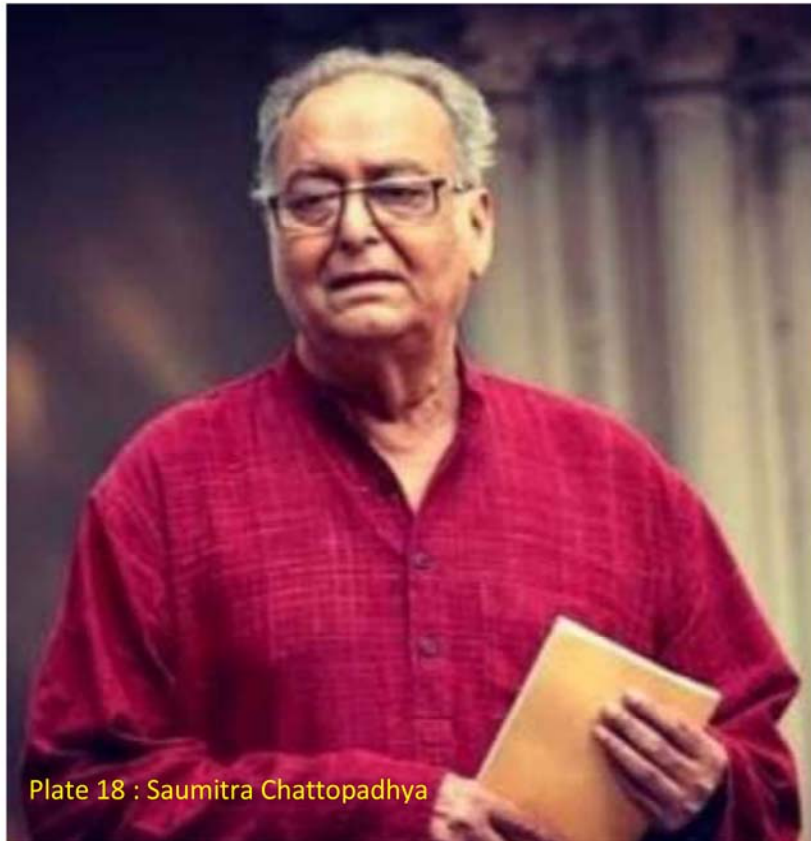


Plate 18 : Soumitra Chattopadhyaya

(The Expedition, 1962), *Charulata* (The Lonely Wife, 1964), *Aranyer Din Ratri* (Days and Nights in the Forest, 1969), *Ashani Sanket* (Distant Thunder, 1973), *Sonar Kella* (The Fortress, 1974) and *Joi Baba Felunath* (The Elephant God, 1978) as Feluda, *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980), *Ghare Baire* (The Home and The World, 1984), *Shakha Proshakha* (1990) and *Ganashatru* (Enemy of the People, 1989).

He also worked with other noted directors of Bengali cinema, such as Mrinal Sen in *Akash Kusum* (Up in the Clouds, 1965); Tapan Sinha in *Kshudhita Pashan* (Hungry Stones, 1960), *Jhinder Bandi* (1961); Asit Sen in *Swaralipi* (1961), Ajoy Kar in *Parineeta* (1969), and Tarun Mazumdar in *Ganadevata* (1978). He acted in more than 210 films in his career. He also received critical acclaim for his directorial debut *Stree Ki Patra* (1986) which was based on the Bengali short story *Streer Patra* by Rabindranath Tagore.

Chatterjee was the recipient of multiple honours and awards. Chatterjee was the first Indian film personality who was conferred with France's highest award for artists, *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* (1999). He was also awarded the *Padma Bhushan* (2004) and France's highest civilian award *Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur* (2017). He received two National Film

Awards as an actor and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his work in theatre. In 2012, he received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, India's highest award in cinema given by the government of India for lifetime achievement. In 2013, IBN Live named him as one of "The men who changed the face of the Indian Cinema"

j. Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, Athlete :

Jyotirmoyee Sikdar is a Member of Parliament, India representing Krishnagar (Lok Sabha constituency) of West Bengal in the 14th Lok Sabha. She is affiliated to the Communist Party of India (Marxist). She was an athlete and won the Bronze medals in 800 m and 1500 m events in the 1998 Asian Games. She is a recipient of the **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna** award for the year 1998-1999. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2003. In August 2004, she was in the news when her husband was arrested on charges of running a sex racket in Kolkata.



Plate 19 : Jyotirmoyee Sikdaar

k. Jhulan Goswami (born 25 November 1983, Nadia, Bengal, India) is an all round cricketer



Plate 20 : Jhulan Goswami

who plays for the India national women's cricket team, Bengal Women, East Zone Women as well as the Asia Women XI women's cricket team. She is currently the Indian Women's cricket team captain. On 1 February 2009, she was appointed to lead the team for the upcoming world cup.

An integral part of the team, Jhulan is noted for both her batting and bowling (right arm average of less than 20. In the 2006-07 season she guided the Indian team to first test series win in England. She won the ICC Women's Player of the Year 2007.

CHAPTER 4 : RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SYNCRETISM OF NADIA IN MEDIEVAL BENGAL

The district of Nadia was for centuries a great centre of literature and learning. Joydev, the earliest Bengali poet and composer of the Geet Govinda was one of the ornaments of King Laksman Sen's court in the 12th century while Krittibas Ojha , the medieval Bengali poet who brilliantly re-scripted the great epic of Ramayana was born in Fulia. It was in Nadia that Raghunath Shiromoni , with permission of his teachers at Mithila, set up the famous school of logic (tarkashastra) on the NavyaNvaya system which produced great logicians in the 15th century. Sri Chaitnya Mahaprabhu ,the great religious leader and social reformer who spearheaded the **Bhakti Cult** in Bengal was born in Nabadwip. Later in the 18th century court of famous king **Krishnachandra Rai** at Krishnanagar , literature flourished again with Ram Prasad Sen and Bharat Chandra Rai being his 2 chief poets. Gopal Bhanr the legendary wit , immortalized in countless stories , was Krishnachandra's court jester . Under Krishnachandra's rule ,art and culture flourished and it was at this King's initiative and encouragement that some reputed potters from Natore in present day Bangladesh moved to Bangladesh moved to Krishnanagar.

The major 2 religion , Hindus and the Muslims have been living together in Bengal for about 800 years. Islam penetrated Indian lives into three phases: 1. Conflict, 2. Mutual Appreciation and 3. Assimilation.4 The third phase of assimilation is very significant in the cultural and religious lives of Bengal , especially in the Medieval period. This trend of assimilation among the Bengalis will be highlighted in this paper. The contemporary vernacular literature informs us that both the Hindus and the Muslims broke the barriers of religious injunctions and performed common worships in many cases- such as **Pir Worship**. It is to be noted that syncretism was visible in **Sufism, Pirism, Nathism, Neo-Vasnavism, Kartabhaja** sect, life-style of the Bauls, practices of the scroll painters etc. and the gamut of Bengali literature namely Mangal Kavyas, Vaisnava literature, translated works, Pir literature, Sufi literature, Punthi literature, Atharo Bhatir Panchali, Purba Banga Gitika, Mymensing Gitika etc. witness syncretism in the Bengali society.

a. Vaisnavism: While Islam was spreading in Bengal, a new force arose which was destined to arrest its pace with the philosophy of equality and brotherhood under the leadership of Sri Chaitanya (1486A.D.- 1533A.D.). The Bengalis became transformed into an entire and integrated nation by the cords of Bhakti of Chaitanya. He had deep love and vast sympathy for human beings. Many poets composed verses about him and his philosophy. The poems versified by the love of God and Radha-Krishna love or dalliance are known as ‘Vaisnava Kavya’. The evidence gleaned from Vaisnava literature throws light on both sides of the picture of social and cultural syncretism in Bengal. Brindaban Das and Krishnadas Kaviraj were the two most famous authors of the Vaisnava literature in the Sultanate Bengal. They wrote that the qazi of Nabadwip tortured the Vaisnavas. But they were not tortured out of communal feeling but for political reasons. The non-Vaisnavas like the Saktas and the Naiyaiks complained to the qazi against the Vaisnavas to ban Namkirtan. The qazi ordered to ban Namkirtan for avoiding conflict between the Vaisnavas and non-Vaisnavas among the Hindus. But it is true that there is not a single instance that the Muslim masses opposed Vaisnava movement in any way. It is to be noted in this connection that being angry at the decision of the qazi Sri Chaitanya raided the house of qazi with his followers in Nadia, the latter referred his friendly relations with Chaitanya’s maternal grandfather, Nilambar Chakrabarty. “According to village relationship Chakrabarty is my uncle, Village relationship is purer or truer than even blood relationship. Nilambor Chakrabarty is your grandfather, So in this connection you are my nephew.”

Vainavism borrowed many Islamic elements, particularly Sufi elements. Enamul Haque have sought to trace parallels between Vasnivism and Sufism, viz. *dasha* and *hal* (ecstasy); *Krishnanama* and *Zikr* (recital of God’s name); *kirtana* and *sama* (Sufi musical gatherings) and attribute the deep pantheistic monotheism of Vaisnavism, its emphasis of Divine love and anti-caste attitude to Sufi influence. It is very interesting to note that many Muslim poets appeared with Vainava inclination in Mughal Bengal. They preached the message of religious syncretism, tolerance and synthesis in their poems. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee has traced 162 Muslim poets with Vaisnava sentiments in his book, *Banglar Vainavbhabapanna Mussalman Kavir Padamanjusha*.

b.Sufism: The contribution of the Sufis in the field of religious syncretism in Bengal deserves mention. The Sufis seeks to explore the spiritual world not through the cold formalism of the law (**Shariah**) but through the warm mystic path of way (Tariqah), of yearning after and coming to union (**wasl**) and fellowship with God. Essentially, therefore, it is a faith, representing a spiritual, emotional and esoteric reality.

Sufism came to India from central and west Asia and penetrated Indian lives both in the towns and villages. It came to Bengal before the Turkish conquest of Nadia by Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji. Since the middle of the 13th century the number of the Sufis was increasing and in the 14th century they reached their zenith. They established shrines in different parts of Bengal and propagated Islam. The Brahminical society of Sena period lost its control on the masses then. There was neither a religious personality nor a guru among the Hindus who could console the sufferers. In this critical juncture of Hinduism, the lower class Hindus were very much impressed by the liberal and democratic ideas of the Sufis and their supernatural activities and was interested to embrace Islam. Historians believe that there are apparent similarities between Indian Hindu thought and Sufi doctrine of Islam, especially in their developed form.

The **Bauls and the Sahayias** are the off-shoots of Sufism in Bengal. They also played very important role for peace and harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims in the society of United Bengal. Lalan Faqir is the most famous among the **Bauls**. One of his song is quoted below for better understanding of the role of the Bauls for assimilation and syncretism in Bengal. *“God ever presents at the door of the devotee and he does not make any distinction of caste and creed, between a Hindu and a Muslim. As the world is lighted by the rays of the moon, so every living being is born out of the same Divine Spirit.”* Here Lalon is arguing oneness of human being and it is more than a sign of syncretism. The Bengali society responded to Lalan’s call.

c.Popular Cults, Local Customs, Superstitions, Religious Rites and Ceremonies : The Muslims ruled Bengal for more than five hundred and fifty years. During this long period both the Hindus and the Muslims came into close contact with each other. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar writes, “As a result of long contact between the two communities, the lower classes of both the Hindus and the Muslims came to have common objects of worship. Members of one

community appeared to the gods and saints of other, failing their own, during illness or distress”.

d.Kartabhaja Dharma (Religion): Mutual religious practices were noticeable between the Hindus and the Muslims in Bengal between 16th to 18th centuries. Out of the mutual practices of both the communities, a new religious sect named ‘Kartabhaja Dharma’ grew up in Bengal in the 18th century. This sect was also known as ‘Satya Dharma’, ‘Satimar Dharma’, ‘Ekmoni Dharma’etc. Aule Chand (birth is unknown, but died in 1769) was the founder of this sect and preached his Dharma in the Nadia district of Bengal, and had as his disciples Muslims as well as Hindus. From the school of Sri Chaitanya the Kartabhaja sect branched out and this sect preached the ‘Satya Dharma’ (True Religion). He left behind Bais Faqir (22 disciples), Ram Saran Paul, his wife, Saraswati Devi (Satima), his son Ram Dulal (Dulal Chand) and Kanai Ghose. They took the responsibility of preaching the spirit of ‘Kartabhaja Dharma’. They also organized the sect and laid down its precepts in a series of songs. The doctrine of the Kartabhajas is as noted by Tarachand³⁴ given below. 1. There is



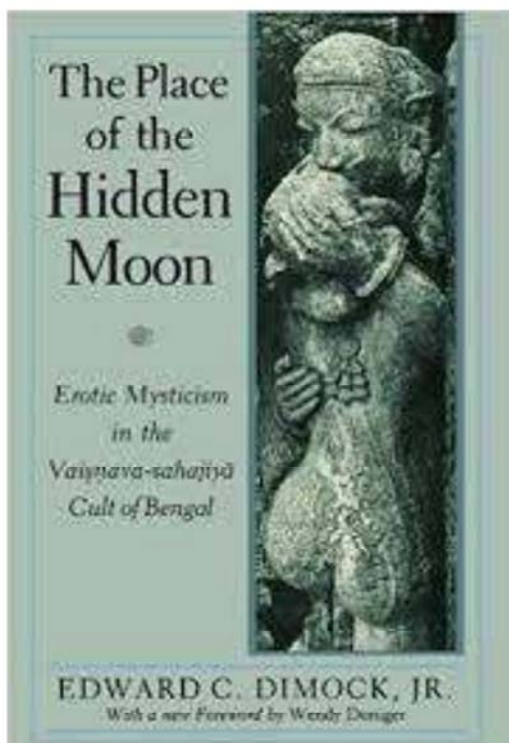
only one God, who is incarnate in Karta. 2. The spiritual guide ‘Mahasaya’ must be all in all to his Barati or disciples. 3. The mantra or religious formula of the sect must be repeated five times a day as a means of salvation and of obtaining material prosperity. 4. Meat and wine must be abstained from. 5. Friday must be held sacred and should be spent in religious

meditation and discussion. 6. There is no distinction in the cult between the upper, the lower or between the Hindus and the Muslims. A Musalman has more than once got the rank of a teacher. The members of the sect eat together, at least once or twice in a year. 7. No outward sign of adherence to the sect is required. A Hindu may retain his sacred thread, and a Muslim need not shave on becoming a member of the sect. 8. Fervid love or Bhakti is the only religious exercise necessary. From the above doctrine of Kartabhaja sect it can be stated that this new sect accepted the theory of the unity of God, five prayers a day, Friday prayers, egalitarian concept and the idea of one leader from Islam. The doctrines of the sect are the mixture of Islam and Hinduism. That is why it was equally popular among the Hindus and

the Muslims. The credit of the sect is that it brought the two communities in close contact with each other in the 18th century Bengal.

e. Balarami sect in Meherpur village of Nadia : Balaram Hari was a prominent Bengali saint, religious leader, songwriter, social reformer in Bengal of British India. He established the Balarami sect in Meherpur village of Nadia Bengal Presidency, British India (present-day Meherpur District, Bangladesh). The ideal of the Balarami is to lead a pure and simple life, above greed and sensuality. The most important feature of his cult was the hatred that he taught his followers to entertain towards Brahmans. Their religion is based on an expression of the body (*deho sādhana*). Balaram Hari won about twenty thousand followers among the low-caste population and Muslims. Balahadis are still to be found throughout the both Bengals. He was a lyricist and also composed the songs for his sect. The certain common attributes of the religious like preachers or 'gurus', avatar was not present in his Balarami sect. The followers of Bala Hari have no peculiar sect marks or uniform. Their religion is based on an expression of the body (*deho sādhana*). According to the Balaram Hari, the human body is made with eighteen attributes .

f. Vaishnava-Sahajiya Sect : Vaishnava-Sahajiya is an unorthodox Tantric cult practice (non-vedic practice) that centred in Bengal, India. It had precursors from the 14th century, but originated in its definitive form in the 16th century. **Sahajiya-vaishnavism** is generally considered as a 'left-hand path' (Sanskrit: *vāmācāra*) and apostate (Sanskrit: *apasampradaya*;



see Sampradaya) from the "orthodox" or vedic standpoint, though followers claim that this view stems from a superficial understanding. There are both right-handed and left-handed Vaishnava-Sahajiya Dakshinachara may be rendered into English as "right (Dakshina) (path to) attainment (chara)", while Vamachara may be rendered into English as "left (vama) (path to) attainment (chara)". The Dakshinacharyas ("Right Attainers") are the ones that practice the Panchamakara ('Five Ms') symbolically or through substitutions, whilst the Vamacharyas ("Left Attainers") are the ones that practice it

literally. The Vaisnava-Sahajiyas operated in secrecy because their sexual tantric practices were viewed with marked disdain by other religious communities. In their literature they adopted an enigmatic style employing substitutions and correspondences that has come to be known as twilight language (Sanskrit: *saṃdhyā-bhāṣā*). Little is known about their prevalence or practices.

The cult was centered in Bengal. It began in the 16th century, although predecessors existed as early as the 8th century in the same city. The founder is generally thought to be **Baru Chandidas**, who lived in the 14th century. In order to avoid unwanted attention, the group spoke of its activities in cryptic language.

Members of this lineage enacted the 'group in a round' Ganachakra (Sanskrit) or circle dance now known as the Rasa-lila of Krishna. It is a mystery religion rite, wherein the followers participated in a rite of communion, trance possession, and non-difference or nonduality with 'deity' (Sanskrit: *ishtadevata*).

The **Vaishnava-Sahajiya** sought religious experience through the five senses which included human coupling and sexual love. Sahaja (Sanskrit: “easy” or “natural”) as a system of worship was prevalent in the Tantric traditions common to both Hinduism and Buddhism in Bengal as early as the 8th–9th centuries. "Sahaja" was evident in the teachings and poetry of Mahasiddha Saraha (c.8th century CE, Bengal, Nalanda).

The tradition used the romance between Krishna and Radha as a metaphor for union with God, and sought to experience that union through its physical reenactment. It teaches that the ideal way to understand the union of humanity is to transcend the profane aspects of sexual intercourse and experience it as a divine act. **The Vaisnava-Sahajiya** creed is a synthesis of these various traditions.

Pirism: Pir worship was a form of joint worship of the Hindus and the Muslims in Medieval Bengal. The large settlement of foreign Muslims side by side with the Hindus and the converts enabled Islam to strike its root deep in society. The worship of local god and goddesses largely contributed to it.

Ghazi Vijaya and Satya Pir Vijay of Faizullah (16th Century); and Ray Mangal, Shasti Mangal, Sitala Mangal and Kamala Mangal (17th Century) of Krishna Das and Dharma Mangal of Ruparam all indicate clearly that Bengali Hindus were devoted to Pirs in the late 16th and the 17th centuries, because the Vaisnavas had lost some of their influences over the society at that time. A large number of Hindus began to regard these pirs as their gods, and

their tombs were visited by the Hindus and Muslims alike. Again the pre-existing guru-chela relationship of the Hindus found a similar ideal in the pir-muridi relationship of Islam. To the convert Muslims, pirs are like the Tantric gurus and their tombs and dargahs (shrines) were like the Chaitayas and stupas of the Buddhists. As a result of Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis, worship of numerous pirs originated in Bengal, e.g. Satya Pir, Manik Pir, Kalu Ghazi, Bara Khan Ghazi and others.

A medieval Bengali poet wrote, “The pirs of the Muslims became the gods of the Hindus. They manifested themselves and were worshipped by both the communities.” So pir worship was a great example of syncretism between the Hindus and the Muslims and it developed cordial relation between the two communities. Towards the closing period of the Mughal rule in Bengal the first effort towards the fusion of religions between the Hindus and the Muslims through the Medium of the ballad of **Satya Pir and Satya Narayan**.

From 16th to 18th centuries various local Pir cults grew up in Bengal with traditions and legends around some Muslim saints (pirs) and mythical heroes of uncertain identity which



Plate 22: Buro Saheber Dargah, Matiari , Nadia where people of all faith *visit* to pay homage to his soul and pray to have their wishes (*mannat*) granted.

became very popular among the masses of the both communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. Khawajah Khizir, Pir Badr, Zindah Ghazi, Madar Pir, Panch Pir etc. are very important among them. They were worshipped by the masses irrespective of religious boundary and both of

them became the devotees of the pirs and made them busy in the invocation of the Pirs. So it is a clear evidence of syncretistic culture of Bengal.

CHAPTER 5 : THE ART AND CRAFT OF NADIA

A. Clay Art of Ghurni : Ghurni is a neighborhood of Krishnanagar in Nadia District in the state of West Bengal. It is the centre for the production of clay dolls, often referred to as Krishnanagar clay dolls. Krishnanagar is situated at the right bank of river Jalangee in the Nadia district. Its geographical location is 23⁰ 24’N latitude and 83⁰ 31’E longitude. Total area is 15.80sq.km. Ghurni, the main industrial centre, is situated to the south east of Krishnanagar. Other clay doll manufacturing villages are Sastitala, Rathtala, Kumorpara and Natunbazar which are located within the close proximity of Krishnanagar.



Plate 23: Miniature Clay Dolls of Ghurni , Krishnanagar , Nadia

History : Historical records tell us that the marvells started under the kind patronage of Maharaja Krishna Chandra Ray, the King of Krishnanagar during 1710-83 AD. He was a

connoisseur of fine arts, literature, and music, and benevolently supported artisans in continuous improvements of their trades.

It is said that he relocated a large number of potter families from Natore in the erstwhile East Bengal (Bangladesh of today) to Ghurni and commissioned them to create clay idols of Hindu gods and goddesses for the palace and more. Impressed by their skills, the king then went on to support them in creating clay dolls with more varied subjects.

During his reign, the arts and crafts flourished so much that even the colonial British rulers could not ignore it! Starting with idols of Hindu deities to creating miniature clay dolls of real-life village people resplendent in their joie de vivre along with numerous subjects from nature's flora and fauna – the exceptional calibre of the artists drew recognition on international shores as well.

This traditional art form of exquisite beauty and finesse has a lot of interesting facts under its belt, right from the inception.

Traditions Fused with Art in Krishnanagar : True to their origins, the clay art in Ghurni is



Plate 24 : Raj Rajeswari Durga Idol , Krishnanagar Palace

intrinsically merged with royal traditions in Krishnanagar Raj Bari. Every year, the stunning idol of “Raj Rajeswari” (Devi Durga as worshipped by the royal family), created by local artists, is erected for the sarbojonin puja at the palace grounds. As part of the festivity, after

Bisarjan (immersion of the idol), the royal family celebrates an age-old tradition called “Shatru Badh (eliminating the enemy)”. The ritual dictates that the king would take up a bow and arrow to shoot at a clay model tinged with a speck of life from the artists’ hands, representing the evil forces.

Raw Materials (1) Soil: - Soil is the prime material of clay-doll industry, which is available in Hanskhali, of South Krishnanagar and Paninala which is close to Ghurni. Price of the soil depends on its quality which always varies because, it is totally different from normal soil, it is basically loam in character. (2) Instruments: - The main instruments of clay-doll industry are- (a) Chewari –made by bamboo (b) Basua – it is also made by bamboo,(c) Brush –of different scales. All the instruments are available in local area but sometime they also use imported ones. (3) Colours: - Previously, clay-doll artists used only powder colour. Now they are using pastel colour, tube colour etc. They also apply Tarpin oil, Vernish, Kerosene oil etc. to give better effect on colour. Another unique application of colour is made by mixing of seed dust of tamarind and gum. Below the some sample doll which are available in Ghurni area in any time.



Plate 25 : Miniature Clay models studios



Plate 26 : Artists preparing clay models , Ghurni

workers. Among labourers 60% are male and 40% are female. Most of the workers are involved in this industry generation to generation and almost every family member is engaged into it. As per primary survey, large number of workers of this industry is involved in making clay models, especially of Hindu God and Goddess, because of their high demand. Since they are not so much skilled in other types of idols, their rate of wage is very low. Whereas, well trained model makers get higher wages, though their share is only 8%. Apart from their participation in National Level Competition, artists of Ghurni are being invited to participate in many **International Exhibitions** held in different countries. For their well acclaimed workmanship, some of them were even awarded.

Age group Composition of Worker: Most of the workers of clay-doll industry belong to age group between 15-55 years which is almost 74%. Education Level: According to the census 2011, 40% of labourers are illiterate. Only 32% have completed primary level, 25% completed secondary level and very few of them have passed graduation.

Economics Characteristics : Income level of different workers: Monthly income of 50% labourer stands in between Rs. 1000-3000. Whereas, 27% earn not more than Rs.1000 and monthly income of few numbers of labourers (16%) varies from Rs. 3,000 to 6000. Apart from this 7% of artists earn a monthly income in between Rs. 6,000-9,000.

Marketing prospects: Clay-doll industry is highly dependent on prospect of marketing which is guided by changing demands of various customers. Hence, variety of products and perfection are of great importance to achieve a wide range of markets. At the same time potential marketing is an essential part of progress and prosperity of the clay-doll industry.

Different types of finished goods and their making and selling rates: According to demand, different types of clay models are made such as small doll, dog block, human figure etc. Following table depicts the making and selling rates of such clay models.

Selling outlets: Since Ghurni is famous for clay-doll industry a large number of people are engaged in selling those products to customers of various statues including tourists who are come in this place for this purpose. Generally artisans are used to sell their products to local shop owners or outside businessmen. They also sell their models direct to customers as per their orders. But in most of the cases they are to depend on whole sale markets. There are agents also, who place order clay-doll manufacturers according to the demands and collect them. Besides, local markets, exporting clay doll are another job. This export exercise is not

limited to different states of India but in abroad also. U.K, U.S.A, and Russia are the prominent buyers. The pattern of marketing over time is shown in table no. 3 as under:



Plate 27 & 28 : Studios cum shops of award winning artists , Ghurni , Krishnanagar





Plate 29, 30 & 31 : Miniature clay models and statues of Ghurni

Accolades and Acknowledgements : The brilliant craftworks soon caught the interests of multiple national and international patrons. Artists from Krishnanagar started to participate in various exhibitions, sales events, and competitions across the world, including London, Paris and the United States of America. Soon after, they started winning several prestigious prizes medals and certificates in international art exhibitions. One such prestigious landmark in history was the EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE DE 1855, where Sri Ram Pal, as a representative of the clay-artists of Krishnanagar received the medal and certificate for 2nd position on 1st July, 1857. Another secret to the animated features of the famous clay models of Krishnanagar was the contribution from trade-experts in the final product. For example, in 1886, a complex model depicting an Indigo factory was created as part of the Colonial and India Exhibition. In its final stage, skilled people from trades like roof-thatcher, etc. also contributed apart from the designated clay artisans.

Many of the renowned clay artists from Krishnanagar had received further training in foreign countries during the era of Raja Krishna Chandra Ray and the British government of India at



Plate 32 : Statue of Mahatma Gandhi , Krishnanagar

that time. Some of them went on to create more splendid works of art all over the world based on patrons' requests and commissions, during the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A group of clay figurines by artist Jadunath Pal received the second order of merit in 1880 at the Melbourne International Exhibition. These figurines are now showcased in Australia-based Museum Victoria's collection. Even in the more recent times, Krishnanagar's clay art form has received international recognition. For example, in 1976, Pope John Paul IV blessed Sambhu Pal, an acclaimed artisan from Ghurni for his flawless depiction of a Bengal village

scene in clay art form. In 1990, when the Government of Russia wanted a bronze figurine of Rabindranath Tagore for display in one of their national parks, they sought the help of master

craftsman Kartick Chandra Pal to give them a clay model. Paul provided it and later converted it into a bronze sculpture.



Plate 33: National Award Winner Tarit Paul's workshop

craftsmen from Dhaka. These clay modellers came to Krishnanagar and started living around a place called Ghurni. Ghurni is near the river Jalangi (also called Khoray), so potters could easily procure clay they needed. In due course, Ghurni grew up to be the potters' colony. The first recorded Durga Puja seems to have been celebrated in Krishnanagar by its royal family and dates back to 1606. Around 1757, Raja Nabakrishna Deb of Shobhabazar Rajbari (king's palace) in north Kolkata, inspired by Raja Krishnachandra, started the tradition of Durga Puja at his family home. Skilled kumors were brought from Krishnanagar to create idols of the goddess—this was the genesis of Kumortuli. Workers slowly started settling in Kumortuli by the Hoogly riverside.

Krishnachandra's patronage towards idol-making, however, is largely connected to the history of grand Durga puja celebrations that started making their appearance in the second half of the eighteenth century. The royal families of Bengal, the zamindars or landlords to be precise, had a unique function to play in Bengal society. They were not only owners of land

who had control over the revenue from their subjects but were also little kings in their own right exercising a huge amount of control over their subjects. However, with the change of political power in Bengal from the hands of Mughals to those of the Nawab and then again with the British taking control, the zamindars found their authority being unsettled. Historian Tithi Bhattacharya writes that in this milieu of shifting fluid political affiliations, zamindars considered it necessary to assert and display political authority and financial stability. The ostentatious celebrations of Goddess Durga and several other Hindu Gods and Goddesses was one such way in which the zamindars were asserting their power.

In his book, *“Krishnanagar mrtshlpa o mrtshilpi samaj”*, Bengali essayist Sudhir Chakraborty notes that the royal family of Krishnanagar was instrumental in the conception of grand festivals of Hindu deities in Bengal. Sen explains that the zamindars would often get people from the kumbhakar caste to craft the idols for these celebrations. It is worth noting here that the shift in the craft of the kumbhakars, in this case, was also connected with the value of the object being produced. While earthen pots and utensils carried within them utilitarian value, the creation of the images of cultic value carried within them a far more powerful message. The preference for potters by the zamindars also needs to be located



Plate 34 : Image making at Palpara , Babla Paul



Plate 35& 36 : Idol makers of Krishnanagar , Nadia involved in making local Gods & Goddess like Shiva , Ganesh & Laksmi (Poila Baisakh)



within the larger context of how clay art, in general, had been gaining popularity in Bengal under British rule. Even today there are several within the Pal community who continue with pottery along with idol-making. Joydeb Pal from Nadia district has been making idols since the age of 18. However, he maintains that this is his seasonal work. For the rest of the year, he is involved in pottery. He strongly believes that idol-making as a profession has a large

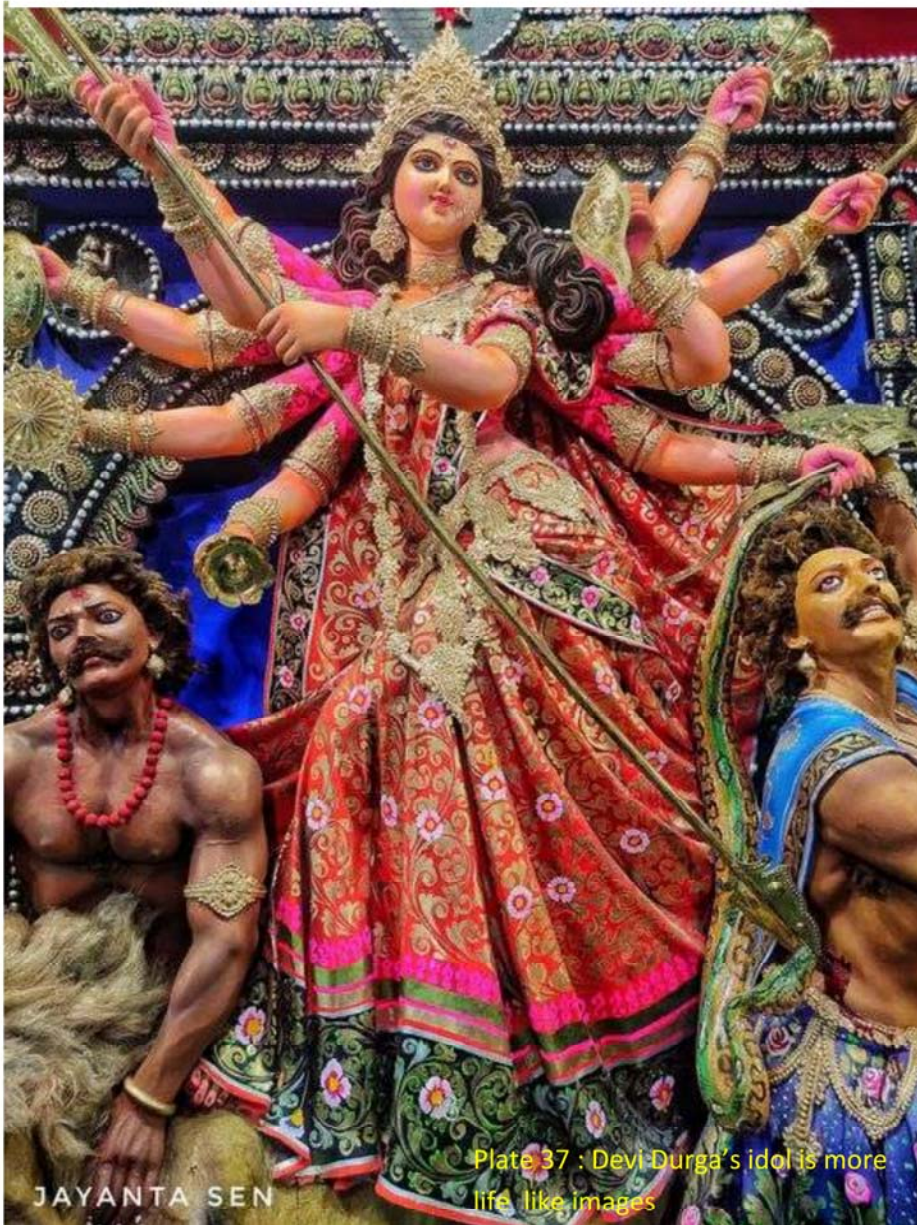


Plate 37 : Devi Durga's idol is more life like images

amount of respect attached to it. However, when asked about the future of his profession, he is confident that he would not want his children to continue with this work. “Now I want to educate my children so that they do not have to come in this field. There is too much hard work in this,” he says. Manik Pal, meanwhile, is of the opinion that the uncertainty and risk involved

in the business is too high and that he hopes with all his heart that his children are not inclined towards this profession. “My children won’t do this work of idol making. I don’t want them to go through so much work pressure,” he says.



Plate 38,39 & 40 : This year , 2020 when we all were facing the scare of Covid 19 , artist Pallab Bhowmick from Krishnanagar in Bengal’s Nadia district sculpted Maa Durga Idol paying tribute to the resilience of the thousands of migrant workers who walked for miles and across states to reach home amid lockdown. On his artwork, Bhowmick added: “It took me two months to create this idol, I began working on it in August. It is made of fibre glass. Rintu Das created this theme and I created the idol as per his instructions. My major inspiration has been a painting by late artist Bikash Bhattacharjee from his Durga series.” “Goddess Durga resides not just in the idol, but within every woman. That’s why we are paying a tribute to narishakti or feminine power through this idol,” he explained.





Plate 41& 42 : Local Idols & idol making in the workshops of Krishnanagar





Other Clay items Many idol makers are now diversifying their work by preparing earthen pots , religious items and decorative items .



Plate 45 & 46: Utility clay items are prepared in the workshops of Krishnanagar , Palpara , Nadia 23° 24.730'N 88° 29.625'E





Plate 47 : Utility Clay item shops in Santipur . 23° 15.064'N 88° 26.459'E



Plate 48 : Pots are getting prepared in Ranaghat along the river Bhagirathi. 23° 10.018'N 88° 34.078'E



Plate 49 : : Pots are getting prepared in Santipur along the river Bhagirathi. 23° 13.204'N 88° 26.160'E

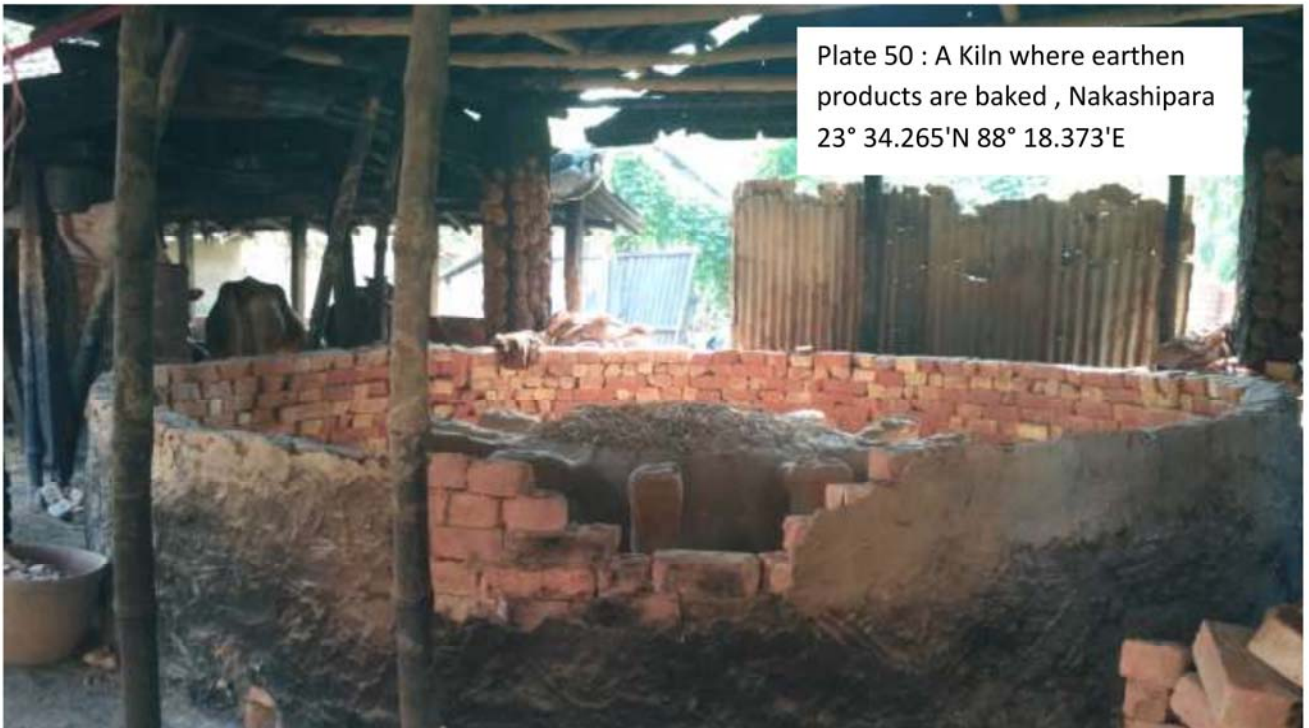


Plate 50 : A Kiln where earthen products are baked , Nakashipara 23° 34.265'N 88° 18.373'E

D. Chalchitra, a part of Bengal Patachitra, referred to the background Patachitra of the Durga Pratima . Chalchitra is a part of Bengal Patachitra, It referred to the Debi Chal or Durga chala, the background of the Durga Pratima or idol. Patua, the artists of Chalchitra called it as Pata Lekha, means the writing of Patachitra. 300–400 years old idols of Nabadwip Shakta Rash used Chalchitra as a part of Pratima. At a time, the use of Chalchitra became fade, but now it has a great popularity. Chalchitra artist of Nabadwip, Tapan Bhattacharya said-

It's good to see a lost painting coming back around.

E. Daaker Saaj : Saaj' or decoration or accessorising is the last stage in idol making. The decoration depends on the choice of the clients and can range from ornaments made of silver and golden foils to 'shola' or pith. **Daaker Saaj was derived from the word Daak (post), as the raw materials required for making these ornaments, were imported from Germany and arrived in Bengal by post. Another probable reason might be that raw materials used, were manufactured by 'Duck' company.** A kind of thread is wrapped with a glittery wire, popularly known as 'rolex.' These threads were wrapped with gold, silver and copper



Plate 51 : Ashish Gopal Bagchi's Workshop ,



Plate 52 & 53 : Ashis Kumar Bagchi , the main artist of the Daaker Saaj & his creation 23° 24.187'N
88° 29.850'E



wire or were reels of metallic wires, known as Salma and Bulen, which were later substituted by 'rolex.' Daaker Saaj was made extremely popular in Bengal for its highly intricate and detailed execution. There were Sholar Saaj, Daaker Saaj, Tabaker Saaj and Bulener Saaj. These days the foil-work comes mostly from Krishnanagar in Nadia district of West Bengal, India. The 'Shola' decorations come from Bankapasi of Barddhaman district. Zari works is also being used for decorations. Devi's Mukut, is usually known as Jhaka, which at times consist of five kalkas (a decorative motif derived from local flora fauna, used in textiles) or two kalkas creating a shape of a beetle nut leaf. Her ears have two extended decorative patterns stretching sideways, known as Makar Beni and Ghar Beni, while the earring is called Kaan Bala. While making the Aanchal (extended drape of idol), artisans maintain exact folds, identical to that of an original Aanchal worn by a Bengali woman. The intricate designs reflect artistic ingenuity and precision. As per 'Hutom Pyanchar Naksha' written by Kaliprasanna Singha, Saaj artists used to come from Krishnanagar.

Of the 20 to 25 daaker saaj manufacturers of Krishnagar, the oldest are the Kars. They get orders from all over the country, from Raipur to London. They even get orders from Mumbai for Ganesh Chaturthi. The Kars outsource a lot of the work to women living in neighbouring villages with names that are a mouthful - Gobrapota, Hanskhali, Horonagar. College students of the area looking for part-time work are also enlisted. Shubhankar Das is one such; he is doing his Bachelor's in Sanskrit from Krishnagar Government College. In Chakerpara area there is Ashish Kumar Bagchi's workshop where more than 30 artisans are involved for making the Daaker Saaj. Badal Chandra Nath is the oldest daaker saaj shilpi or artist in Krishnagar. In 1994, Badal da was given the National Award for his art. Today, his hands shake as he works the knife on the thermocol, but his legacy is in safe hands. And one of the many upholding it is Putul Boiragya. About 10 years ago, she started out as an independent player in this market. She accepts a certain number of orders every year and executes them all by herself. "This year, I have got a big order, from Calcutta's Jodhpur Park."

Badal da is proud of his pupil but he blames the increasing number of karkhanas in Krishnagar for the decrease in the demand for his work. The retailers of Kumartuli source the daaker saaj from Krishnagar and sell it along with the idols to clients. It's a convenient yolking.



Plate 54: An artisan creating beautiful headgears in the Chakerpara workshop



Plate 55: Daker Saaj workshop of Ashis Kumar Bagchi , Chaker Para , Krishnanagar



Plate 56 & 57: In Ashis Bagchi's Studio, Chakerpara , artists are involved in making Daaker Saaj





Plate 58 & 59: Artists involved in making shola ornaments





Plate 60 & 61: Sholapith Saaj in Bagdipara , Krishnanagar , Artist – Manoj Baag





Plate 62 & 63 : Sholapith reed , the raw materials of ornament





Plate 64 & 65: Beautiful shola ornaments









F. HANDLOOM INDUSTRY OF NADIA :

Nadia is famous for some special types of handloom *sarees* like *Tangail*, *Jamdani*, *Dhakai-Buti*, *Santipuri* etc. which acquire their own identity all over India and abroad as well. Handloom plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic status of this district. The traditional production on *Jamdani* of Nabadwip, *Santipuri* of Santipur and *Tangail* varieties of Fulia zone has been popular and these three are the main centers of handloom industry of Nadia. But there are other centres also like , Durgapur Village of Habibpur, Taherpur, Ranaghat, Chakdah, Haringhata, Kaliganj, Nakashipara, Karimpur, Tehatta and Krishnannagar.

Santipuri : Shantipur, also known as Santipur, is a town that has assumed the proportions of a city. In Nadia district of West Bengal, India, it is believed to have been constructed by Raja Krishnachandra of Nadia. It is known for two very prominent things. A pilgrimage town, the famous Rasjatra is religiously conducted every year over here. **It is otherwise known for its traditional handloom sarees since ancient times.**

There are records of handloom saree weaving activity in Shantipur, a centre of Vaishnavite culture and Bhakti movement, as early as the 15th century. Weaving flourished throughout the medieval era, and the famed indigo-dyed Neelambari made the Shantipur saree a household name. There was a strong sense of identity among Shantipur weavers. They united to agitate against the stranglehold of the Dadni system of the British East India Company and even took their grievances to colonial courts during the 19th century.

In the decades leading up to independence, Shantipur saw gradual inflow of techniques like the Barrel Dobby facilitating the conversion from Throw Shuttle to Fly Shuttle (1920s), the Jacquard Machine (1930s), and sectional warping and sizing that allowed production of warp yarns 350 yards long (1930s).

The Great Influx

The Partition saw many weavers from Dhaka migrate with their families and settle in the Santipur- Fulia region. Many of them being skilled weavers, they along with their art spread along the Santipur, Fulia (Fulia), Samudragarh, Dhartigram, Ambika Kalna belt. That is why this region is popularly known as the hub for quality handloom products in exotic designs and colors.

Traditional Styles , Shantipur saree:

The ‘Neelambari’ saree was the first product that made Shantipur famous. The indigo dyed, midnight blue cotton handloom saree was so alluring that it was called “an enemy of modesty!” The USP of the Neelambari lay in the fineness of the yarn and dyeing quality. Very fine hand spun yarn of 250 – 300 s was used for weaving, resulting in a powder fine texture. A heady mix of fine weaving and subtlety of design, the Neelambari was the last word in sophistication.

Today traditional handloom sarees woven in Shantipur have 68s to 80s counts cotton yarn in th There is also the “do- rookha” technique of weaving double sided design, where the saree looks the same on either side. Another unique feature of Shantipur sarees is the finishing. The weavers here apply size paste (made from sago or popped rice) once while sizing the warp yarn and again, either by hand when the saree is still being woven or by fixing the saree to a frame after weaving is complete.e warp and the weft. Cotton and silk yarn is used as extra warp in the border, and so is zari.

The Santipur sarees in the past were very popular for the fine & uniform texture. The sarees are termed as per the design used in the extra warp meant for side border. The Bengal Small Scale Aids Industry Act during the early eighties (1980 –83), was instrumental support of the government for the growth of the Handloom industry. Financial aid, in shape of 50% grant & 50 % Loan was provided to the individual weavers for purchase of looms. During the mid eighties and later in the mid nineties 1995, there were weaver movements for the wage hikes but were unsuccessful for the suppression by Mahajans who stood to lose their dominance as middlemen. Shantipur, the home of skilled weavers, artisans and craftsmen since traditional times had seen a period of glory. Backed by royal patronage and spurred by their encouraging gestures, it was a handloom weaving hub famed for its feather-like touch handloom woven dhotis and sarees.

Somewhere in the last few decades, time has not boded well for this town of skilled ethnic practitioners. Their efforts were sincere, their devotion a 100 %, but the masters of their craft, never got their due for their toil. Slowly it became a struggle for survival and even to eke out a decent livelihood seemed like a nightmare. So much so that many of the weavers and craftsmen moved out of Shantipur and searched for whatever meagre-paying job they could

get just to exist on this planet.

Those fighting for remaining true to their traditional occupation despite the odds, decided to come out of their mould and attempt something as a compromise between what they were familiar with and good at with the current market demands. No wonder Shantipur fabrics suddenly broke out into magenta, teal, burgundy, rust like hues with interesting modern day popular motifs instead of the wonderful jacquard themes that they were experts in. Some even went in for sequins and other adornments to see whether the market would respond favourably. Somehow nothing seemed to work for these desperate souls, who just shrank into a corner or moved to other means of livelihood.



Plate 66 : The sarees are kept for sun drying



Plate 67 & 68: Saree (Taingail) preparation is done in every households of Santipur and Phulia.





Plate 69 : Threads are extracted out by conventional method



Plate 70 : At present number of power looms are set up in the individual households

Weaving of *tant* sari is famous and an age old crafting of Bengal. The craftsmen deftly weave the cotton to thread which is woven to *tant* sari. Two shuttles are used for this purpose. Traditionally, handlooms were used by the weavers, which have today been largely replaced by power looms to weave these saris.

The typical Tant sari is characterised by a thick border and a decorative pallav, woven using a variety of floral, paisley and other artistic motifs. Some of the popular traditional motifs are: bhomra (bumble bee), tabij (amulet), rajmahal (royal palace), ardha-chandra (half moon), chandmala (garland of moons), ansh (fish scale), hathi (elephant), nilambari (blue sky), ratan chokh (gem-eyed), benki (spiral), tara (star), kalka (paisley) and phool (flower). Printed, hand-painted and embroidered patterns are also used to get a larger variety of designs. Different motifs including floral element, solar element and recently even modern art are depicted in this sari. Tant Sari comes with colourful design and borders are made thicker because it is subjected to tear easily.

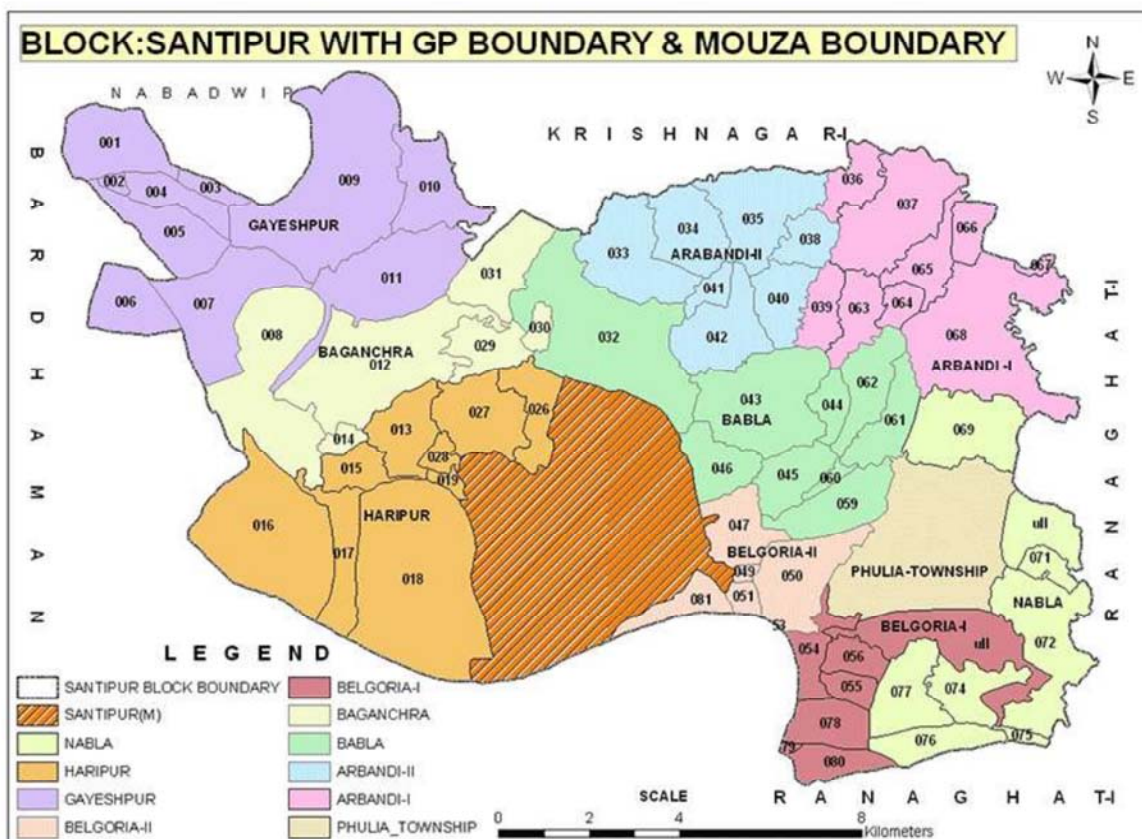
The traditional art of weaving jamdani, considered the best variety of tant clothings, has been enlisted by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Along with ordinary Bengali women of Bangladesh and West Bengal, many prominent Bengali female personalities also prefer to wear tant sari as their regular outfit. Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina, speaker of Bangladesh parliament Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee are notable.

Preparation of a Santipuri Saree takes a number of steps starting from yarn to the finished product .

a.Yarn Scouring : The yarn coming from Spinning Mills are treated with soap and soda ash or other detergents to remove some impurities present in yarn. **b.Bleaching :** It is a treatment of scoured yarn by chlorine to remove. Natural colouring matter and to make it milky white. **c.Dyeing :** Dyeing imparts the beauty of the yarn in desired colour . Various methods of dyeing are adopted depending on the requirements of fastness, colour etc.. Preparation of It requires patience ,time and soft handling of yarn for starching and yarn & **d.Starching :** taking out each strand from the hank before it is wound on bobbins or pirns. **e.Drumming /** The set of bobbins that come out from the above process are arranged in **f.Warping.** : a creel in order of colour scheme as well as pre-planned design. These are drummed for a length of 50/60 number of sarees **g.Drafting & Denting :** The rear ends of the drummed yarn are wrapped on a warp beam, drafted through healed eyes which are subsequently dented through reeds whose count depends on the fineness of the yarn (count) being used. **h.Looming :** After denting the yarn is warft in layers on a beama and is mounted on a loom. In case of design at the border or body, harnessing in the jacquard machine (mounted at top of the loom) is done.

Locations within Shantipur : Sutragarh, Bygachi Para, Dhaka Para, Karigar Para, Malancha Para , Kaji Para, Ostagarh Para, Kalla Para, Sarbanandi Para , Tanti Para etc. Beside this centres, weavers are mostly found in the refugee areas of Haripur, Narsinghapur, Gobindapur, Bhatjangla, Babla, Barajiakor etc



The major castes involved in the weaving industry are : Basak, Karmakaar, Sheel, Saha, Sen, Bidyanta, Khan and Das . Many Muslims and NamaSudras are also involved in this craft.



Women folks equally participate in almost all the steps of a Saree preparation starting from spinning out thread from the cotton.

Fulia Tangail : According to the 2011 census, Fulia, a small town in West Bengal’s Nadia district, has a population of 55,653 and a literacy rate of 82%, higher than the state average of 76%. The early weavers here were refugees from East Pakistan who crossed over after Partition in 1947. Others came from Bangladesh after the 1971 war, and trace their lineage to the Tangail weavers near Dhaka. Fulia is famous for its Tangail saris, similar to the Dhaka Jamdani in technique but softer in feel, with the motifs spaced out.

In the 1970s, three cooperative societies—Fulia Tangail Shari Bayan Silpa Samabay Samity Ltd, Tangail Tantujibi Unnayan Samabay Samity Ltd and Natun Fulia Tantubay Samabay Samity Ltd—were set up under the West Bengal Co-operative Societies Act, 1973. This resulted in a surge in production. In 1985, these societies started diversifying—producing scarves and yardage for the export market and experimenting with yarns. The designs became more subtle and the colour palette, softer. Markets such as Japan, West Asia and Europe became fertile territory. “At its peak, around the turn of the century, exports accounted for



almost 40% of the production in Fulia," says Haripada Basak, 70. Haripada, now a consultant with the Tangail Tantujibi Unnayan Samabay Samity, came to Fulia in 1969, started as a weaver and went on



to become a cooperative society office-bearer. “Exports made the weavers technically competitive and taught them quality control. They discovered new patterns, designs, textures and colours,” he says.

At its peak in the early 2000s, Fulia had close to 75,000 looms. “There are less than 20,000 looms now,” says Haripada. Exports plummeted after the economic slowdown and now account for less than 10% of the overall production; the figures weren’t readily available. Many weavers sold their looms for the price of scrap and left the state in search of better livelihoods.



There are three kinds of weavers in Fulia. The independents, those who are part of a cooperative and those who work for moneylenders. Most of them are disenchanted, overworked and underpaid. Sari prices range from ₹ 600 for the plain Matha—a pure cotton weave with the simplest of motifs—to

thousands of rupees for Jamdanis in fine silk. For a sari that sells for ₹ 600, the raw material costs ₹ 200-250. The weaver gets up to ₹ 200, the rest goes to the seller. A weaver produces around five saris a week, working 10-12 hours a day. Depending upon the intricacy of the design, he earns ₹ 100-400 per sari.

Power-looms definitely pose a problem, especially those run in neighbouring Ranaghat, Nabadwip and Shantipur. Each produces around 10 saris daily. Their production costs are lower and, therefore, so is their retail price. It is tough even for the trained eye to differentiate between handloom and power-loom, and the market is flooded with power-loom fabrics parading as handloom.



Plate 74 & 75 : Bleaching and Dying process in Santipur





Plate 76: Drumming of threads done as a part of saree weaving.



Plate 77 : Traditional Charkha used for making threads , Santipara

Ganga Documentation Project

Report on intangible Cultural Heritage Documentation: District – Nadia ; West Bengal

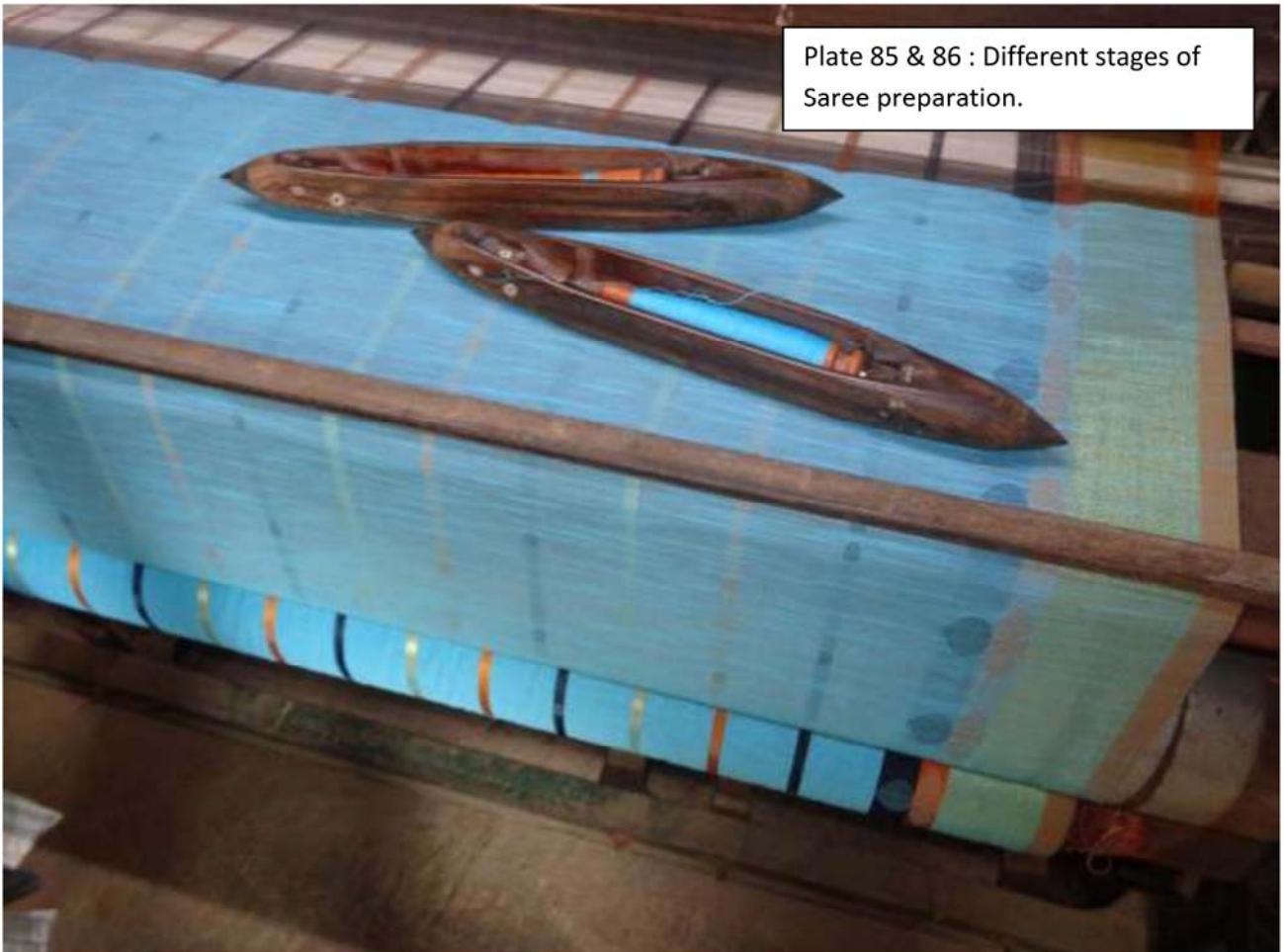


Plate 77 & 78 : Powerlooms ,
Santipur









Jamdani:

Traditional Jamdani, the pride of Bengal handloom, is now woven in Habibpur and Ramchandrapur near Fulia. The true Jamdani saree is woven without using even a jacquard machine. The weaver uses fine needle-like spindles to conjure magic with extra weft work that can rival the most intricate embroidery.



Plate 87 : Jamdaani Saree

Some of the award winning weaver artists of Nadia :

1. Birendra Kumar Basak , Fulia , Nadia : He received an honorary doctorate from a UK-based university for his intricate artwork depicting seven episodes of Ramayana on a six-yard sari in 2017 . Basak, a handloom weaver from Fulia in Nadia, was felicitated with Degree of Doctorate in Record Breaking (Honouris Causa) by UK s World Records University, an



Plate 88 : Jamdaani Saree depicting Ramayana. Source : Website : Bengal Weaves

autonomous institute formed by the conglomeration of record books around the world. The masterpiece, in Basak's word, took one year of planning and two years of weaving. It was completed in 1996. His six-yard wonder had earned him a National Award, National Merit Certificate Award, Sant Kabir Award and also found a mention in Limca Book of Records, Indian Book of Records and World Unique Records.

Birendra Kumar Basak and his team is now engaged in creating the longest saree which is dedicated to Bharat Mata . Basak is guiding five other weavers, who have been working round-the-clock at his factory near Krishnanagar in Nadia District of West Bengal using 316kg of yarn of saffron, green and white color, which has been brought from Surat in Gujarat. Once it is ready, the saree will be on display at Phulia school ground on January 1st in the coming year. The saree, being made at a cost of Rs 2.9 lakh will have colors of the national flag – saffron, white and green.



Plate 88 : Award winning artist ,
Birendra Kumar Basak



Plate 89 : The longest saree is getting prepared.

2. Saraswati Sarkar, Habibpur, Nadia ; Saraswati Sarkar, the recipient of this year's President's Medal has been weaving in tandem with her husband for the past 35 years. She sits with the loom only after completing her household chores. The saree that got her the award took seven months to make. While she was weaving the saree, people praised the design and her work and she was happy to receive the adulation but she was definitely not prepared for this. Her saree border features bright, multi-coloured peacocks and the rest of the saree is a beautiful tapestry of birds and flowers.

3. Khagendranath Basak , Fulia, Nadia : Master weaver Khagendranath Basak received National award , 2015 for his creation of Cotton Jamdani Saree.

4. Kamal Basak , Fulia , Nadia : He received National merit Certificate for creation of Cotton Jamdani Saree.



Plate 90 : Exquisite Jamdaani Work , Fulia.

5. Shri Sushil Chandra Sen, Shantipur , Nadia : He got his training from his father Shri Gour Chandra Sen and Gora Chand Pramanick. From the very early age he started preparing very fine weaves . He used to create the Santipuri Sarees and Dhotis of 150 count. He also received accolades from State and Central Government.

6.Sri Phanimoy Kastha , Shantipur , Nadia : The Kastha family migrated from Dacca and specialised in weaving Jamdani Sarees. He could weave very high quality Sarees of 100-200 count.He participated in number of Handloom Exhibitions and displayed amazing skills. He received various State Govt. and National Level recognitions and even received President Award for creating exquisite Golden Border Jari .

7. Sri Kartick Chandra Bidyanta , Santipur , Nadia: He received his earlier training from his father Sri Sambhunath Bidyanta. He created a beautiful Jamdani saree which got exhibited in Sweden. In 1987 he received President award for preparing a Jamdani Saree in which he used 40x40 cotton threads and real gold threads. The amount for the saree was fixed at Rs 13,700 /- rupees. This Saree has been kept in Delhi Museum.



Plate 91 : Machine made Jamdaani Saree

E.THE SILK HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN NADIA DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL:

Silk handloom bears a timeless legacy of the cultural heritage of West Bengal. Shantipur, Phulia in Nadia district, Dhaniakhali, Begampur in Hooghly district, Samudragrah, Dhatrigram, Katwa, Ketugram in Burdwan district and Bishnupur in Bankura district are the major handloom concentrated areas in the state of West Bengal (Ministry of Textiles, Government of West Bengal).

Nadia district is neither a traditional raw silk producing region, nor a substantial section of weavers are producing silk clothes exclusively, but a vast section of handloom weavers are clustered around specifically two of its region which dominate the world of handloom industry, where silk is being used as a valuable ingredient.



Plate 92: Handloom Silk Saree, Habibpur , Nadia

F. SHIVA MASK

The ritualistic wedding of Shiva-Parvati takes place at the time of Basanti Puja, during the month of Chaitra, in Nabadwip, Nadia. The local kumbhakars (potters) make colorful busts of Shiva, known as Shiva masks, on this occasion. This moulded soft clay structure is sun-dried before being coloured. The facial features are drawn on the white face of Shiva. Yellow Kalki flowers are painted on both ears and a golden crown (like that of a Bengali bridegroom) is placed on the head. This mask is taken door to door and the money thus collected is for wedding expenses. This is mostly done by the children. This mask of Shiva is a significant piece of folk art.



Plate 93 : Shiva Mask, Krishnanagar

CHAPTER 6 : PERFORMING ART

A.String Puppetry of Nadia :

Puppetry in West Bengal, which finds mention in the medieval folk ballads of undivided Bengal, is commonly called putul naach (doll dance). Traditional forms of the art include rod and glove puppets. String puppetry, which is nowadays in practice, was a later import from East Pakistan. String puppets, originally manipulated with string and also with wire, are mostly found in Nadia.

Muragachha colony, and its neighbouring village **Borboria**, near Bagula are home to families of String Puppeteers . The puppeteers mainly migrated from Bangladesh to Nadia during 1950 – 51. There are presently about seven to eight renowned puppeteer groups in Barbaria and twelve in Muragachha. Most of the puppeteers trace their roots to Khulna and Barishal districts of Bangladesh. The then-famous puppeteers, namely Jiten Haldar, Jiten Mandal, Neelkanta Chakraborty and Atul Matabbar (a dhol player) were pioneers who established their dominance in this area of West Bengal. Today, the puppeteers are a well-established colony in each of these villages in Nadia. Other than West Bengal, only Rajasthan still has a few puppeteering groups. who, in the past, not only plied their craft across Bengal but also travelled to many fairs and festivals across India. Masters in string puppetry or ‘suto putul’ as it is known in Bengal, today they are trying their best to preserve this traditional folk theatre (often referred to as ‘putul natok’ or ‘putul nach’ in Bengali) against stiff competition from electronic media. Until two decades ago, almost every household in Muragacha was involved in puppetry, ranging from making puppets to giving performances. But the advent of television, coupled with the waning interest of people, rang the virtual death bell for the art. “There were around 380 families in the village that were involved in puppetry in the 1980s. The artists were in great demand and spent around six months every year outside the village giving performances across the State and even outside. We normally performed at least 25–30 shows every month. The income was also good and we didn’t have to look for any alternative forms of livelihood,” says Amolya Rai, a puppetry artist.

But things began to change from mid-1990s when other forms of entertainment emerged both in urban and rural belts of the State., “We started losing work as people began to switch to television. The cable network proved to be the last nail in the coffin. People lost interest in

puppetry despite the fact that it was devoid of vulgarity and always gave a social message to the children,” he added.

“Our families arrived in Nadia in the 1950s from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and continued with the tradition of puppet theatre,” says veteran puppeteer Ranjan Roy by way of introduction. Most puppeteers in these areas trace their roots to Khulna and Barishal in Bangladesh. According to Roy, the string puppetry practised by them probably owes its origin to ‘kathputli’ of Rajasthan but how the influence travelled to Bengal (then undivided) he could not say. “But the younger generation is not keen to pursue the family profession owing to dwindling income,” he adds.





Plate 95 : Puppets made out of sholapith , Muragaccha

The Making “Making the busts of string puppets is a laborious process. Stems of sholapith or sponge-wood (a mouldable, milky white spongy plant matter) obtained from plants found in the wetlands, are cut and stuck to one another using a glue made from wheat flour. They are then tied to form a bundle and dried in the sun to take the form of a thick cylinder. The artist skillfully converts these cylindrical structures into busts of beautiful dolls or puppets, which are then layered with clay and glazed with colour to obtain the desired skin tones. It is the masterstroke of the artists that breathes life into each of these dolls,” explained Ranjan Roy, a veteran puppeteer from Muragachha.

Manipulating a Puppet Designing and tailoring the costumes is one of the most difficult tasks. It is only after the costumes are fitted that the hands and the head are fixed to the body of the puppets with the help of black strings. String puppets do not have legs and are adorned with long flowing costumes to cover this aspect. We found it interesting that a typical “character” puppet is manipulated with four strings while a “dancer” puppet with more movements, with ten. Of these ten strings, two are fixed on each hand for hand movements, two on the waist for jerky waist movements, two on the head for balancing, two on the knee

for lifting the skirt while dancing and two on each elbow for elbow movements. A chhat or a cane stick is fastened on top to turn the dancer doll round and round. The total height of the body of a puppet is 2.5 feet while that including the dress is 3-3.5 feet.

Puppet Shows A puppet show typically involves ten to fifteen members. Two are responsible for controlling the puppets while one is in the supporting role. There is one voiceover artist who lends his voice for all the characters in the play, be it male, female, child or even various animals and birds! It is with good reason that he is called the Master. The Master is the most important member in the puppet show, having licence to work for several owners simultaneously and quote any price he likes, depending on his demand in the market. In other words, in the world of puppet shows, if a Master is highly skilful, his job is highly secure. Another significant aspect of a puppet show is the music. A band of musicians includes a singer who plays the harmonium, a flautist, a tabla player, a keyboard player and a percussionist. Other members include light men who make the show attractive, gatekeepers who handle the tickets and act as a security guard.



Plate 96 : Preparation going on (practise sessions) for puppet shows

String puppet shows are conducted generally in an open area and gates decorated with beautiful puppets are set up. A stage is built which is typically ten feet long, six feet wide and three feet high. Ideally the three sides of the stage are covered with decorative curtains. The lightweight puppets are hung by strings whose free ends are held by the puppeteers operating from behind a curtain. The puppet shows are conducted with clockwork precision in sets, lights, costumes, script, voiceover and music. The seating arrangement is for an audience 1000 – 2000 strong!

Shows of shorter duration of 15-20 minutes have also evolved these days, with lighter arrangements and fees to convey social messages.

The themes of the operatic puppet shows are mostly myths and legends and each show is for one and half to two hours. The most popular plays are

Sati Behula,
Bhakta Prahlad,
Raja

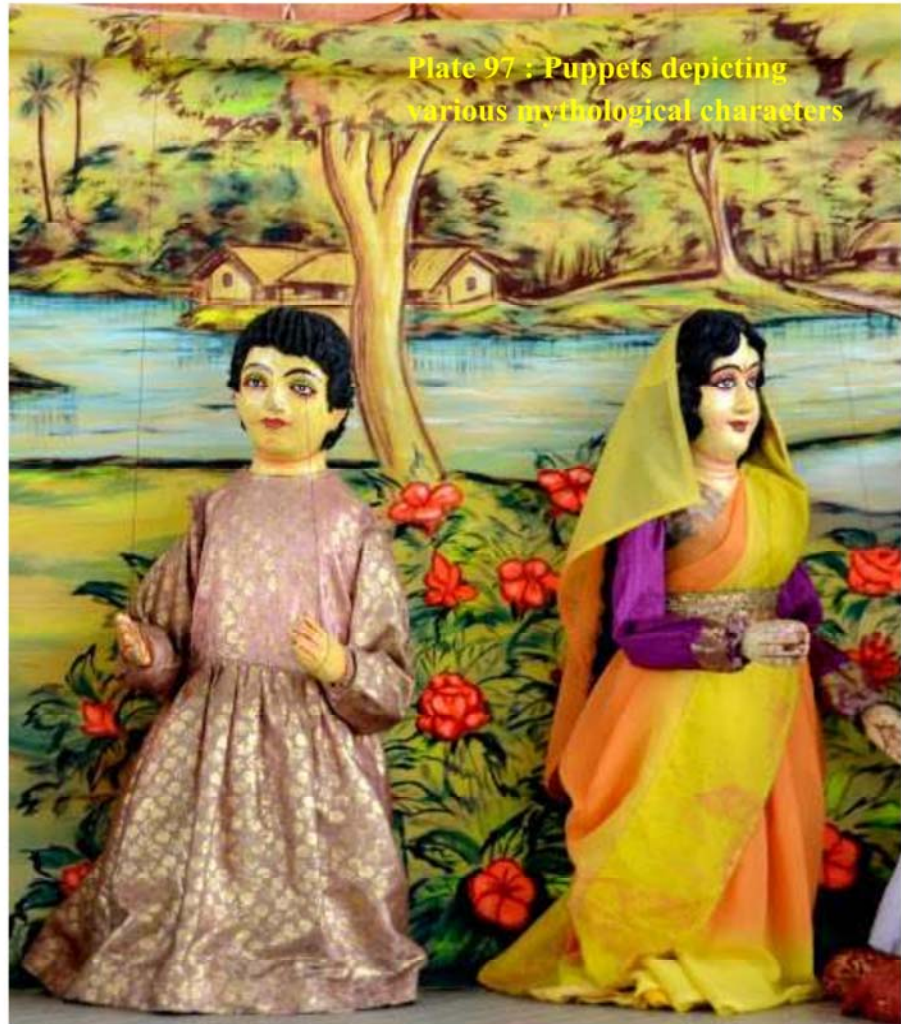


Plate 97 : Puppets depicting various mythological characters

Harishchandra, Lab-Kush, Nimai Sanyasi, Roopaban Kanya, Laila-Majnu, Phoolan Devi, Nati Binodini and so on. It is the dexterity and musicality of the lone performer that holds the audience enthralled. “Before television, there was a huge rush every weekend for our shows and we would sell nothing less than 1500 – 2000 tickets per show,” recalls a nostalgic Kanai Haldar, a second-generation puppeteer. “Post-80’s, the audience started thinning and then, ever since society was hit by the epidemic of smart phones, the number fell significantly!” adds a frustrated Dilip Roy.

Future of Puppetry The ever-changing taste of the audience and technological advancements have adversely affected the puppetry industry. “Lack of sensible and interesting content is an important factor for puppetry’s fast losing ground. Hence, I have begun writing my own scripts, which are far more popular among the audience today than the age-old traditional legends,” asserts Ranjan Roy. Today, though the demand curve of puppetry is slowly rising, it is not a sustainable business model as the running costs and overheads surpass the income potential. Another big challenge that these puppeteers are facing today is that, their art being of an itinerant nature, they have to carry the objects of their craft and their props with them, packed into boxes or folded and rolled into a cloth bag. The makeshift stage, which is a prerequisite of a string puppeteer, also has to be made by the puppeteers themselves. So every time they get a call, they have to travel not only with their entire team but also their bags and baggage, for just one show, which is quite challenging. Fortunately, Banglanatokdotcom (an NGO) has undertaken active initiative in reviving many art forms all over Bengal and has played a vital role here too. They are training the puppeteers to create contemporary scripts and develop more relevant stagecraft, to woo a larger urban audience. This initiative has enabled the puppeteers to discover the cultural dimensions of entertainment and also helped them realise how puppetry can be a tool to disseminate cultural knowledge. The puppeteers are thus conducting regular shows on social issues such as ‘*Kanyashree*’, ‘*Naripachar*’, ‘*Balyabibaha*’, ‘*Paribeshdooshan*’, etc.

B.Gorbhanga , the land of Bauls and Fakirs : Gorbhanga village of Nadia district is the home of the Fakirs, the makers of soulful, mellifluous music. The village symbolises a quiet celebration of peace and free flowing music - the elementary essence of the village, practised in the age old Baul tradition. The singers of Gorbhanga are making ripples across the world.

The village that has evolved as a popular destination amongst music enthusiasts is an ideal one if one is seeking soul searching music in the natural habitat of the music genre. One can visit Gorbhanga round the year to enjoy the music, jam with the musicians, and experience the lifestyle and philosophy of the Fakirs. The Baul artists of West Bengal celebrate their songs and traditions through the annual festival '**Baul Fakiri Utsav**' in Gorbhanga.

There are many other nearby fairs and festivals throughout the year in Nadia to explore like the Raas Mela at Shantipur and Nabadwip and Lalonmela at Kadamkhali village at Asannagar.

Baul-Fakiri The air of mysticism surrounding Fakirs and their ascetic nature can be traced back to Lalon Shah, ranked 12th in BBC's poll of the Greatest Bengali of All Time. Influencing the likes of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam, **Lalon Shah or Lalon Fakir** as he is most commonly known, is an icon of Bengali culture. His songs are still sung and his preaching is followed by a wide sect of believers. Born in an era that was dominated by orthodox religious beliefs, Lalon Shah rejected every notion of caste and creed and preached religious harmony. Mocking the division that religion creates in mankind, Lalon was a school of thought in himself and his influence crossed borders to the West as well. Allen Ginsberg, a prominent figure of the American Beat Generation and the Counterculture Movement that followed, was heavily influenced by Lalon Shah. He wrote a poem entitled 'After Lalon'. **Bob Dylan**, winner of the 2016 Noble Prize in Literature was deeply influenced by **Baul music – Purna Das Baul and Luxman Das Baul** feature on Dylan's "John Wesley Harding" album cover. Lalon believed in the power of music. He sang in the local dialect songs of his land, of his people and of the state of God being within oneself – the true spirit of the Baul-Fakiri music and lifestyle. This makes Baul-Fakiri practitioners so enticing that people from Europe and America flock to their Akhras.



Plate 98 & 99 : Baul-Fakir ashram , Gobhanga .



Gorbhanga : Before the Partition of Bengal, Kushtia, the birthplace of Lalon Shah used to fall under the Nadia jurisdiction. During his lifetime, Lalon Shah built an Akhrah near the Kushtia railway station which was the place of his devotion. From there spread his music and ideology which was later propagated by his disciples. Gorbhanga, a mere 8 kilometres from the Bangladesh border, is resplendent with many artistes who still follow the Fakir lifestyle and preach the hymns of Lalon.

Flourishing Phase Beside its artistic demeanour, Gorbhanga also has a success story of its own. Presently the artistes at Gorbhanga are praised for their musical brilliance and are invited for performances in all parts of the world. But things were not always on the greener side. A couple of decades back Gorbhanga bore the image of poverty. The musicians, though immensely skilled in their trade, did not have an audience to play for. The village was plagued by robbers and its people endured a life of misery. Things started to change for the better with the intervention of banglanatok.com, a social enterprise that empowers communities to develop and hone their skills for overall economic and cultural development. The intervention of banglanatok.com around a decade back came as a boon for the musicians of Gorbhanga who united under their guidance to form the artiste community.

The encouraging turn of events also resulted in these musicians getting invitations for events and concerts in Kolkata followed by other metropolitan cities. This was the beginning of '**Gorbhanga – Land of the Baul-Fakiri Utsav**' which takes place in the month of November every year. Hundreds of people from all over India, Europe and America visit the festival. This year it is scheduled to be held from 23-25 November. Along with the 'Gorbhanga Baul-Fakiri Utsav', 'Kodomkhali Bhimpur Lalon Mela' near Krishnanagar, 'Binnagar Sarabangla Lalon Mela', 'Banipur Lokutsav', 'Poush Mela' in Shantiniketan, 'Joydeb Mela' and 'Gangasagar Mela' are other festivals where Baul-Fakiri music can be heard. All these festivals take place during the November to March period.

Akhrahs : A spectacle unmatched, Akhrah are the heart and soul of Gorbhanga. They are places of devotion and transcendence and melting pots where musical geniuses come together to play their hearts out. There are five Akhrah in Gorbhanga: 'Datababa Lalon Ashram', 'Azhar Fakir Ashram', 'Akbar Fakir Ashram', 'Siddique Ashram' and 'Ashrad Fakir Ashram' where Mahajan songs are practised every evening. Mahajan songs is an umbrella term under which the songs of Fakir stalwarts like Lalon Fakir, Durdu Shah, Pandu Shah, Abdul Karim,

Chandi Das and Bhaba Pagla are sung. The artiste community of Gorbhanga comprises of nearly 100 well-versed musicians with another 200 musicians practising the Baul-Fakiri faith under their guidance. The Akhrahs of Gorbhanga are a revelation with their simplistic approach to life and their dedication to music. They have visitors coming in all day and discussions ranging from the life of Lalon and the philosophy of his songs to the Baul-Fakiri faith. These people have denounced religion, seeking God within themselves. Their songs are full of praise for the human body. The intrinsic nature and easy-going melodies are a reminder of “From dust you came, and to dust you shall return” – that human beings are the embodiment of Earth and God. “Some people search for God in temples and some in mosques, but we Fakirs, we search for God within ourselves. My body is a temple, my body is a mosque,” says Arman Fakir. To be present in an Akhrah and to imbibe the spirit of the evening with the artistes’ mesmerising melodies is an experience worth cherishing a lifetime.



Plate 99 : Performance of Baul songs , Gorbhanga

C.Bolan : „Bolan“ is a popular folk drama of South Bengal. This performance is held on during the Hindu „Gajan“ utsav (festival) when the Lord Shiva is worshiped. Generally it is popularly known as a folk song, pala gan is a term of folk terminology. But today it is a popular folk drama as like as performing art. Acting, songs, dance and dialogue are the main structure of Bolan. According to Gurusaday Dutta Bolan is a ballad dance. His opinions- “The word Bolan means recitation and the dance derives its name from the fact one of the dancers chants or recites the story or ballad from a writing which he holds in his hand 3 .” “According to Panchanan Mondal „Bol“ (sound) is the original word of Bolan 4 . Another school of thought enunciates that the word „Bolan“ is derived from the „Bol“, that means travelling and „Bol“ implies respond to some one call. According to Folk Etymology, „Bula“ means “to walk or travel .” Shri Pulakendu Sinha has said that Bolan is a play composed in poetical form having a metrical system of Bengali poetry each line consists of fourteen letters or syllables .

The root of this folk drama is at Nadia district of south Bengal, but it is disseminated through Bardwan, Birbhum and Murshidabad. The main performing areas of Bolan are Kaligang, Palashipara, Paglachandi, Tehatta, Debogram, Krishnaganj etc at Nadia district.



Plate 100 : Performance of Bolan (street plays) , Nakashipara

Bolan is a traditional folk performing art form of South Bengal. The most backward classes of the villagers are the traditional bearers and performers of Bolan. So the performers are the lower rural classes of people who are illiterate and below poverty line. Today the literate person and higher class society in urban areas are acted in this form.

Traditionally this performance is performed in open ground at the outside of a village. The performing place was circle and oval shaped. The audiences sit down surrounding this performing place. This performance was associated with the light of Petromax and Hajak Lanthan. The performer used natural dresses and costumes like Saree, Blouse, half-pant, Lungi, Photuya etc. They did not use any cosmetic. Generally a Bolan troupe was composed by 10 to 15 artists but everybody was male. Most participants were teenager boys and middle age young men. Effeminate young men played the role of woman and they sing and dance. Bolan-gan was usually composed in the form of a narrative play based on mythological stories. However, the themes of these songs have expanded to include social and contemporary issues . It reflects the sorrows, distress, dejection and in secured life of the poor who love to live in dance and music. For imparting education to people, the story of the Epic Ramayana, Mahabharata and the episodes of Krishna are also being taken up for performance. Sometimes it presents social awareness and protest against social problems, for example Briksha ropon. It has been found that Muslims to participate in this traditional programme and they offer their prayers to Hazarat Md. So the Hindus and the Muslims jointly celebrate Bolan utsab through dance and music

D.Nagar Sangkirtan : *Sankirtan* is a form of song or chanting that praises God and is performed in a public setting. The term comes from the Sanskrit root, *kirtan*, which means “praising,” “celebrating” or “glorifying.” *San* comes from the word, *samyak*, which means “complete.” Westerners have been exposed to sankirtan through the Hare Krishna movement, whose followers publicly sing the praises of Lord Krishna, often to the accompaniment of drums or other percussion instruments and sometimes with dancing. When the sankirtan takes to the streets, it is called *nagara-sankirtan*.

Nagar-sankirtana Mayapur , ISKCON had been performing in daily basis Food For Life and Harinam Sankirtan in Mayapur Dhama to reach every village in Navadwipa dhama to offer some dhama seva for the Dhamavasis.



Plate 101 : Nagar Sangkirtan , Mayapur Iskcon , Source : Mayapur.com

CHAPTER 7 : FOOD AND DRINKS OF NADIA

Nadia district has an extremely rich cultural heritage. It is famous as the abode of Vaishnava scholars. The great seer Chaitanya Mahaprabhu founded Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Chaitanya has a significant influence on the cultural legacy in Bengal including on its gastronomic preferences. The Gaudiya Vaishnavas follow a Lacto vegetarian diet. They abstain from consumption of all types of animal flesh, fish, eggs, onions and garlic. Influenced by Chaitanya, many of the respectable Bengalis did not consume non-vegetarian food. Even the Shaktas consumed mutton and fish only on specific occasions. These culinary limitations of widows inadvertently contributed to the development of a rich vegetarian cuisine in Bengal. Gifted cooks amongst widows contributed greatly to the range and originality of Bengali vegetarian dishes.

“*Chakka*, “*dalna*”. “*ghanta*”, “*chhachari*”, “*chhechra*”, “*chhechki*” and “*labra*” are some of the treasured vegetarian dishes gifted by Bengali widows. Later many of these dishes have been adapted by including non-vegetarian ingredients like shrimp or fish heads. Upper caste Bengali widows would also cook a vegetarian spread for offering to Shaalgraam Shilaa, a small stone form of Narayana.

Nadia has a glorious tradition of sweet making. Most of the famous sweetmeats of the district are made of cottage cheese and sugar. So it seems that they must have originated in the 18th century. The list includes well known dainties like *sarpuria*, *sarbhaja*, *sartakti* (all made of milk cream), along with *dedomonda* (made of cottage cheese and *khejur gur* or date juice syrup), *nikhuti* of Shantipur, *chhanar jilapi* of Muragacha and *pantua* of Ranaghat. All these are basically made of cottage cheese fried in *ghee* and dipped in sugar syrup. Late 19th-century preparations include variants of *rossogolla* and *chumchum* (Anonymous 1940:197).

Local Sweet Shops of Nabadwip :



Plate 102 & 103: Rosogolla & Jalebi getting prepared in the local shops.





Plate 104 & 105 : Jeebe Gaja and other sugar syrup coated dry sweets are sold in the local shops





Plate 106 & 107 : Singhara & Kachori are the most preferred snacks in the locality





Plate 108 & 109 : Malpoa , another traditional sweet of the locality ; Sweets are getting prepared from Chenna



a. Lal Doi or Red Curd of Nabadwip : Nabadwip-er lal doi , also known as Kheer doi or Chakku doi, is one of the most famous types of confectionery in the Bengal region of the Indian subcontinent, originating in present-day West Bengal, India. Though curd is usually white, red curd is a distinct type of confectionery. Red curd of the Nadia's Nabadwip type is very popular. Kalipad Modak of Nabadwip was the inventor of the confectionery in 1930. One of the most famous red curd shop is "Laxmi Narayan Confectionery Store", that is 150-years old curd shop. After preparing the curd, it can be stored up to ten days.



Plate 110: Lal Doi

There is a legend behind red curd. It is known from Nabadwip's archaeological



Plate 111: The thick curd in the earthen pot

council that the birthplace of red curd is Nabadwips Phasitala, and the inventor is Kali Ghosh. Kali Ghosh and Hari Ghosh were two brothers, they used to make mostly curd and whey. They used to boil buffalo milk in a gentle fire pouring a small amount of water to make it as condensed milk for a long time. The milk was turned reddish due to long burning. The two brothers

used to make wheys from the milk. Their whey making area was known as Red Ghol or Red Whey. When milk becomes thick, it reaches to kheer stage, so sometimes it is called Kheer yogurt.

Another name for this curd is Chakku yogurt. There is also a reason behind the name. The quality of the curd is judged on its stickiness. To test it, it is also seen by turning down the pot. Even a Chakku or a knife is inserted inside the pot. Thus the name of Chakku yogurt came from that knife

b. Sarbhaja & Sarpuria : There is a difference of opinion on the history of Sarapuriya. Chaitanyadev used to eat three types of confectionery. One of them **Sarpuri or Sarapuriya**. It is mentioned in Chaitanya charitamrita written by Krishnadas Kaviraj almost 520 years ago. Advaita Acharya himself sent Sarapuriya to Chaitanyadev. Sarpuria is an integral part of delivering offered to Chaitanya Mahaparabhu. According to the historical evidence, Krishnagar and the nearby place were chiefly occupied by a lot of milkman family. Thus the sarpuria came as a West Bengal sweet.

On the other hand, the creator of Sarpuria was the Chandra Das of Krishnanagar. Sarpuria's creator is the father of his father Surukumar Das. It is said that he used to make doors by closing the door at night and with sana, latex and sarp, Sarapuriya and his other discovery Sarwaja. The next morning, he used to ferry in the head. The younger Adhar Chandra learned how to cook sweets for his father. In 1902, the sweet shop was established at Nadiar Para, i.e. the present



Plate 112 : Adhar Mishtanna Pratisthan

Ananta Hari Mitra Road. The name of the shop is Adhar Chandra Das. In time it became an institution. But fear of stealing the recipe, he closed the door and made sweet at night. But when the recipe was published gradually, other mules were made to make Sarapuriya and Sarwaja.



Plate 113 : Sarpuria & 114 : Sarbhaja



c. Pantua of Ranaghat : *The origin of the word Pantua is a bit unclear. Few say, it's taken from the word Panitua, whereas others say, it's from the word Panitoba. "Toba" means down. So, the sweet that sinks to the bottom of the light sugar syrup, is named as the same. The word or rather the concept can be found in ancient Sanskrit literature and even in Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*

Rice flour was mashed with chhena and ghee and milk was stuffed in. And the same was known as "Dugdhakupika". As the preparation process is similar to Pantua, hence, it can be called as the Great Great grandfather of modern-day Pantua. During mid-nineteenth century write-up of a grand feast, mention of Pantua can be found. To cut a long story short, Pantua is a fried sweet which is dipped in sugar syrup. for me, a good pantua should have the outer crust light and inside should be fluffy.

The most famous sweet shop selling pantua is Jogu Moira Shop near Ranaghat Station. This unimpressive looking small shop prepares one of the most authentic pantuas. The shape is little cylindrical and is prepared by chhena.

d. Sweets of Santipur : "Khasa-moa" , "Nikhuti", "Jibegaja" and "Pokkannya" etc. are the main Sweets of Santipur. Other sweets like "Makha Sandesh", "Rosagolla" ,"Pantua" and "Jilapi" etc. were also available at Santipur.

e. Food For Life , Mayapur : Srila Prabupada longed for the day when everyone will



receive full meals of prasadam at Sri Mayapur Dham the birth place of Lord Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu. In order to fulfil his desire "No one should go

hungry", his followers and well-wishers have started a non-profit, non-sectarian charitable project to serve "Gauranga Prasada Seva", a full meal programme, reviving India's glories ancient culture and tradition of distribution of sumptuous vegetarian meal with regular feeding of 300-500 pilgrims on an average, regardless of caste and creed, as a symbol of

mutual brotherhood. The sacred food is distributed absolutely **FREE** for everyone and pilgrims collect their **FULL meal** coupons early in the morning at Sri Sri Radha-Madhava temple courtyard.



f. Bhapa pitha is a type of rice cake mainly from the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, what is today Bangladesh, East India and Northeast India. Bhapa pitha is considered to be traditional winter dish in Bangladesh. These are steamed rice cakes made out of freshly ground rice flour. The filling is composed of coconut and date molasses. Either brown sugar or jaggery can often be used as a substitute for the molasses.



g. Dolo : A very popular pitha in Nadia is Dolo which is similar to Dudhpuli (rice flour Dumpling soaked in thick milk).



Plate 117 : Dolo , popular pitha in Nadia

CHAPTER 8 – FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN NADIA

Our study area includes the blocks of Chakdah, Ranaghat, Santipur , Krishnanagar 1 & 2 , Nakashipara and Kaliguange which all have their individual lists of local festivals and fairs.

I. Charak & Gajaan : Among the many folk festivals of Bengal, Gajan festival, Charak Puja and Neel Puja has a special place even in today's modern age. It is celebrated predominantly in rural Bengal, particularly in Nadia, North 24 parganas, South 24 parganas , Haora, Hugli, Bardhaman etc.



Plate 118 : Charak Puja ritual getting performed in Krishnanagar

Hindus celebrate the festival mainly on the last two days of the month of Chaitra. This period is known as Chaitra Sankranti when Sun will enter Pisces sign. Chaitra Sankranti begins on 14th April of every year. People observe fast during this period devoting themselves to their God. It is almost impossible to determine the actual period when Gajan started. However, according to some historians, there was a time in middle ages when Buddhism was somewhat cornered in India, Buddhist monks took shelter in many places. One of them was in Bengal where they converted to Hinduism. With them came the Tantric rituals of Buddhism which involving Tantra rituals including severe penance as well as the thought of renouncing worldly pursuits to devote one's self to spiritual work, which is often referred to as monasticism. This may be the reason that Gajan started as "Dharmer Gajan" and slowly took its way to "Shiber Gajan" in the later period. In Bengal Dharmathakur is generally worshipped by the scheduled cast like Bauri, Bagdi, Hari, Dom. Dharmathakur may have been originated from Dharmaraj of Buddhism. Although Dharmathakur is identified by a shapeless stone (as seen in Bankura) and its Vahana is represented by terracotta horses, there have been instances where Buddha idol has been worshipped as Dharma Thakur in villages of Bankura. There are still villages where both Dharamraj and Shiva are placed with Gajan offerings. Gajan is actually linked to persons who are related to agricultural community, directly or indirectly. They pray for the rains and better harvest. Lord Shiva is said to be closely related to this community. It may be worth noting here that Dharmathakur is actually considered to be the God of Fertility. Gajan festival was and still to some extent a great social leveler. The persons who were involved in the festival become a Shiva Devotee and are respected by all. In earlier days the peasants who were involved in penances which involved piercing one's tongue with sharp needles to hung oneself from sharp hooks hanging from wooden structures were respected by the Landlord. During Gajon these so called "Low caste" would rise above his own level and be recognized as representative of Lord Shiva.

Gajan Celebration

During Gajan celebration is performed by the devotees signifying marriages of the male forces of Siva, Nil or Dharmaraj with their respective consorts. One way it signifies the union of the forces of sun and earth.



Plate 119 , 120 & 121 : Shiva Puja (Gajan) is performed in Tilipara, Krishnanagar



Although the festival takes place in its full intensity for three days, starting before the day of Chaitra Sankranti and ending the day after, it continues till the beginning on the month of Ashar alias Ashad which signifies the rainy season.

As mentioned earlier, the basic reason for the festival is to worship the deities of the respective devotees for the hope of a better rainy season and good harvest. Also, people believe that the festival will provide them prosperity eliminating from any sorrow and sufferings which they suffered in the past year. Primarily arranged on the premises of different Shiva Temples, the festival is arranged mainly by mendicants (Persons begging or relying on charitable donations) who are referred as “Gajan Sanyasis”. The festival takes place in open grounds and not in anyone’s residence. In Bengal generally the festival takes place dominant by Scheduled caste Bengali people.

During Charak people dress up as Cosmetic Shiva, Parvati, Krishna and other deities. Usually Rajbangshi caste of persons is allowed to do such acts. They are locally known as “Soung of Gajan” (Soung in Bengali means jester). The word gajan in Bengali comes from the word garjan or roar generated by sannyasis during the festivities. Alternative theory says it is from the from two word Ga (village) and Jan (People), indicating festival of the people.





Plate 123, 124, 125 : Preparation of “Shongs of Gajaun” .







Plate 126,127 : Performance of puja by the charak sannyasis , Krishnadevpur , Nadia

Charak Puja

The most intriguing part of Gajan Festival is Chark Puja. The tradition of Charak Puja is all about worshipping the Charak tree and the several penance acts performed by Charak Sanyasis around and on the tree. This act is performed on 14th April every year. A Charak Tree is actually the trunk of a tree without any roots or branches. The height is around 30 to 40 feet. The trunk needs to be straight. The tree is worshipped by priests and then erected inside a ditch and is balanced by bamboos. Then the Sanyasis perform their penance acts. After these acts the tree is duly immersed into the river which is believed to visit the same ghat of the river next year. The Charak Sanyasis then brings it back to the puja ground, which is a local ground (normally a playground nowadays). The Charak tree is believed to be the abode of Ardhanarishwar (composite form of the Shiva and Parvati). An Idol or a Mask is first attached to the top of a tree, before the worship and hoisting it up straight on the ground. Several people are engaged to pull it up. In some village, the mask is also referred to be that of Harakali. However, the predominant concept is that of Ardhanarishwar –which symbolizes Purush (Man) and Prakiti (Nature) in the deity. A deeper meaning is that Human life coexists with that of nature. The most amazing part is how sanyasi priests pierce sharp hooks at the bodies of participating sannyasis almost without any cut or injury. The bloodless piercing of sharp metals in the human body by the practitioner priests looks like a magic act. Actually with years of practice, they know how to pierce these sharp hooks without damaging the veins and causing less pain.

It is believed that such acts actually functions as a near role reversal for men attempting to experience the pains of womanhood, including childbirth.

The hook held men then fly in a circular path by the ropes fastened to the Charak Tree on one end and to the hook on the other. After repeated circular motion some fall down from such a height, but surprisingly no one seems to majorly hurt. They seem to be in a trance and do not want to get down. Some get their tongue pierced with multiple needles and move around the Charak tree sitting on the shoulder on other devotees. While hanging mothers allow devotees to embrace their infant child which is supposed to cause well being to the infants! In some villages other spine-chilling acts take place where devotees lie on the nails of the studded plank, climb onto a bamboo platform on a bed of thorns and in some places their bodies are pierced with arrows having their tip wrapped with cotton which is set on fire.

In many villages, devotees dance with human skulls too. This practice is however coming to end in many places as police has made regular arrest of such ‘performers’ The area where Charak Puja performed is sanctified and protected by fencing, where the Charak tree is installed. The Charak Sannyasis and the sadhu are the only people who can enter into the area.



Plate 128 : Rituals during Charak Puja



Plate 129 & 130 : Charak Performance , Krishnadevpur



Plate 131& 132 : Rituals associated with Charak & Gajan



B. Raas Festival :**Nabadwip**

In the Bhagavat Purana and in the VishnuPurana, the Raas Yatra of Sri Sri Krishna is mentioned. In the later autumn, Sri Krishna's union with the Gopinis with Dance & Songs is expressed in the Raas Lila. At Nabadwip, the Shaktas who are devotees of Shakti worship and the Saivas who are devotees of Siva become united with the Vaishnavas, the devotees of Vishnu. Hence the word 'Mela' i.e. 'Milan' – the co-ordination of Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Saivism is performed in Raas Mela. After all, Raas Mela is the "samannay sadhan" of different religions. The maxim "Yata Mat Tato Path" is clearly expressed in this fest.

The King Krishna Chandra Roy of Nadia is responsible for this Raas Yatra at Nabadwip. Here Hari and Hara, Krishna & Kali are the halves of each other. Various types of images are worshipped in different pandals. They are well decorated with light and various types of Sola made ornaments and 'Daker Saaj'. The beatings of Drums, the music of Flutes and Banjos and somewhere Mridangas and Kartals fill the air of Nabadwip.



Plate 133 : Hari and Hara are worshipped together during Raas yatra

The Raas Lila of the Vaishnavas of Nabadwip was held at Baro Akhra, Shyamsunderar Bari, Gorachander Akhra, Jagannath Bari, Harisava Mandir and etc. Some are of opinion that Krishnanda Chandra and other opines that the later generation of Krishnanda (Girish Chandra) introduced this Raas. Devi Gostho is still now worship after its introduction in 1836 by Nandakumar Bidyabhusan. Another opinion is invogue that Vriguram who hailed from Dacca with his family is responsible for this Raas Yatra. He lived at Dearapara. Deara means the strand of the river. He setup a seat of Panchamundi at Dearapara and then the Court Pandit of Krishnanda Shankarnath Tarkobagish enshrined the Siva Linga and Goddess Kali. In 1752 to 1756 Alok Nath (Siva) and Kali were worshipped on the day of Raas Purnima. Possibly it was the first Raas Yatra of Nabadwip. After 5-7 years of this Savasiva of Badrapara and Savasiva of Ampuliapara were worshipped. Hence it may be referred that Raas Yatra of Nabadwip was introduced in between 1752 – 1756. Approximately 400 idols of gods and goddesses are worshipped in the Raas Yatra of Nabadwip.

One of the feature of the Raas Puja is after the completion of the worshipping the Baroari members attained one another and finally go to Poramatala with musical instruments and procession, it is called NAVAMI,

The next day that is on the Bisarjan day the idols on carts pass through the town encircling Poramatala Road with Poramatala with musical instruments and procession, it is called ARANG. This circular road came into being from the year 1994. The Ghat Bisarjan or the immersion of Ghatas which has been taken from the Jagadhatri Puja of Krishnagar is another feature starting from 2001. Formerly the Procession ceremony was held with the Music of Sanai and the beating of Drums and various types of songs called Khemta and Kheur. But now the old system is going to be stopped. Instead, Western Band and other Musical instruments. Now the Raas Utsav of the Vaisnavas is ensigned in the temples only. Whereas the Shakta Raas Yatra is gaining brown among the mass. Some of the Sakta and Saiva pujas are mentioned in brief.



Plate 134 : Gaurangini mata One of the oldest and most respected of the pujas

Plate 135 : Dumureswari Mata





Plate 136 : Shaba Shiba Mata idol worshipped during Raas Yatra



Plate 137 : Ganga Mata is worshipped during Raas Yatra, Nabadwip



Plate 138 ; Biswaroop Puja ,
Raasyatra , Nabadwip

Santipur : Mathuresh, the grandson of Adwaitacharya, first introduced the festival of Raasa at Santipur. It was perhaps at the end of the sixteenth century or in the early years of the seventeenth century. He brought 'Dolgovinda' from Jessore and renamed him as Radharaman and established the Baragoswami Bati as a separated clan. He has a good number of disciples both in the Brahmin and non-brahmin sect. He insisted them to have Raasa as a special festivity. All the owners of the Bigrahas built their own Raasamandir for their own Bigraha or deity. Raasajatra festival for the deities are observed for four days. In the first three days the deities sit in the Raasmancha and moves around of Santipur But on the fourth day they walk in the surrounding of his own area on the laps of the owners of the deities and the disciples. The first day of the Raasa is called the Pratham Raas, second day is called the Majher Raas and the third day of the Raas when the deity moves around the city on the shoulders of the bearers in called the Bhanga Raas. But the fourth day when the deity moves around his own area is called the Kunja Bhanga Day. It is also called the Phooldol.

In the early days the Raas festive was between the deities and His devout. The pomp and grandeur as we seen it now-a-days was not at all at that time. The pious men used to take part in the Raas only. The celebrations of the Raas especially in the Bhanga Raas were not there. In 1790 one English artist came down to Santipur and stayed here for two full years. He was Artheer Doilliam. Davis and lived in the English ware house at Baigachi of Santipur He draw many pictures of santipur both of the lab ours and of the natural sceneries. But we do not find any picture of the Raas in the works. Also in the letters written by the English storekeeper who had to live at Santipur nothing of the Raas is mentioned. It is presumed that the permanent Settlement produced a lot of big aristocrats though art whole of Bengal. They contributed largely in the up leftmost of the Raasjatra at Santipur. In the proceeding of the Santipur Municipality we find the mention of the ra for the first time is 1860. It is written there that many shops from the outside of Santipur have came down here during the Raasjatra. It means that by that time the Raasjatra festival has been famous throughout Bengal. So it can be said safely that by 1820 A.D. The Raasjatra festival at Santipur got momentum. The great sage Bijay Krishna Goswami told : “there are three things to take into mind – the Doljata of Brindaban, the procession of Janamastami at Dacca and the congregation of Bhanga Raas at Santipur.



Plate 139 : Bhanga Raas , Santipur





Plate 135 & 136 : Bhanga Raas , Santipur



C. Gaura Purnima Festival at Mayapur :

Gaura Purnima is a Vaishnava festival that celebrates the appearance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534), who founded Gaudiya Vaishnavism. It occurs on the Purnima (Full moon day) in the Hindu month Phalguna, usually falling in March or April. Gaura Purnima means "Golden Full Moon", a reference to



Plate 142 : Gaura Festival, Mayapur

Chaitanya. His followers spend this festival fasting and chanting congregationally, then at moonrise a feast is enjoyed by all. It was celebrated on 1st of March in 2018 likewise in 2019 the very auspicious day will be witnessed on or around March 21. This festival is celebrated by Gaudiya Vaishnavas as part of Nabadwip-mandala Parikrama. *Gaura-purnima* is the most auspicious appearance day of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. In Mayapur it is the biggest festival throughout whole year. On the eve of Gaura-purnima, an adhivasa ceremony is performed by the devotees to purify ourselves and get ready to worship and serve the Lord the next day.

The morning Srimad-Bhagavatam class is given by three leaders of ISKCON. During the day, devotees go to the Ganga and take bath to purify themselves. A grand abhiseka of Gauranga Mahaprabhu is done in the evening. The ecstatic hari-nama sankirtana transports one to the spiritual world.

On Gaura-purnima devotees fast till moon rise. Anukalpa maha-prasada (ekadasi-prasada) is served after moonrise, while regular grain prasada is served on the next day, Jagannatha Misra's festival which is starting a New Year for all Gaudiya Vaishnavas.



Plate 143 :
Adhibas
Festival ,
Mayapur



A part of Gaura-purnima celebrations, Ganga-puja and immersion of ashes of departed souls is performed. Devotees offer puja to Ganga, something that Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu liked very much, take bath in her holy waters and also fetch a pot of water for Gauranga Mahaprabhu's abhisheka on Gaura-purnima. Ganga-devi emanates from the lotus feet of the Lord. She is flowing throughout the universe bestowing mercy to all, but in Navadvipa-mandala, but as stated by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, she distributes special mercy not available anywhere else. Her divine waters in Navadvipa-mandala bestow Gauranga-prema, love for Lord Gauranga.

Just like a caring mother, Ganga-devi nourishes and protects the tender Bhakti creepers of those who take shelter of her by bathing in her sacred waters and worship her. Immersion of the ashes of departed souls in Ganga helps them get liberated from all sins and awards them a birth to continue Krishna-bhakti.



Plate 146: Ganga Puja as a part of Gaura Purnima festival

Boat and Swing Festival: The small Sri Sri Radha Madhava deities (uttsava-murti) are brought in a procession amidst kirtana to the lake at Srila Prabhupada's Pushpa Samadhi Mandir. Their Lordships are placed on a boat and taken on a boat ride during a boat festival

evening. The festivities intend to engage everyone in Krishna's service, thereby giving us a chance to perfect our lives.

The pujaris apply sandalwood to Their sacred bodies. After the boat ride, Their Lordships are seated on a swing decorated with colorful and fragrant flowers and fruits. Devotees then have the wonderful opportunity to swing Them while singing bhajanas for Their pleasure. They also grab the opportunity to cook and offer bhoga to Their Lordships and distribute them to other devotees!



Plate 147 & 148 : Boat and Swing Festival in Gaura Purnima



D. Agmeshwari festival

The Agmeshwari festival at Nabadwip is held at Agmeshwaritala, the birthplace of Krishnananda Agambagis, who wrote Tantrasar.

E. Barodol Festival

On the auspicious eleventh day of the bright fortnight after the Indian festival of colours, Holi – usually in April – 12 idols of Krishna, in his various forms (ranging from the crawling baby Gopal to the flute-playing avatar, etc.), are brought to the palace in Krishnanagar. The idols are displayed for public viewing on the first three days of the festival, after which they retire to a temple inside the palace as guests of the patron deity Boro Narayan. However, the month-long fair, held in the huge field next to the old fort's gate, is open to all.

Barodol of Krishnanagar is one of the most important events in Nadia district. The deity of Krishnanagar Raj is **Baro Narayan**. The main festival is for three days and the festival is more than 200 years old. Though a month-long fair, one can witness thirteen Radha Krishna idols (including that of Rajbari) – all from Nadia district are worshipped in the eastern side of the Puja Mandap within the Rajbari compound in the first three days and they are placed in separate wooden thrones.

The festival is normally held after the Dolyatra in the *Sukla ekadashi tithi*. A temporary marquee is set up in the palace precincts for the public viewing of the idols. The idols are dressed in separate attire on each of these three days – rajbesh (royal attire), phoolbesh (floral attire) and rakhalbesh (cowherd attire), respectively. Pilgrims offer flowers and coloured powder to the idols. The festival draws a lot of Vaishnav pilgrims from different parts of the district. Even if you are not religiously inclined, you are likely to enjoy a glimpse of the religious iconography of Bengal as represented through these old idols. Unfortunately, owing to some spat, the idol of Gopinath from Agradwip (in neighbouring district of Burdwan) is not brought to the fair and a photograph of the idol is worshipped instead.

The fair springs to life in the late afternoon (as it can be very hot during the day) and by evening it is choc a bloc with visitors. There are stalls selling household goods, textiles, plastic goods and toys, etc. A large part of the fair is devoted to food stalls, from the traditional jalebi and fried papad stalls to chicken rolls and chow mein, from iced lassi to cold drinks to icecreams, to packaged food. Do partake of the locally popular hot snack called

‘ghugni’ – made from cooked gram and yellow or white peas in a spicy gravy and served with various toppings. There is a whole row devoted to stalls selling India’s popular street food – panipuri (phuchka in Bengal), where you will not only find the use of traditional ingredients but also experimental ones too.

Barodol mela has turned into a heritage fair which is still continuing without any interruption and every year the number of shops are increasing. With age, the nature of the fair is changing as modern amenities are being sold. This year the fair started on the 15th of April, which also happens to be the Bengali New Year’s Day. The festival was started in the year 1764 (according to some in 1744) by Maharaja Krishnachandra. Since then the fair is going on for more than two and a half century. Though *Barodol*, the idols being thirteen in number including that of Baronarayan Chandra of Krishnanagar Rajbari.



Plate 149 & 150 : Bardol Mela , Krishnanagar

The other idols were brought from different areas to the Rajbari like **Shree Shree Madangopal** from Birohi; Shree Shree Gopal from Nabadwip; Shree Shree Garergopal from Shantipur. Instead of the idol of Shree Shree Gopinath of Agradwip, the photo of the same is

worshipped. There was a story connected with this famous *mela*. It was said that *Choto Rani* (queen) once requested Maharaja Krishnachandra to take her to Ula village fair; but he somehow forgot it owing to his busy work. Later Krishnachandra brought the whole fair in the Rajbari itself and which is being continued till date as the famous *Barodol mela* of Krishnanagar. The Rajbari gates are opened for the general public during the first three days of the festival. People from even far-off places visit Krishnanagar to witness this famous *mela*. After the end of three days, all the Krishna idols were sent to their respective

temples from where they came. Although the basic character of the fair has remained the same – where local people come to buy household goods and enjoy the food – the merchandise sold have undergone a drastic change, rued a seller of hand-made goods for the home kitchen. Even though you will still find vendors selling handmade household goods of wood and iron, the majority stalls belong to those selling steel and plastic goods. The local popularity of the fair also entices branded companies to set up stalls here. The famous clay toy makers of



Krishnanagar too have stopped coming to the fair. According to a toymaker, the fair is hardly known to people beyond the district. Hence only local people flock to it, who are not interested in buying the clay toys. Besides, children today are more drawn to plastic-made bright coloured toys. Only if the fair can be made popular to visitors from different parts of India and from abroad, it will be a boon to local artists and handicrafts.

f. Baruni and Ganga Puja

Mayapur : On the occasion of Ganga Devi's merciful descent to earth, grand puja was offered on 4th June to Mother Ganga at **Prabhupada Ghat**, Mayapur. Highlight being the spectacular Ganga Arthi with big, bright lamps. Srimati Ganga Devi, seated on her carrier crocodile, decorated in a new Sari and many flower garlands, accepted the puja and offerings & arti, offered with love & devotion by Mayapur Community devotees. Under the instruction & desire of HH Jayapataka Swami, for over past three years, every day Ganga puja & arti takes place at Prabhupada Ghat at 5 pm. Every year Ganga Dusshera puja is being celebrated with fervent devotion. HG Bhadracharu prabhu conducted the pooja and proceedings. Earlier, HH Gauranga Prem Swami Maharaj, HG Jananivas prabhu and senior devotees spoke on the glories of Mother Ganga. Everyone offered lamps & flowers to Mother Ganga and was served prasadam. An initiative of Mayapur Ganga puja seva committee, a temple for Mother Ganga is being constructed at the banks of Ganges. The work is going on so that the temple inauguration can take place at the earliest. Ganga Mata ki Jai! Mayapur dham ki Jai!

Other important sites : The week long Baruni and Ganga Puja festival at Phulkhali on way to Krishnanagar to Shikarpur is held during the Bengali calendar month of Chaitra (mid-March to mid- April).



Plate 151 : Ganga Puja at Phulkhali

g. Jagadhatri Puja

The Jagadhatri Puja was first started by Raja Krishnachandra of Krishnanagar, Nadia in Bengal. Jagadhatri Puja is very popular in Krishnanagar, Tehatta, Rishra, Chandannagar, Bhadreswar, Hooghly, Boinchi, Ashoknagar-Kalyangarh. In Krishnanagar, Nadia, Raj Rajeshwary Jagadhatri Puja is one of the oldest Jagadhatri Puja in Bengal. Legend has it that once during the Nawab raj in Bengal Maharaja Krishnachandra was arrested by Nawab Siraj-ud-Dullah for not paying tax in time. He was released from Prison during the day of Vijaya Dashami due to which the entire festivity of Durga Puja in his kingdom was spoiled so to again rejoice Maharaja started the ritual of this Jagadhatri Puja. Primarily, this puja was done by one Raj Rajeshwary (Raj Mata) Bengali language. and before start a Jagadhatri Puja was donated by Maharaja Krishna Chandra called Maa Jaleshwary at Malopara Barowary.



Plate 152 : Jagadhatri Puja , Krishnanagar



Plate 153 : Buri Maa , Chashapara , Krishnanagar

Plate 154 , 155 & 156 : Different Jagadhatri Images





Plate 157 : Kalinagar Rainbow Club



Plate 158 : Chakerpara , Adi Maa





Plate 159: Jagadhatri Idol of Krishnanagar Palace





Plate 160 & 161: Tantipara , Baromaa



Plate 162 : Radhanagar Krishnamata Jagatdhatri Puja



Plate 163: Adityar Maa , Chashapara , Krishnanagar & Pandal





Plate 164 : Choto Maa , Kanthalpota , Krishnanagar, Plate 165 : Adi Maa , Krishnanagar



h. Mela of Fatima Bibi

The two-century-old festival and Mela of Fatima Bibi is held at Uttar Rajpur on the way to Haringhata in the Bengali calendar month of Baisakh (mid-April to mid-May). This festival lasts for three days.

i. Nrisinghamela

The Nrisinghamela at Deypara, near Krishnanagar is held on the fourteenth day in the Bengali calendar month of Baisakh (mid-April to mid-May) every year.

j. Sanajatra festival

The Sanajatra festival at Jasra is held to celebrate the worship of Jagannath and coincides with the chariot festival of Puri, Odisha.

k. Satimar Mela

It is an important event organized in Ghoshpara near Kalyani. This was introduced by Saraswati Debi alias Satima, wife of Ram Saran Pal of Sadgop caste. Ram Saran was a disciple of Aulechand, who is the founder of Kartabhaja Sect. No deity is worshiped by the Kartabhaja, it is the Guru (religious head) who is worshiped. The fair is scheduled for three days during Dol Yatra or Holi festival. However, it may continue for a month. The people follow the practice of confession before the Guru which is similar to Christianity and Islam. Satima Festival and Mela is held at Ghoshpara near Kalyani during Holi. Satima the Founder of Kartabpuja Sect is worshiped during the festival.



l. Worship of Lord Krishna

Worship of Lord Krishna, which was inspired by Sri Chaitanya, resulted in many celebrations in the district. It includes Rath Yatra, Dol Yatra, Jhulan Yatra, Ras Yatra, Goshtashtami and Janmashtami.

j. Other Fairs

Beside these famous festivals there is some of the other notable fairs (Mela) which attracts local people from far and wide. They are :

- a. Jugolkishor Mela – at Aranghata, Ranaghat Sub division
- b. Rash Mela – at Santipur and Nabadwip
- c. Gajipirtalar Mela – at Dhananjaypur Nakashipara
- d. Sahidpirer Mela – Majdia
- e. Lalan Mela – Kadamkhali village at Asannagar
- f. Brahma Puja Mela
- g. Jaleswar Shiva Mela – Ghurni