



# HUIGLI

# GNAMAMI GANGE

## Documentation of Ganga from Gomukh to Gangasagar



**Report submitted by:**

**Intangible Cultural Heritage Division**

# **GANGA CULTURAL DOCUMENTATION**

**HUGLI DISTRICT**

**Intangible Heritage Documentation**

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**Authored By :**



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Background of the Project

**Namami Gange Programme**, is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as ‘Flagship Programme’ by the Union Government in June 2014 with the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

**The key achievements under Namami Gange programme are:**

- a. **Creating Sewerage Treatment Capacity:** 63 sewerage management projects under implementation in the States of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. 12 new sewerage management Projects Launched in these states. Work is under construction for creating Sewerage capacity of 1187.33 (MLD). Hybrid Annuity PPP Model based two projects has been initiated for Jagjeetpur, Haridwar and Ramanna, Varanasi.
- b. **Creating River-Front Development:** 28 River-Front Development projects and 33 Entry level Projects for construction, modernization and renovation of 182 Ghats and 118 crematoria have been initiated.
- c. **River Surface Cleaning:** River Surface cleaning for collection of floating solid waste from the surface of the Ghats and River and its disposal are afoot and pushed into service at 11 locations.
- d. **Bio-Diversity Conservation:** Several Bio-Diversity conservation projects are namely: Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation, Fish and Fishery Conservation in Ganga River, Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Education Programme has been initiated. 5 Bio-Diversity center’s at Dehradun, Narora, Allahabad, Varanasi and Barrackpore has been developed for restoration of identified priority species.
- e. **Afforestation:** Forestry interventions for Ganga through Wildlife Institute of India; Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute and Centre for Environment Education has been initiated. Forestry interventions for Ganga have been executed as per the Detailed Project Report prepared by Forest Research Institute, Dehradun for a period of 5 years (2016-2021) at project cost of Rs.2300 Crores. Work has been commenced in 7 districts of Uttarakhand for medicinal plants.
- f. **Public Awareness:** A series of activities such as events, workshops, seminars and conferences and numerous IEC activities were organized to make a strong pitch for public outreach and community participation in the programme. Various awareness activities through rallies, campaigns, exhibitions, *shram daan*, cleanliness drives, competitions, plantation drives and development and distribution of resource materials were organized and for wider publicity the mass mediums such as TV/Radio, print media advertisements, advertorials, featured articles and advertorials were published. Gange Theme song was released widely and played on digital media to enhance the visibility of the programme. NMCG ensured presence at Social Media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.
- g. **Industrial Effluent Monitoring:** The number of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) in April, 2019 is 1072. Regulation and enforcement through regular and surprise inspections of GPIs is carried out for compliance verification against stipulated environmental norms. The GPIs are also inspected on annual basis for compliance verification of the pollution norms and

process modification, wherever required through third party technical institutes. First round of inspection of GPIs by the third-party technical institutes has been carried out in 2017. Second round of inspection of GPIs has been completed in 2018. Out of 961 GPIs inspected in 2018, 636 are complying, 110 are non-complying and 215 are self-closed. Action has been taken against 110 non-complying GPIs and is issued closure directions under Section 5 of the E (P) Act. Online Continuous Effluent Monitoring Stations (OCEMS) connectivity established to CPCB server in 885 out of 1072 GPIs.

- h. **Ganga Gram:** Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS) identified 1674 Gram Panchayats situated on the bank of River Ganga in 5 State (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal). Rs. 578 Crores has been released to Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS) for construction of toilets in 1674 Gram Panchayats of 5 Ganga Basin States. Out of the targeted 15, 27,105 units, MoDWS has completed construction of 8, 53,397 toilets. Consortium of 7 IITs has been engaged in the preparation of Ganga River basin Plan and 65 villages have been adopted by 13 IITs to develop as model villages. **UNDP** has been engaged as the executing agency for rural sanitation programme and to develop Jharkhand as a model State at an estimated cost of Rs. 127 Crore.

**National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** endeavors to deploy best available knowledge and resources across the world for Ganga rejuvenation. Clean Ganga has been a perennial attraction for many international countries that have expertise in river rejuvenation. Countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Israel etc. have shown interest in collaborating with India for Ganga rejuvenation. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed with various Central Ministries viz.- Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Ayush, Ministry of Petroleum, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation and Ministry of Agriculture for synergizing the Government schemes.

### Why we need "Namami Gange" programmes?

- a. River Ganga has significant economic, environmental and cultural value in India.
- b. Rising in the Himalayas and flowing to the Bay of Bengal, the river traverses a course of more than 2,500 km through the plains of north and eastern India.
- c. The Ganga basin - which also extends into parts of Nepal, China and Bangladesh - accounts for 26 per cent of India's landmass.
- d. The Ganga also serves as one of India's holiest rivers whose cultural and spiritual significance transcends the boundaries of the basin.

### Aim & Objective of NMCG

The aims and objectives of NMCG are to accomplish the mandate of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) are:

1. To ensure effective abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the river Ganga by adopting a river basin approach to promote inter-sectoral co-ordination for comprehensive planning and management and
2. To maintain minimum ecological flows in the river Ganga with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally sustainable development.

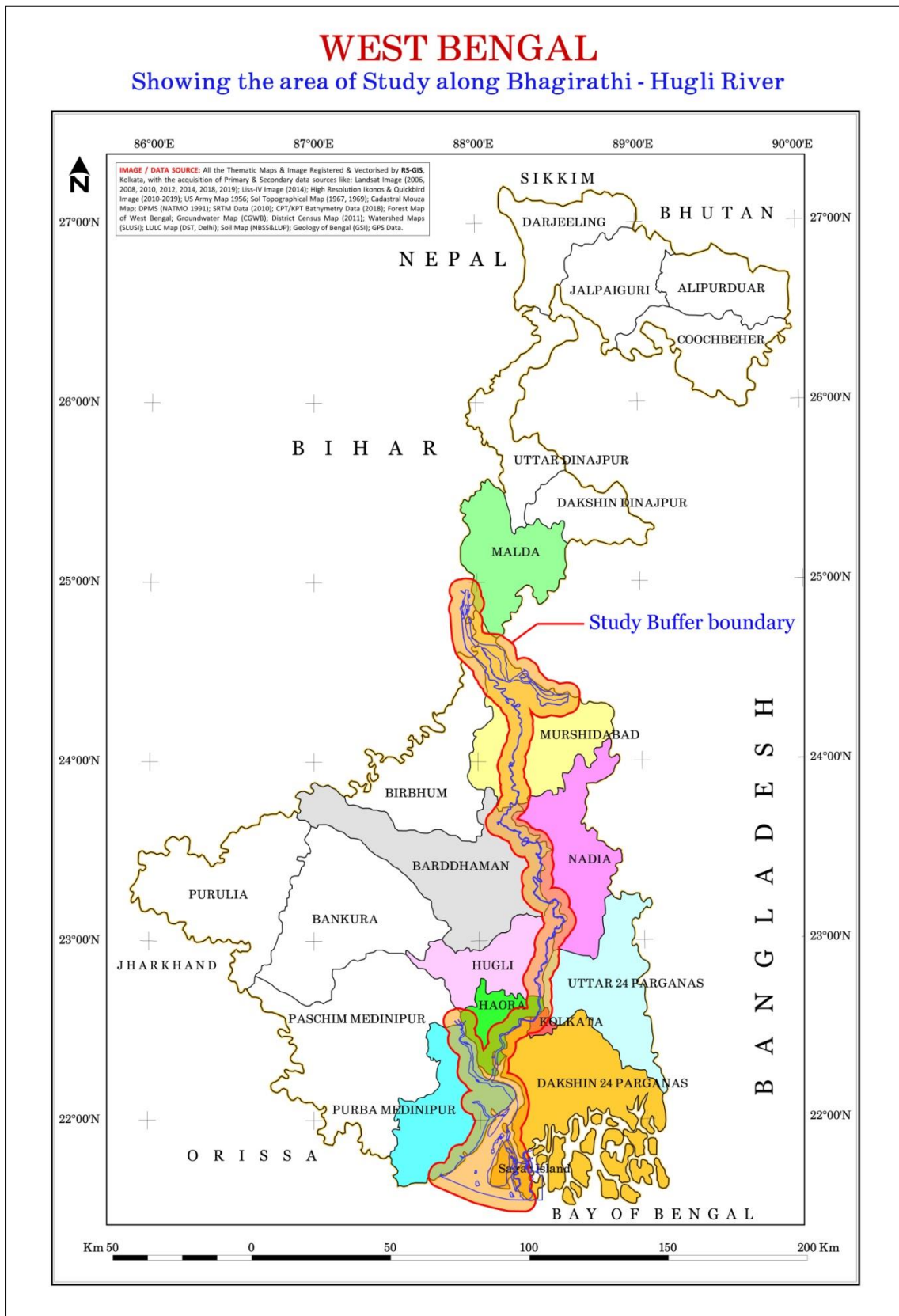
## 1.2 Ganga Cultural Documentation

India is endowed with rich water resources with approximately 45,000 km long riverine systems criss-cross the length and breadth of the country. The Ganga River basin is the largest of the basins of India with an area of 8,61,452 Sq.km in India, draining into the 11 states of the country, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. The Ganga River has many tributaries, both in the Himalayan region before it enters the plains at Haridwar and further downstream before its confluence with the Bay of Bengal. The basin has a total drainage length of about 624235.73 Sq.km. The Ganga basin lies between east longitudes 73°2' to 89°5' and north latitudes 21°6' to 31°21' having maximum length and width of approx. 1,543 km and 1024 km. The average water resource potential of the basin has been assessed as 525020 million Cubic Meters (MCM).

**Table No 1 : Hugli District Details**

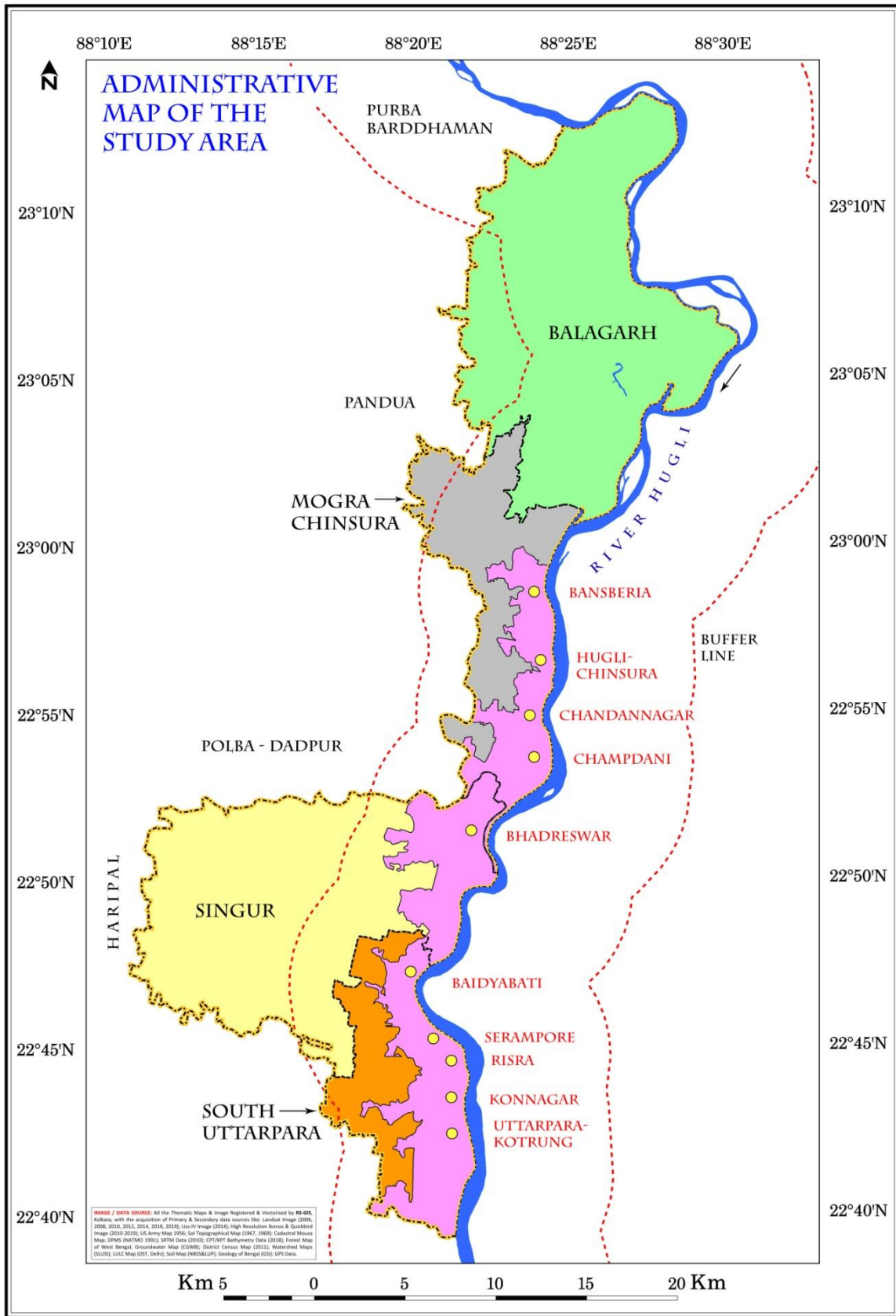
Sl.	Head Details		Quantitative Information		Remarks
1.	State Name: West Bengal		-	-	
2.	Geographical Extension of Bhagirathi-		N	E	
	Hugli		N	E	
3.	Areal coverage in 5km Buffer				
4.	Areal coverage in 10km Buffer				
5.	Total Number of Districts coverage		10		
6.	District wise Police Station & Ward coverage	<b>District</b>	<b>Number of PS/ Wards</b>	<b>Length of Hugli River</b>	
		A Malda	04	88 Km	
		B Murshidabad	13	520 Km	
		C Nadia	09	112 Km	
		D Barddhaman	04	138 Km	
		E Hugli	09	91 Km	
		F Haora	09	69 Km	
		G North24 Parganas	09	42 Km	
		H South 24 Parganas	09	110 Km	
		I Kolkata	144 Wards	20Km	
J Purba Medinipur	06	92 Km			
7.	Total Length of the Bhagirathi-Hugli River in the Lower Part		1282 Km.		

### 1.3 Study Area



Map No 1 : West Bengal Map showing the location of Hugli

**DISTRICT HUGLI - NATURAL HERITAGE DOCUMENTATION**



Map No 2 : Administrative Map of the Study Area

## CHAPTER 2 : HUGLI THROUGH AGES

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From the configuration of the district, a low-lying tract, traversed by numerous rivers with a series of marshes between them, it may be presumed that its earliest inhabitants were tribes of fishermen and boatmen. This supposition is confirmed by the predominance, down to the present day, of fishing castes like the *Kaibarttas* and the *Bagdis*. The former, indeed, can be traced to very early times, their name being found in the Manu Smriti the two great Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and Mahabhdrata, and also in the colloquial form of Ketata in Asoka's Pillar Edict V. The Bagdis seem to have been an aboriginal tribe of West Bengal, whose origin is indicated not only by their non-Sanskritic name and their peculiar features, but also by certain customs to which they still adhere and by their low position in the Hindu social scale. The *Kaibarttas* predominate in the south, the *Bagdis* in the north and west; while the *Sadgops* are also found in strength in the western tracts, where they may have migrated after the Bagdis.

At the dawn of history this part of the country was probably included in the territory held by the Suhmas, a tribe mentioned Hindu in juxtaposition with the Angas, Vangas and Pundras in the Mahabharata and also in the Mahdbhdshya, a grammar dating back to the second century B. C. In the epic the Suhmas are said to have been born of the queen of Bali by the blind Brahman sage Dirghatamas, while according to the Ayrdnga-nutta, one of the oldest Jaina scriptures, Subbahumi, or Suhma-land, was a part, apparently the eastern part, of Ladha (Sanskrit Radha). These references, fragmentary though they are, afford some grounds for the belief that the land had been colonized by Aryans, including Brahmans and other high castes, long before the birth of Christ.

There can be no doubt that in the third century B.C. The territory of the Suhmas was included in the vast empire of Asoka which extended over the whole of Bengal as far as the mouths of the Ganges and up to Tamralipti (the modern Tamluk). Several centuries later this tract became absorbed with the rest of Bengal in the Gupta empire, owing to a successful campaign by Samudragupta in the fourth century.

The country remained under Hindu rule for some time longer, escaping the raid made on Nadia by Muhammad-i- Mdhah- Bakhtyar Khilji in 1199 A.D. By 698 H or 1298 AD. However, the northern part of the district had passed into the hands of the Muhammadan conquerors for Zafar Khan's Mosque at Tribeni bears that date, and his Madrasa is dated a few years later. Tribeni, and afterwards Satgaon (Sanskrit Saptagram) was the head-quarters of the local Muhammadan governors and the importance of the latter place was recognized by its being made a mint-town: the earliest existing coin minted at Satgaon is dated 729 H. (1329 A.D.). Saptagram (colloquially called Satgaon) was a major port, the chief city and sometimes capital of southern Bengal, in ancient and medieval times, The word Saptagram means seven villages. These are identified as Saptagram are Basudebpur, Bansberi, Khamarpara (Nityanandapur), Krishnapur, Debanandapur (Sambachora) and Tirisigha (Baladghati). According to Binoy Ghosh, Tamralipta, the ancient port, started declining from the 8th century, owing to river silting, and Saptagram possibly started gaining in importance as a port from the 9-10th century. Saptagram port, along with its business centre, had become important in the pre-Muslim era, during the rule of the Palas and Senas.



Image No 1 : Tribeni Ghat



Image No 3 : Remains of Ancient Temple Neti Dhopanir Pata



Image No 2 : Ganga Idol From Pal-Sen Era

There is also a mythological story behind the origin of Saptagram. It is said that King Priyabanta was the king of Kannauj and his seven sons arrived on the banks of river Saraswati looking for some peaceful abode and each of them settled in seven nearby villages which comprised of Saptagram.

Famous traveller **Ibn Battutah** has mentioned about the prosperity of Saptagram in his travel memoirs. Saptagram used to be an important business port during that time in the world map. Saptagram also finds mention in the travel memoirs of, **Caeser Frederick**, a venetian traveller, Tome Pires, a Portuguese traveller, Ralph Fitch, an English traveller and many more. The Portuguese also settled in Saptagram during the 16th century when Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah was ruling Bengal. The Portuguese called Saptagram as Porto Pequeno (little haven) and they converted it into a flourishing port.



Image No 4 : Present Course of River Saraswati, AdiSaptagram, 22°58'11.06"N 88°22'30.52"E

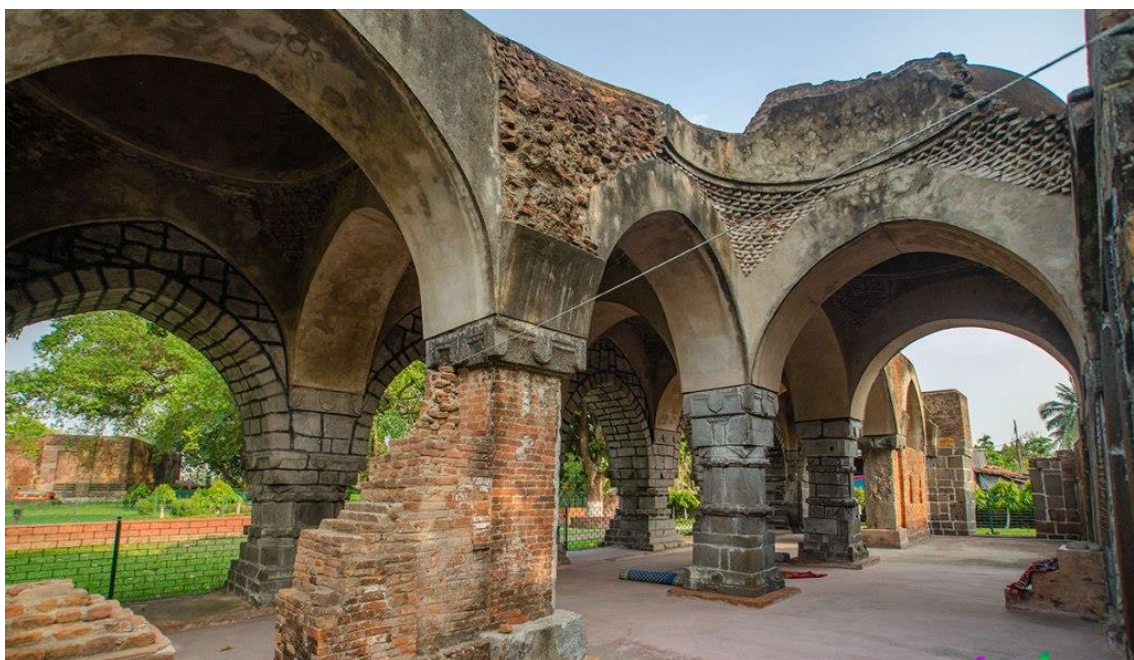


Image No 5 : Zafar Khan Ghazi Mosque and Dargah Situated at Tribeni in Hugli District



**Zafar Khan Ghazi Mosque and Dargah** situated at Tribeni in HUGHLI district, West Bengal, India, is considered to be among the earliest surviving Muslim monuments in Bengal. According to an inscription, the mosque is dated 698 AH/1298 AD. Tribeni (junction of three rivers viz, the Ganga, the Jamuna and the Sarasvati - hence the name) was an ancient holy place of the Hindus. The Muslims conquered it during the early phase of their conquest of Bengal.

For some historians, Ulugh-i-A'zam Humayun Zafar Khan Bahram Itgin was an Islamic crusader while some legends talk of him as the worshiper of Ganges while some refer to him as the Sufi who built Madrasas and Mosques. There are some stones with the Dargah where Sanskrit verses can clearly be seen. While the structure as a whole seems to have been modified like the Eastern entrance to the temple have been blocked but the original door jambs can clearly be seen.

Further, down the Mosque it has artifacts from the temple site as well as from a mosque, which may or may not have been the same mosque before reconstruction or might have very well come from another nearby site.



**Image No 6 : Terracotta Panel Work Inside the Dargah Clearly Indicating to be Part of Hindu Temple.**

In the time of the Delhi Emperor Muhammad Shah Tughlak (1324-51; Muhammadan Bengal was divided into three sub-provinces with head-quarters at Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sunargaon, Satgaon being placed under Izz-ud-din Yahya Azam-ul- Mulk. Subsequently, when the Sultans of Bengal had acquired independence, the three sub-provinces were reunited under Sikandar Shah, the second of the line (1358-1390); but Satgaon continued to be the seat of a local Governor and a mint-town. It is not known whether it acknowledged the rule of the Hindu usurper, Eaja Kansao/ws Ganesh (1409-

1415), but it certainly was a part of the kingdom of his son and successor Jadu alias Jalal-uddin Muhammad Shah (1415-1430). Mahmud Shah I, who overthrew Kansa's grandson, continued to be in possession of Satgaon, and according to two inscriptions of his reign, his son, Prince Barbak Shah, was its Governor in 1456, while Tarbiyat Khan built a mosque there in 1457.

During the long and strong administration of Man Singh (1590-1606) the Afghans were gradually brought under control, and the larger Hindu zamindars reduced to submission. Peace being restored, Todar Mai's rent-roll in itself only a compilation from older rent-rolls with slight changes —was enforced. The Hugli district was now divided between three Sarkars, viz., Satgaon, Sulaimanabad and Mandaran. Satgaon town, although its importance was diminishing with the decline of its trade, still continued to be the seat of the local governor, but was gradually superseded as a commercial centre by Hugli with its large Portuguese trade. The latter trade, however, received a fatal blow in 1631, when the Emperor Shah Jahan gave orders for the destruction of the Portuguese settlement, the fort being captured and the survivors deported to Agra. From this time Hugli (Hugli) became the royal port of Bengal, and the Governor's headquarters were removed there from Satgaon.

## **2.1 The Porto Pequeno**

While travelling through the western delta of Bengal in 1515, Portuguese traveller Tom Pires mentions Satgaon or Saptagram as one of the chief trading cities in Bengal. He writes, 'It has a good port; it has a good entrance. It is a good city and rich, where there are many merchants. From ancient times, the chief port and emporium of trade on the western side of Bengal was Satgaon, situated on the banks of the river Saraswati, which branches off from the Hugli below Tribeni and joins it higher up. In fact, as already noted in 1536, Mahmud Shah had conferred the right to collect customs duties of Satgaon upon Joao Correa, and soon it emerged as a porto pequeno (small port) of the Portuguese. Satgaon's status as a porto pequeno was, however, short-lived, since by around 1565 it was taken over by the port of Hugli, located further downstream. A number of factors contributed to this development. Over time, the harbour of Satgaon began silting and soon it became inconvenient for ships to enter and depart, and the Portuguese are often blamed for this decline. Inayat Khan in the Shahjahannama writes in detail about how the growing number of farangi (European) merchants in the region contributed to the gradual growth of Bandar (port) Hugli at the cost of Satgaon.

The third probable reason for the rise of Hugli was Akbar's farman to the Portuguese, which officially allowed them to build a city there. Sebastian Manrique, Portuguese traveller and missionary, notes in his account that Emperor Akbar, on becoming aware of the vast scale of trade conducted by the Portuguese from Bengal, summoned the Portuguese merchants from Hugli to his court. Hence, a deputation led by the merchant Pedro Tavares, along with two Jesuit priests, went to Fatehpur Sikri. A direct aftermath of this meeting was the farman of 1578–80, which allowed the Portuguese to choose the site of construction of their proposed settlement in Hugli and also granted them some adjoining lands to support their establishment. The emperor's order further granted full religious liberty to the Portuguese, with freedom to preach Christianity, build churches and even baptise gentiles with their consent. It gave significant legitimacy to the Portuguese settlement in Hugli, since, initially, the port was established by private traders, adventurers and smugglers.

By the end of the 16th century, Hugli was a flourishing bandar with the lion's share of its trade in the hands of the Portuguese. Their merchants had extensive trading relations with the Malabar Coast, Southeast Asia and China. From China, among other goods, they imported a large amount of textile and 'worked silk', including brocades, velvets, and taffetas. Another very lucrative part of their trade was in commodities forbidden by the Portuguese Crown—cloves, nutmeg and mace from the Molucca Islands and Banda, camphor from Borneo, cinnamon from Ceylon and pepper from Malabar. The Portuguese from Hugli also exported a large number of commodities, of which rice was the most important. The vast scale of the Portuguese trade from Hugli can be gauged from the fact that they annually paid 10,000 tankas to the Mughal government. Notably, they also engaged in the notorious but highly profitable slave trade with their counterparts in the eastern delta as well as the Moghs (Arakanese).

In 1599, the Augustinians in Hugli built the Covent of Sam Nicoleu de Tolentino, attached to the Church of our Lady Rosary. Thus, by the mid-seventeenth century, Jesuit missionary John Cabral described Hugli as the richest and the most flourishing trading port of Bengal.



**Image No 7 : One of the Oldest Christian Place of Worship in Bengal**

This is the oldest Christian place of worship in Bengal, India, was founded in 1599, the year in which Queen Elizabeth sanctioned the establishment of the East India Company. It was burnt in the sack of Hugli by the Moors in 1632, but the keystone with the date 1599 was preserved and built into the gate of the new church erected by John Comes de Soto in 1661. It is dedicated to Nossa Senhora di Rosario and contains a monastery once occupied by Augustinian friars, the last of whom died in 1869... Some 380 bigghahs of land, out of the 777 granted rent-free by Shah Jehan, are still enjoyed... Every November the church is thronged with pilgrims during the Novena of Notre Dame de Bon Voyage.  
22°55'9.39"N 88°23'43.43"E

Cotton, H.E.A (1909)

Among other European powers that came to Hugli were the Dutch, the Danish, the British, the French, the Belgians and the Germans. Dutch traders centred their activities in the town Chuchura which is south of Hugli. Chandannagar became the base of the French and the city remained under their control from 1816 to 1950. Similarly, the Danish establishment in settlement in Serampore (1755). All these towns are on the west bank of the Hugli River and served as ports. Among these European countries, the British ultimately became most powerful.



**Image No 8 : Marvellous Structures of Dutch Colony at Chuchurah or Chinsurah**

Chuchurah or Chinsurah was a Dutch Colony from 1615 to 1825, just around seventy-five kilometres from Kolkata this rivalled the British Calcutta in terms of architectural beauty. Till today some of these marvellous structures still exist and the beauty can only be imagined during its peak. The Dutch wanted to use this as a production hub for fabric for export to various European cities.

The Dutch Cemetery (Dutch: Nederlandse begraafplaats) of Chinsurah was constructed on the order of the director of the Dutch East India Company in Bengal. The cemetery and all its graves are now maintained and Archaeological Survey of India under the protection of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance. The Chinsurah Dutch cemetery is probably the biggest non-British European cemetery in West Bengal. The oldest tomb that could have been identified at the cemetery belongs to Sir Cornelius Jonge who died in Chinsurah in 1743.

## **2.2 French Settlement of Chandannagar**

Chandannagar was established as a French colony in 1673, obtaining permission from Ibrahim Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal, to establish a trading post on the right bank of the river Hugli. It became a permanent French settlement in 1688. In 1730 Joseph francois Dupleix was appointed governor of the city. In 1756 war broke out between France and Great Britain, and the British Navy captured Chandannagar on 23 March 1757. Chandernagore was restored to the French in 1763, but

recaptured by the British in 1794. The city was returned to France in 1816, along with a 3 sq miles (7.8 km<sup>2</sup>) enclave of surrounding territory. It was governed as part of French India until 1950, under the political control of the governor-general in Pondicherry, though India became independent of Britain in 1947.



Image No 9 : The Gateway of Chandannagor Inscription on Chandannagor Gate



Image No 10 : Frederick Fiebig, 1851 - British Library



Image No 11 : Sacred Heart French Cemetery, Lal Dighi, Chandannagar



Image No 12 : French is Taught in Many Educational Institutions of Chandannagore

### 2.3 Danish settlement of Srirampur/ Frederiksnagore

Serampore is situated in West Bengal by the Hugli River, which is a branch of India's holy river Ganges. During the 14th and 15th century, the area was a centre of global trade. Indian cotton, oils, sugar, and spices were sold from the port town of Saptagram to Burma, Sumatra, Java, the Malay Peninsula, China, Persia, and the Arab world. The foreign merchants paid in silver, gold, pearls, porcelain, camphor, wood, and tropical spices.

The Danish Asiatic Company returned to Bengal in 1755. Their aim was to buy up silk, cotton, spices, and indigo, the blue natural dye, along with saltpetre, used in the production of black powder. The company's representatives reached a new agreement with the Mughal governor of Bengal. The governor granted them permission to establish a trading station in Serampore on condition that they paid taxes on the trade to him and maintained law and order in the area. The Danes named the trading station **Frederiksnagore**

after King Frederik V of Denmark, but it remained known under its local name, Serampore or Srirampur, the city of the deity Ram. The neighbouring towns were controlled by the French and the British trading companies. In the beginning, the Danes lived in simple houses made of clay. The settlement was considered the most insignificant of the European trading stations along the river. However, Serampore quickly developed into a multicultural town.



Image No 13 : Danish Cemetery, Serampore

Danish Cemetery, Serampur. 22°45'10.49"N 88°20'41.15"E“A total of 52 burial places or cemeteries were known before we took up the restoration. But after a year-long work, carefully working for conservation of the cemetery. there are 61 graves now” - ASI

The urbanisation of Serampore was driven by the European trade. Thousands of Indians moved to Serampore to work as craftspeople, weavers in particular. Others were employed by the Indian and European merchants as guards, managers, bookkeepers, or servants, some of whom were kept as slaves. Many women worked as prostitutes. While only a few Danes lived in Serampore, numerous other Europeans settled in the city. Many were criminals fleeing persecution in the British settlements or bankrupt traders hiding from their Indian creditors.

In 1777, the administration of Serampore was transferred from the Danish Asiatic Company to the Danish Crown. The town flourished, particularly under the administration of Ole Bie (1776-1805). Bie died in Serampore and lies buried in the Danish cemetery. Serampore became one of the Danish monarchy's largest towns. On the main road along the river, the Europeans built their elegant mansions. Serampore's Indian merchants, having made their fortunes trading with the European companies and lending money to the Danish and other European merchants, built palatial houses with inner courtyards and colonnades. Serampore was described as the best-built and best-kept European town in India. But in the narrow lanes, further away from the riverfront, the town's poor people lived in straitened circumstances. They dwelled in small clay houses or bamboo sheds and were often plagued by floods, deceases, and starvation.



**Image No 14 : Danish Cemetery**

Initially the British were based in and around the city of Hugli like traders from other countries. In 1690 Job Charnock decided to shift the British trading centre from Hugli-Chinsura to Calcutta. The reason behind this decision was the strategically safe location of Calcutta and its proximity to the Bay of Bengal. As a result, trade and commerce in the Bengal province shifted from the town of Hugli to Calcutta. Hugli lost its importance as Calcutta prospered.

After the Battle of Buxar this region was brought under direct British rule until India's independence in 1947. After independence, this district merged into the state of West Bengal.

Though the city of Hugli is more than 500 years old, the district of Hugli was formed in 1795 with the city of Hugli as its headquarters. Later the headquarters shifted to the town of Chuchura. In 1843 the Howrah district was created from the southern portion of this district. And in 1872, the south-west

portion of this district was merged into the Medinipur district. The last change in area occurred in 1966.



Image No 15 : A View of Chinsura ( present Chuchura ) the Dutch Settlement in Bengal; by William Hodges, 1787.

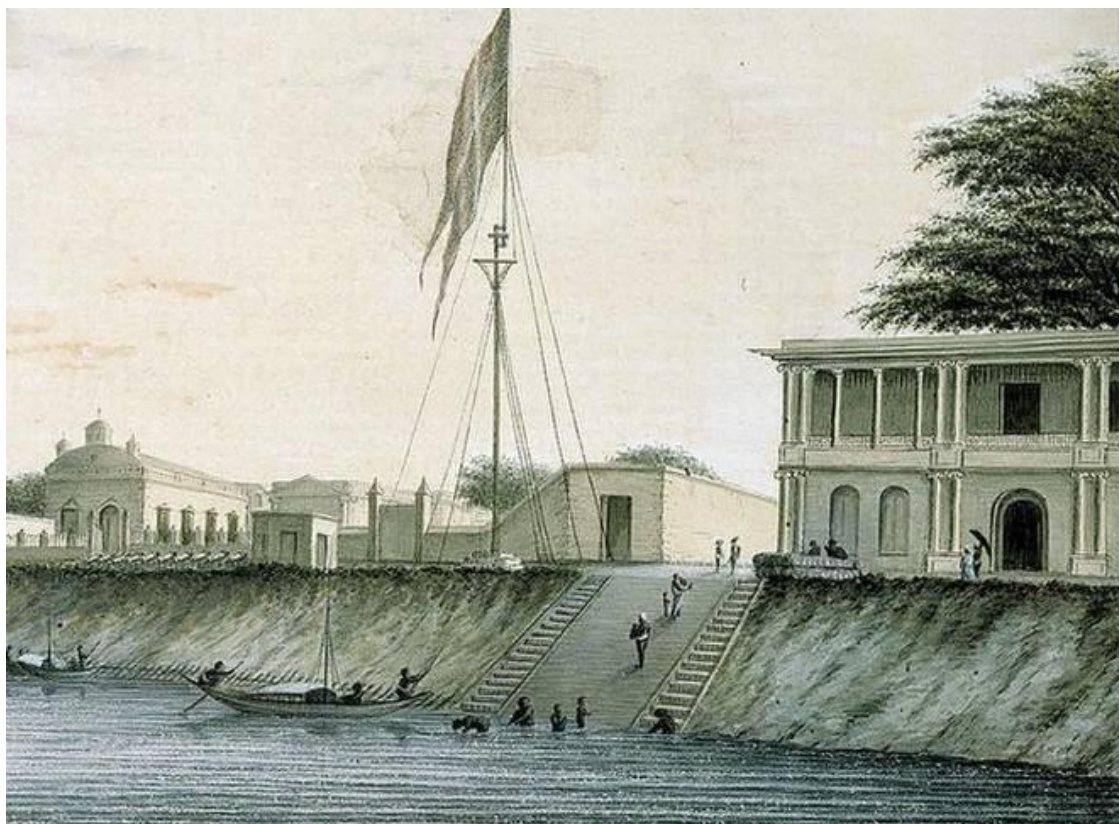


Image No 16 : The Denmark Tavern in a Painting by Peter Anker, dated 1790 | Photo Credit: Historical Museum of Oslo/Special Arrangement



## CHAPTER 3 : CELEBRATED CITIZENS

**1. The Great Trio of Serampur - Joshua Marshman, William Carey, and Willam Ward** – The architects of **Serampore Renaissance** - The beginning of the 19th century can be considered the most significant period in the history of Serampore, with the arrival of four English missionaries - Joshua Marshman, Hannah Marshman, William Carey, and Willam Ward. Although they came chiefly for the purpose of preaching Christianity, they dedicated themselves to the service of ailing and distressed people in and around the town, spreading education, social reforms, and social reconstruction. They established more than a hundred 'monitorial' schools in the region. Hannah Marshman established the first Girls' School at Serampore, which received much public approval. Carey made an outstanding contribution by founding the Serampore Mission Press in 1800 where the wooden Bengali types made by Panchanan Karmakar were installed.

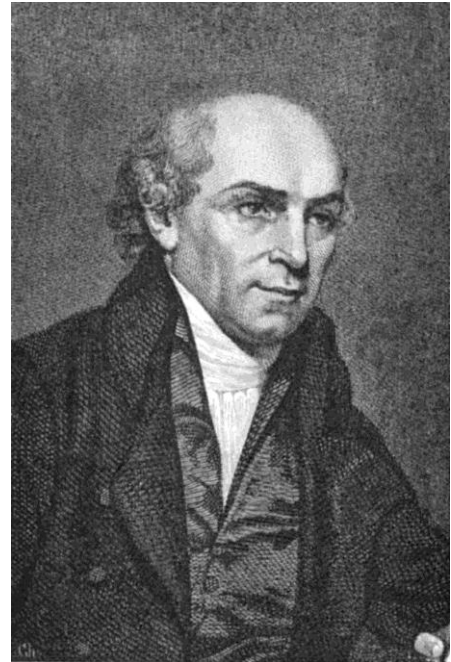


Image No 17 : William Carey

Perhaps the crowning work of Carey and his two associates was the establishment of the **Serampore College in 1818** which acts both as a university through the Senate of Serampore College (University) and as an individual college. The founders had to spend their last farthing on the construction of its magnificent buildings. It was also the first college in Asia to award a degree.

Carey became famous as the father of Bengali prose. The Mission Press published three books - the Bengali translation of the Bible, Hitopadesh and Kathopakathan. Munshi Ramram Basu, the pundit appointed by Carey, brought out Pratapaditya Charita (1802) as well as Kashidas' Mahabharat (1802) and Krittibas' Ramayan (1803). The first issue of the second Bengali daily, Samachar Darpan came out in 1818 under the editorship of Carey.

At the same time, the Serampore Mission Press brought out the English daily, **A Friend of India (precursor to The Statesman)**. Another outstanding contribution of the missionaries was the installation of **India's first paper mill**, at Battala, set up by John Clark Marshman (the son of Joshua and Hannah Marshman) which was powered by a steam engine.

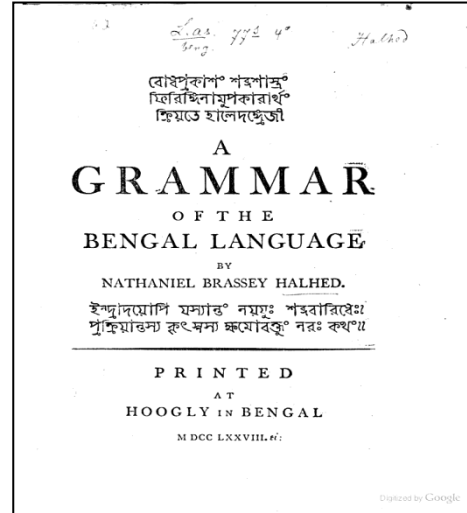


Image No 18 : Grave of William Carey, Serampur

Between 1801 and 1832 the Serampore Mission Press printed 212,000 copies of books in 40 different languages. In this cultural development, the local inhabitants had only a passive role. Only a few among the affluent, comprising absentee landlords and businessmen, seized the opportunity

for higher education by sending their children to the academic institutions of the missionaries. On the other hand, people belonging to the lower economic stratum sent their children to the monitorial schools, which provided basic education. In the process, there emerged a class of local gentry, who had a favourable attitude towards the missionaries.

**2. Panchanan Karmakaar :** Panchanan Karmakar (Mallick) was an Indian Bengali inventor, born at Tribeni, Hugli, Bengal Presidency, British India, hailed from Serampore. He assisted Charles Wilkins in creating the first the Bangla type. His wooden Bengali alphabet and typeface had been used until Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar proposed a simplified version. Apart from Bangla, Karmakar developed type in 14 languages, including Arabic, Persian, Marathi, Telugu, Burmese and Chinese. Karmakar was born in Tribeni. His ancestors were calligraphers; they inscribed names and decorations on copper plates, weapons, metal pots, etc.



**Image No 19 : The First Bengali Language Printed**

Andrews, a Christian missionary, had a printing press at Hugli. In order to print Nathaniel Brassey Halhed's *A Grammar of the Bengali Language*, he needed a Bangla type. Under the supervision of English typographer Charles Wilkins, Karmakar created the first Bengali typeface for printing.

In 1779, Karmakar moved to Kolkata to work for Wilkins' new printing press. in Chuchura, Hugli. In 1801, he developed a typeface for British missionary William Carey's Bangla translation of the New Testament. In 1803, Karmakar developed a set of Devnagari script, the first Nagari type to be developed in India.

**3. Brajendranath Sil :** Brajendranath Sil was born in Haripal, Hugi District (in West Bengal), in 1864. His father Mohendranath Sil was one of the earliest followers of Comtean positivism in Bengal. As a student of philosophy at the General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College, Calcutta), he became attracted to Brahma theology. And along with his better-known classmate and friend Narendranath Dutta, the future Swami Vivekananda, he regularly attended meetings of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. Later they would part ways with Dutta aligning himself with Keshub Chunder Sen's New Dispensation (and later on to found his own religious movement, the Ramakrishna Mission) and Seal staying on as an initiated member.



**Image No 20 : Brajendranath Sil**

Seal was the inaugural chair of philosophy at India's first graduate school in philosophy at the University of Calcutta. Seal was regarded as 'a versatile scholar in many branches of learning, both scientific and humanistic,' and in his major work *The Positive Sciences of Ancient Hindus* demonstrated 'interrelations among the ancient Hindu philosophical concepts and their scientific theories.'

Sil was the keynote speaker at the first session of the First Universal Races Congress of 1911 on 26 July 1911, which gathered speakers and attendees from across the world to discuss racial issues and encourage international cooperation.

**4. Raja Ram Mohan Roy** : (22 May 1772 – 27 September 1833) was an Indian reformer who was one of the founders of the Brahmo Sabha, the precursor of the Brahmo Samaj, a social-religious reform movement in the Indian subcontinent. He was given the title of Raja by Akbar II, the Mughal emperor. His influence was apparent in the fields of politics, public administration, education and religion. He was known for his efforts to abolish the practices of sati and child marriage. Roy is considered to be the "Father of the Bengal Renaissance" by many historians.

In 2004, Roy was ranked number 10 in BBC's poll of the Greatest Bengali of all time. Ram Mohan Roy was born in Radhanagar, Hugli District, Bengal Presidency. His great grandfather Krishnakanta Bandyopadhyay was a Rarhi Kulin (noble) Brahmin. Among Kulin Brahmins – descendants of the six families of Brahmins imported from Kanauj by Ballal Sen in the 12th century – those from the Rarhi district of West Bengal were notorious in the 19th century for living off dowries by marrying several women. Kulinism was a synonym for polygamy and the dowry system, both of which Rammohan campaigned against. His father, Ramkanta, was a Vaishnavite, while his mother, Tarini Devi, was from a Shaivite family. He was a great scholar of Sanskrit, Persian and English languages and also knew Arabic, Latin and Greek. One parent prepared him for the occupation of a scholar, the Shastri, while the other secured for him all the worldly advantages needed to launch a career in the laukik or worldly sphere of public administration.[citation needed] Torn between these two parental ideals from early childhood, Ram Mohan vacillated between the two for the rest of his life.



**Image No 21 : Half-Portrait Oil Painting of Ram Mohan Roy, Painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1833.**

Half-portrait oil painting of Ram Mohan Roy, painted by Rembrandt Peale in 1833. Roy and Peale met in London, a few days before Roy's death according to John Quincy Adams. Roy wears a red and gold turban common to early 19th-century Bengali Hindus.

Ram Mohan Roy was married three times. His first wife died early. He had two sons, Radhaprasad in 1800, and Ramaprasad in 1812 with his second wife, who died in 1824. Roy's third wife outlived him.

The nature and content of Ram Mohan Roy's early education is disputed. One view is that "Ram Mohan started his formal education in the village pathshala where he learned Bengali and some Sanskrit and Persian. Later he is said to have studied Persian and Arabic in

a madrasa in Patna and after that he was sent to Benares to learn the intricacies of Sanskrit and Hindu scripture, including the Vedas and Upanishads. The dates of his time in both these places are uncertain. However, it is believed that he was sent to Patna when he was nine years old and two years later he went to Benares."

The Persian and Arabic studies influenced his thinking about One God more than studies of European deism, which he didn't know at least while writing his first scriptures because at that stage he couldn't speak or understand English.

Ram Mohan Roy's impact on modern Indian history was his revival of the pure and ethical principles of the Vedanta school of philosophy as found in the Upanishads. He preached the unity of God, made early translations of Vedic scriptures into English, co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society and founded the Brahma Samaj. The Brahma Samaj played a major role in reforming and modernizing the Indian society. He successfully campaigned against sati, the practice of burning widows. He sought to integrate Western culture with the best features of his own country's traditions. He established a number of schools to popularize a modern system (effectively replacing Sanskrit based education with English based education) of education in India. He promoted a rational, ethical, non-authoritarian, this-worldly, and social-reform Hinduism. His writings also sparked interest among British and American Unitarians.

**5. Haji Muhammad Mohsin**, was: a prominent Bengali Muslim philanthropist. His most notable contribution was to establish the Hughli Mohsin College and the Hugli Imambara. He also played a significant role during the Great Bengal famine of 1770 by helping thousands of the victims. Mohsin was born into a Bengali Shia Muslim family to Haji Faizullah and Zainab Khanam in Hugli (now in West Bengal, India) in 1732. He was home-schooled and gained knowledge in the study of the Quran, Hadith and the Fiqh. Later, he went on a voyage to other countries of Asia, including the regions in current-day Iran, Iraq, Turkey and the Arab peninsula. He also made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and visited Medina, Kufa, Karbala and other holy places. After performing the Hajj, he was given the title Haji.

Following his return, Mohsin took over the management of the estate of his half-sister, Munnujan. She was the widow of Mirza Salahuddin, the Naib-faujdar or deputy military governor of Hugli working for the Nawab of Bengal. She inherited a fortune from her mother Zainab, whose first husband Aga Motahar had much land and properties in Hugli, Jessore, Murshidabad and Nadia.

After Munnujan's death in 1803, Mohsin inherited all of her fortune. He bequeathed this fortune for charity and created a Waqf or trust in 1806, with his entire wealth of 156,000 taka. One-third of his fortune was to be donated for education and religious programmes, four-ninths for pensions to the elderly and disabled, and the remaining two-ninths for the expenses of the two trustees.

**6. Satish Chandra Mukherjee** (5 June 1865-18 April 1948) was a pioneer in establishing a system of national education in India, along with Sri Aurobindo. Satish Chandra was born at Banipur in Hugli district of present-day West Bengal. His father, Krishnanath Mukherjee, had been a childhood friend and classmate of Justice Dvarkanath Mitra, who appointed him as a translator of official documents in the Calcutta High Court. Mitra was a leading believer in the Religion of Humanity as founded by

the Positivist Auguste Comte. Adept of this faith, an atheist servant of Man and of society, Krishnanath impressed this ideology on his sons, Tinkori and Satish.[2] Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay himself was not only one of the first in India to write on Comte and his philosophy but, also, he had zealous Positivist friends like Yogendrachandra Ghose and Rajkrishna Mukherjee; in 1874, Bankim published the latter's article on Positivism in his *Bangadarshan*, which began with the sentence, "Among the successfully educated classes of our country, there is a great deal of animation concerning the philosophy of Comte." While writing on psychological purification, Bankim wrote "He who has been psychologically purified is the best Hindu, the best Christian, the best Buddhist, the best Muslim, the best Positivist."



**Image No 22 : Satish Chandra Mukherjee**

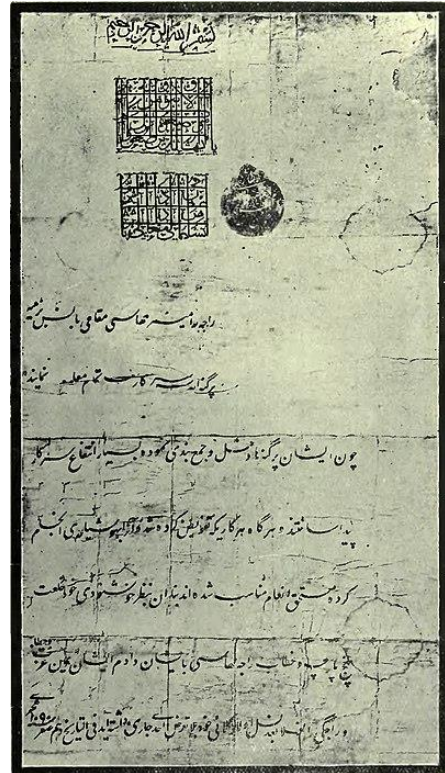
In 1884, in the preface of his novel *Devi Chaudhurani*, Bankim quoted from the Catechism of Positive Religion: "The general law of Man's progress consists in this that Man becomes more and more religious."

Founder-editor of the *Dawn* magazine (1897–1913), an organ of Indian Nationalism, in 1902 he organised the "Dawn Society" of culture, to protest against the Report of the Indian Universities Commission, representing the inadequate university education imposed by the Government to fabricate clerks for the merchant offices. "The cry for thorough overhauling of the whole system of University education was in the air." In 1889, he formulated the scheme for national education.

*Dawn* occupied an apartment on the first floor of the present Vidyasagar College (formerly known as the Metropolitan Institution: its Principal, Nagendranath Ghosh was the President, and Satish its general secretary). The Dawn Society was "functioning as a training ground of youths and a nursery of patriotism, became in 1905 one of the most active centres for the propagation of Boycott-Swadeshi ideologies."

In tune with the programme of a new pedagogy introduced by Sri Aurobindo, the Society's object was to draw the attention of the students to the needs of the country, to love Mother India, to cultivate their moral character, to inspire original thinking. It had a weekly session for a "general training course". One of the members, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, considering having lived significantly thanks to Satish Chandra's influence, would remember his ardent message of patriotism and philanthropy rousing the youth to dedicated service; he would also write about the method of Pandit Nilakantha Goswami's explaining the *Bhagavad Gita*, impressing on the listeners' mind the futility of life and death, the insignificance of the body: the sole thing that counts is Duty, the right Action. Among active members of the "Dawn" were Sister Nivedita, Bagha Jatin (Jatin Mukherjee), Rajendra Prasad (first President of India), Haran Chakladar, Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Kishorimohan Gupta (principal, Daulatpur College), Atulya Chatterjee, Rabindra Narayan Ghosh, Benoykumar Sarkar, all future celebrities. One day, Satish Chandra heard an inner voice uttering firmly: "God exists."

**7. Bansberia Raja Mahasay Family :** The descendant of Patuli Raj Family of Purba Barddhaman, Raghab Roy Chowdhury like his father, ultimately became the sole owner of the entire family property. Raghab was equally fortunate with Jayananda and like him succeeded in gaining the favour of the Emperor, Shah Jehan, who by a Sanad dated the 12th Rubi 1066 H. E. (1649 A.D.) conferred upon him the title of "Chaudhuri" and in the year following that of "Mazumdar." The bestowal of these titular distinctions was not unaccompanied by grants of a substantial character, for, as a matter of fact, Raghab got Vast Lakhraj or rent-free lands as absolute gifts and the Zamindari right of the following twenty-one Parganas, namely, Arsha, Haldaha, Mamdanipur, Panjaur, Boro, Shahapur, Jehanabad, Shaistanagore, Shahanagore, Raipur Kotwali, Paonan, Khosalpore, Moiat, Buxbunder, Havalishahar, Paikan, Mozzaferpore, Hathikanda, Selimpur, Amirabad, and Janglipur. As the greater part of these estates lay in Sarkar Satgaon, Raghab for the better management of these large additions to his ancestral property, was obliged to put up near Satgaon or rather Buxbunder Hugli, the then capital of Lower Bengal, and he, accordingly, built a large house at a village two miles to the



**Image No 24 : Sanad of the Hereditary Title of Rajah Mahasai Granted to Rameswar Rai by Aurangzeb**

east on the right bank of the river Hugli, to which he gave the name of Bangshabati, commonly known as Bansberia, and began to spend most part of the year there, paying occasional visits to his ancestral house at Patuli, especially at the time of the Durga Puja. At this time Bansberia was a small insignificant village with a sparse population, consisting mostly, of the dregs and scum of society. It was largely covered with thick jungles in which the denizens of the forest held their solitary sway. Raghab reclaimed the jungles, and, in the place of the savages of the wood whom he had killed or cast out, settled human beings of different orders by making them grants of rent-free lands and helping them in various other ways. Thus, what was a little obscure village, partly tenanted by savage beasts and partly by equally savage men, became in a few short years something like a town with a large sprinkling



**Image No 23 : Hanseswari Temple, Bansberia  
22°57'38.94"N 88°23'46.95"E**

of peaceful citizens of all castes and creeds.

Rameswar brought several families of Brahman, Kshetrya, Kayastha, Baidya and other castes and settled them in the new town, which he divided into different *paras* or sections, each section being assigned to persons belonging to one particular caste and calling. Along with the Hindus some Mahomedans were also brought in and

were allotted lands in the western portion of the town. These Pathans served as guards and soldiers to the House. Their descendants still live there, though considerably reduced in numbers. The northern portion was assigned to the Baidyas and what are collectively called the Nabasaks; while the eastern and the southern portion were divided among three hundred and sixty families of Brahman and a goodly number of Kshetrya and Kayastha families.

Rameswar also directed his attention to the very important subject of education. He founded several *tols* or Sanscrit schools and placed them under charge of learned Pundits who were brought in mostly from Benares. In these schools were taught the Darsanas or branches of Hindu learning viz: Darsan *par excellence* or philosophy, Nyaya or logic, Sahitya or pure literature, Alankara or rhetoric, Smriti or law and Sruti or the Vedas. Of the Pundits so brought down, the most eminent was Ramsharan Tarkabagish of Benares, the Athens of India, who was, therefore, appointed by Rameswar as his Sabha (court) Pundit. Ramsharan held this high office till his death after which it has been all along held by his descendants from generation to generation who look upon it with pride. Rameswar was a loyal subject of the Great Mogul and had always the welfare of Government at heart. Having found that some persons were wrongfully enjoying the profits of certain Parganas without paying anything to Government, he with the knowledge and consent of the Provincial ruler took prompt steps against them and having succeeded in ousting them from these estates, took possession thereof on behalf of the powers that be. This good service being brought to the notice of the ruling Emperor, Aurangzeb, otherwise called Shah Alumgir, who though a stern bigot in matters of religion, was never backward in rewarding merit, wherever it was found, justly thought that such a well-wisher of Government richly deserved special favour at his hands, and he, accordingly by a Sanad dated in the year 1673 A. D., conferred upon him the rare title of "Rajah Mahasai" together with *Punj-Percha* Khelat or dress of honor made up of five pieces, which title was not a mere personal distinction, but was made hereditary in the family descendible to the eldest branch thereof.



Image No 25 : Bansberia Rajbati Complex Gate 22°57'44.65"N 88°23'51.43"E

**8. Mitra Mustafi Family** - In the early 18th century Rameswar Mitra of Ula, worked as the Auditor General in the court of Murshid Kuli Khan in Murshidabad. In 1704 Rameswar Mitra received official Mustafi title from Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi. Rameswar Mitra made a huge fortune and constructed several mansions and temples in Ula, which later came on to be known as Ula Birnagar. Rameswar Mitra's son Anantaram Mitra left Ula and settled in Sukharia in 1712. Anantaram also built a huge mansion in Sukharia along with several temples. The mansion is in ruins and many of the temples have been converted into modern structures and in the process losing their beauty and grace.



**Image No 26 : Family Tree of Mitra Mustafi Family**

The 25 pinnacled Anandabhirabi Temple is the star attraction of Sukharia. The approach to the Ananda Bhairavi Temple, housing the idol of Anandamoyee Kali, is flanked by two parallel rows containing six temples each. Five of the temples on each row are of aat – chala (8 sloped roofs) type while one each are of pacha – ratna (5 pinnacled) type. One of the fort complexes contain a Rash Mancha and several temples, but the star attraction of the complex is the Chandi Mandap, with its intricate wooden carvings.



**Image No 27 : Anandamoyee Kali Bari, Mitra Mustafa Family, Somra Bazar**

The Chandi Mandap constructed in 1707 by the Mitra Mustafi family, has recently been declared a protected monument. The hay thatched roof has been replaced with corrugated sheet, thus robbing it of its former beauty and grace. But the real wonder lies inside the Mandap, where the Durga Puja is held to this day. The three walls of the Chandi Mandap are decorated with the most intricate wood curved panels. The wooden panels are very similar to the terracotta panels that dot the walls



of the numerous temples of Bengal. But the wood work is not restricted to the panels alone. The pillars and the roof beams are curved with the finest floral, geometric & figurative designs.

The century old boat industry still survives, but is only restricted to small boats. The banks all along the Hugli in Sripur is lined with boat making workshops.



Image No 28 : "Radha Kunj", Adjoining the Temple Complex is the Radhakunj of Mitra Mustafi Family

**9. Famous personalities of Uttarpara – Kotrung** - The Year 1704 AD - a Zaminder of famous Sabarnya Chowdhury clan, **Shri Ratenswar Roychowdhury** left his ancestral village near Barrackpur of 24 pargans district for a new residence on the banks of river Hugli - Ootarpara. In those days, village Ootarpara was northern part of village Bally (in Bengali, Ootarpara literally means Northern Part), forming part of Sheorafully Zamindary. Shri Ratenswar exchanged his ancestral property for Ootarpara and moved there with his family and followers. Ootarpara, in those days was marshland - bereft of decent human settlement. Only fishermen of Patni, Malo castes and a few Muslims lived there. Their trade was fishing, marketing fishing equipments, ferry service and dacoity. The compulsion of Kaulinya system made Ratneswar, who was a Brahmin, to bring other Brahmin families for matrimony. Gradually, many Brahmin families like **Durga Charn Banerjee, Ramtanu Chatterjee, Ramnidhi Chatterjee, Nandalal Mukherjee** etc. migrated and settled at Ootarpara through matrimonial relation (Ghar jamai system) with decedents of Ratneswar Roychowdhury. Many of these families afterwards took leading role in intellectual and spiritual development of Uttarpara (we do not know how and when 'Ootarpara' became more sober sounding Uttarpara). During the period 1800-1900, this tiny village gradually turned to a small town of 0.8 sq. mile with the help of **Ramhari Roy**, great grandson of Ratneswar, **Joykrishna Mukherjee, Rajkrishna Mukherjee** grandson of Nandalal and others. They constructed or took leading role in the construction of palatial buildings whose majestic contours still dot the skyline of Uttarpara, broad roads, modern sanitary system, tension bridge across Bally Khal, hospitals, schools, municipality, public library, Police Station, Post Office, Uttarpara Railway Station etc.

Residents of today's Uttarpara are now enjoying fruits of that sound foundation. During this period, Sir Arthur Wellesley (Duke of Wellington), John Lawrence, Lord Canning and great Indian

personalities Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee, Kesab Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Sree Arabindo, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and many others visited this place several times. Uttarpara, or rather its illustrious sons, took leading role in the struggle for independence during 1900 - 1947. The youth of Uttarpara responded to calls from Gandhi's non-violence and Surya Sen's armed struggle with equal enthusiasm. So, we see revolutionaries like Dhruv Chattopadhyay, Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Chaitanya Deb Chattopadhyay and many others sacrificing their lives in Cellular jail in The Andamans as also Shaheed Smritish Bandopadhyay, who lost his life while preaching Gandhiji's non-violence during Hindu-Muslim riot in 1945. Revolutionary Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay was forerunner in the struggle for independence.

Many firebrand youths of Uttarpara and surrounding area got inspired and joined in freedom movement. First rays of Bengali Renaissance enlightened Uttarpara. Joykrishna, brother Rajkrishna and many others realised the value of modern education and appealed to the British for an English school in Uttarpara. Zamindars of Uttarpara, specially Joykrishna and his family, never hesitated to donate liberally for just cause. So, in his appeal, Joykrishna offered to donate one of his palatial buildings as also liberal aid for setting up the school. Not just Zamindars, but other residents of Uttarpara were equally forward looking. So, people of Uttarpara and Bhadrakali collected a fund of Rs. 2000 and Rs. 220 respectively for this purpose. The school was opened on 15th May, 1846. Mr. Robert Hord was its first Head Master. Later Sri Ramtanu Lahiri (1852 - 1856) took over as Headmaster and laid the foundation of one of the greatest schools of West Bengal - Uttarpara Govt High School. In 1848-49 Joykrishna and his brother Rajkrishna approached the government for setting up a modern hospital. True to their spirit - again Joykrishna offered to donate one of his palatial buildings that will earn Rs. 1800 per year for the Hospital. The hospital started from May 1851. Its first incharge was Sub-Assistant Surgeon Dr. Dayalchand Basak. Uttarpara Municipality was formed on 14th April 1853.



Image No 29 : Joykrishna Library, Uttarpara 22°39'41.87"N 88°20'59.34"E

**10. Durga Charan Rakshit**, a writer and a businessman - was the first Indian to be honoured with the Légion d'Honneur for his contribution to the growth of Chandannagar, West Bengal. He contributed

to the growth of farmers and artisans by exporting their goods worldwide. With Rakshit vision, Chandannagar transformed from a sleepy, suburban town to an economic success.

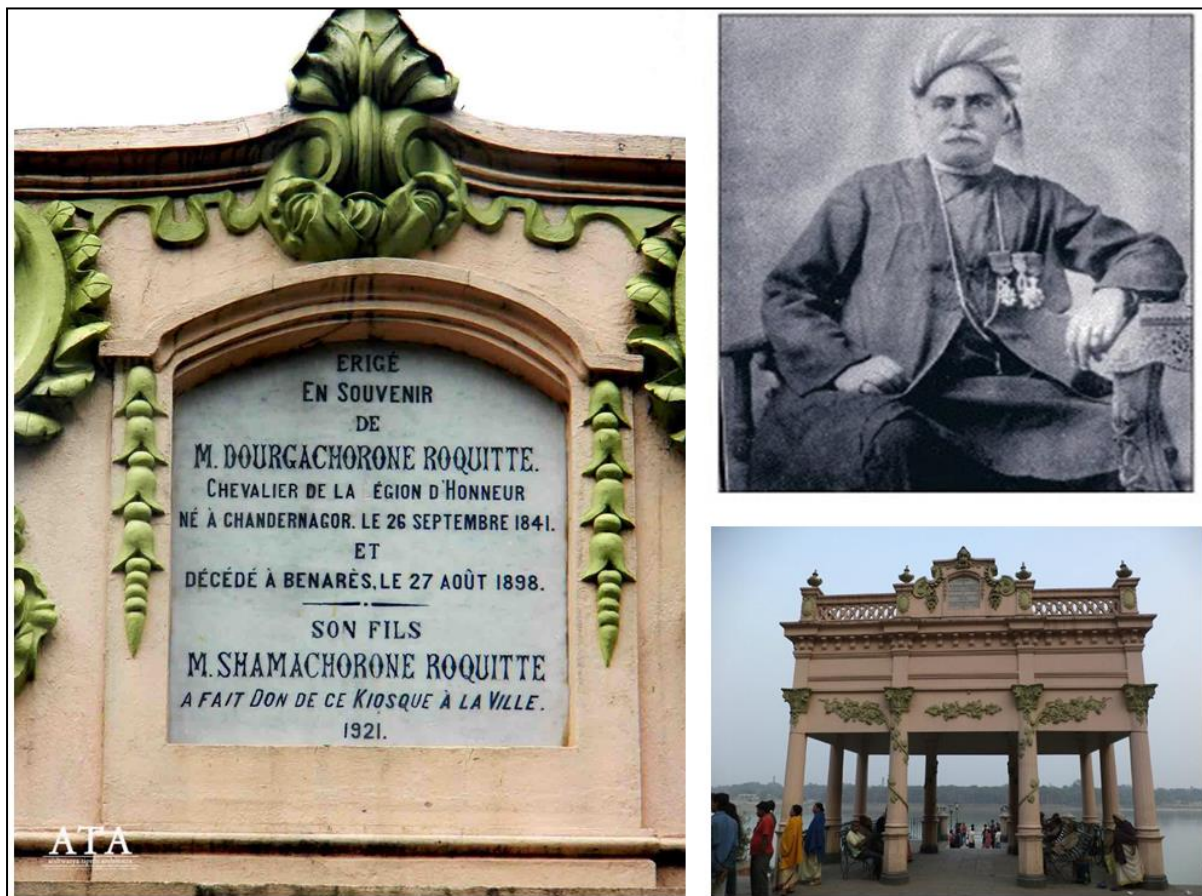


Image No 30 : Doorga Charan Rakshit and the Memorials Associated With Durga Charan Rakshit.



Image No 31 : Doorga Charan Rakshit Gate

**11. Jagannath Tarka Panchanan** (23 September 1695 – 1806) was a legendary Sanskrit scholar and pundit of ancient Hindu Tarka Panchanan was born in Tribeni in 1695. He was the son of Rudradeva Bhattacharji, a poor Brahmin of Tribeni, Hugli district. He obtained great respect by the highest Hindu nobles and the Hindu community. Tarka Panchanan had a wonderful memory and became a remarkable logician and unrivaled in his knowledge of Hindu law. He was a great teacher and had immense knowledge on all branches of the Dharmasastras. Tarka panchanan assisted Sir William Jones (philologist) in his endeavor to compile Vivadabhangarnava that literally means 'a break



**Image No 32 : Jagannath Tarka Panchanan**

wave on the ocean of disputes' and reconcile the schools of Hindu jurisprudence. He assisted judges to familiarize with the Indian culture as a consequence of a parliamentary mandate to perform judicial duties. The text was first published in 1801 under the title – A Digest of Hindu Law, which tried to legitimize the transformation of the prescriptive guidelines enshrined in the Sastras into legal rules to be directly administered through court by using terminologies like Digest. Tarka Panchanan taught Sanskrit to Robert Clive. He supposedly introduced Durga Puja in Tribeni Laws.

**12. Kali Mirza** Kalidas Chattopadhyay, better known as Kali Mirza was an 18th-century composer of tappā music in Bengal. A contemporary of Nidhu Babu, he composed over 400 tappās. He received his training in the cities of Delhi and Lucknow. He was born at Guptipara , Hugli District in present-day West Bengal. His name, "mirza", comes from the Muslim clothes he often wore

**13. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay:** alternatively spelt as Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (15 September 1876 – 16 January 1938), was a Bengali novelist and short story writer of the early 20th century. Most of his works deal with the lifestyle, tragedy and struggle of the village people and the contemporary social practices that prevailed in Bengal. He remains the most popular, translated, and adapted Indian author of all time. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay was born on 15 September 1876, in a Bengali Brahmin family in Debanandapur, a small village in Hugli, West Bengal.

Sarat Chandra spent most of his childhood at his maternal uncle's home in Bhagalpur, Bihar. Chandra spent his childhood in extreme poverty. Chandra was a daring, adventure-loving boy. His education began at Pyari Pandit's pathshala, an informal village school and later he joined Hugli Branch High School. He



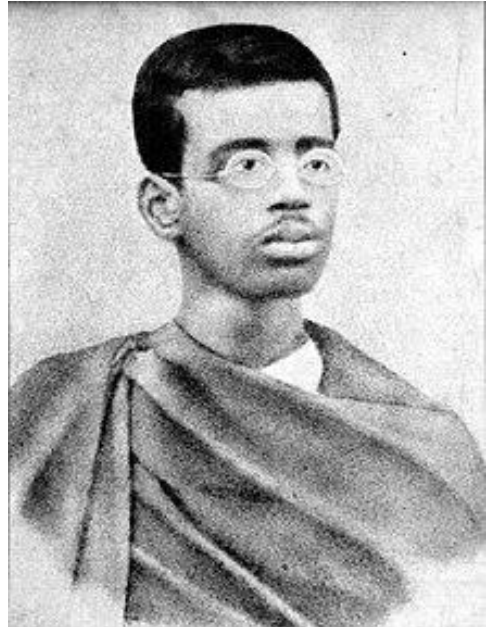
**Image No 33 : Statue of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's in Front of His Residence, Debanandapur**

was a good student and got a double promotion that enabled him to skip a grade. He passed his Entrance Examination (public examination at the end of Class X) but could not take his F.A.

(First Arts) examination or attend college due to lack of funds.

There, he attended the Durga Charan Balak Vidyalay. He wrote his famous book 'Devdas' in Bhagalpur and is said to be somehow his own story, while he visited Jogsar, a Red-light area to meet Chandramukhi.

**14. Kanailal Dutta** : (30 August 1888 – 10 November 1908) was a revolutionary in India's freedom struggle belonging to the Jugantar group. He was born in Chandannagar, West Bengal. He, along with Satyendranath Bose, was convicted by the British for the assassination of Narendranath Goswami, an approver of the British, in the Jail hospital of Alipore Central Jail on 31 August 1908. Kanailal Dutta was born in Chandannagar, West Bengal. His father, Chunilal Dutta, was an accountant in Bombay. Kanailal's early school life was started in Girgaon Aryan Education Society School, Bombay and later he came back to Chandannagar and took admission Duplex College in Chandannagar. In 1908, he appeared BA exam from Hugli Mohsin College, which was affiliated with the University of Calcutta. During his early college days, Kanailal met with Professor Charu Chandra Roy, who inspired him to join the revolutionary



**Image No 34 : Kanailal Dutta**

movement during the agitations against the Partition of Bengal. During 1905 movement against partition of Bengal, Kanailal Dutta was in the forefront from Chandannagar group. He also developed a close connection with the Gondolpara revolutionary group, which was led by Srishchandra Ghosh. In 1908, he moved to Kolkata and joined Kolkata based revolutionary group Jugantar.

**15. Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (born Bhavani Charan Bandyopadhyay)** was an Indian Bengali theologian, journalist and freedom fighter. He was closely attached with Keshub Chandra Sen, classmate of Swami Vivekananda and close acquaintance of Rabindranath Tagore. Brahmabandhab Upadhyay was born as Bhavani Charan Bandyopadhyay in a Kulin Brahmin family. His father, Debi Charan Bandyopadhyay was a police officer of the British regime. Debicharan had three sons. The eldest was Hari Charan, who became a doctor in Calcutta, the second was Parbati Charan who practiced as a pleader, and the third was Bhavani Charan. He was born in village Khannyan in Hugli district of undivided Bengal (presently in West Bengal). Bhavani Charan lost his mother Radha Kumari when he was only one year of age and was raised by one of his grand mothers. Bhavani Charan received his education in institutions such as Scottish Mission School, Hugli Collegiate School, Metropolitan Institution (now Vidyasagar College), and the General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College in Calcutta. In the General Assembly's Institution, during 1880s, he was in the same class with Narendranath Dutta, who, at a later date, became Swami Vivekananda. He was a friend of Rabindranath Tagore. His biographer, Julius Lipner, says that Brahmabandhab "made a significant contribution to the shaping of the new India whose identity began to emerge from the first half of the nineteenth century"

**16. Ashapura Devi**, (8 January 1909 – 13 July 1995), also Ashapoorna Devi or Ashapura Debi, was a prominent Indian novelist and poet in Bengali. In 1976, she was awarded the Jnanpith Award and Padma Shri by the Government of India, D.Litt. by the Universities of Jabalpur, Rabindra Bharati, Burdwan and Jadavpur. Vishwa Bharati University honoured her with Deshikottama in 1989. For her contribution as a novelist and short story writer, the Sahitya Akademi conferred its highest honour,



Image No 35 : Ashapura Devi

the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, in 1994.

**17. Vandemataram Bhawan, The Residence of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay:** The Vandemataram Bhawan is located in Chinsurah of Hugli district. The house is sanctified with the footsteps of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. It is the birth place of the national song of India-Vandemataram. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was the first graduate of India and worked as a Deputy Magistrate. He stayed at Joraghat on the banks of Ganga in the 1870s when he was the Sub-Divisional officer in Hugli. The Vandemataram song which was later included in his novel Ananda Math was composed in this house and later on the song played a vital role in the Indian Independence movement. Post independence of India, the song was recognized as the national song of India. The single storied house is built using bricks and facing the North on the banks of river Hugli (Ganges).



Image No 36 : Vandemataram Bhawan 22°53'36.98"N 88°24'14.73"E

**18. Rabindranath Thakur and Chandannagar :** Relationship of Rabindranath with Chandannagar was very deep. The poet used to live several times at several houses of Chandannagar. 'Janhabi Nibas'

near river Ganga is one of his favourite houses. The poet wrote, on the top, there was a room with opened doors, from where I used to see the sun lighted net on the top new leaves of bushy 'Bakul' tree. Here I once lived. The poet wrote, those beautiful days of mine on the bank of river Ganga, were just like dedication of full bloomed lotuses on the river Ganga.

Unfortunately, the house is now neglected, proper care and conservation of this house never seen Chandannagar. The poet inaugurated the Banga Sahitya Sammelan at Chandannagar in the Bengali year 1343. Where the Gondalpara Jute Mill situated now, a bungalow was there named Moran saheb-er bagan bari. Moran means Lat Saheb. In Latin, it means 'which glitters in dark'. The poet mentioned about this house in his short story 'Adhyapak O Apod' (The Professor and The Unwanted). Rabindranath spent long days in a house named 'Patal Bari' near Strand of Chandannagar. This house was once under the foreign traders. It was a rest house of French navy. Then Jogendra Nath Khan occupied it. Tagore family later taken the house from him on rent. In front of the house, on river Ganga, the boat 'Padma' used to anchor. The poet used to sit on the boat for hours. 'Bouthan' of the poet Kadambari Debi learnt riding horse while she lived in this house. The poet wrote in this house, a poem titled 'Mistannita' within the collection 'Prahasini' to his granddaughter Parul Debi.



**Image No 37 : Patal Bari at Strand, Chandannagar, where poet used to stay**

The poet sent his hair to Parul Debi inside the envelope with this poem on 16 Magh, 1343 (Bangla). That hair, used chair, pen and shoes conserved carefully at Chandannagar heritage archive. The people of Chandannagar intend earnestly that on the occasion of 150 birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, Chandannagar may find its historical importance on the pages of Bengal's history. The world should know the immense importance of this city in the life of great poet Rabindranath Tagore.

**19. Radhanath Sikdar and Chandannagar :** Radhanath Sikdar (5 October 1813 – 17 May 1870) was an Indian mathematician who is best known for calculating the height of Mount Everest. In 1852, Sikdar calculated the exact height of Everest. George Everest retired in 1843 but his successor,



**Image No 38 : The Grave of Radhanath sikdar, Chandannagar 22°51'47.84"N 88°22'6.48"E**

Colonel Andrew Scott Waugh, named the peak after the man who initiated the survey. The height, 8,848 metres, was officially announced in 1856. Sikdar, a follower of Derozio, was a brilliant student of Hindu College. He was equally famous for social service. He played a leading role in passing of the Widow Remarriage Act, prohibition of child marriage and polygamy. His role to spread women education has been remembered and acknowledged. Radhanath spent the last days of his life in Chandannagar at his uncle's house in Godalpara. He was suffering from leukoderma which was then considered to be 'White Leprosy'. He stayed in Chandannagar for 13 years until his death. The road where his uncle's house was situated was renamed as Radhanath Sikdar Road by the Chandannagar Municipal Corporation on February 14, 1948. However, his friends and relatives left him and he died unwept and unsung for.



## CHAPTER 4 : THE ART AND CRAFT OF HUGLI

### 4.1 Printing

In 1800, William Carey established a Mission Press in Serampore for the initial purpose of publishing scripture translations, and in May 1800, the first leaf of his Bengali New Testament was published in Serampore.

In 1817, W. H. Pearce, who had trained at The Clarendon Press, Oxford, came to Serampore and associated himself with William Ward, the Serampore printer and colleague of William Carey and Joshua Marshman. Pearce had gone to India as a Baptist Missionary Society missionary, and he remained in India until his death

in 1840. In 1818, the Baptist Mission Press opened in Calcutta, as Pearce

sought to parallel Ward's work in Serampore. After fifteen years of dual operation, the two presses

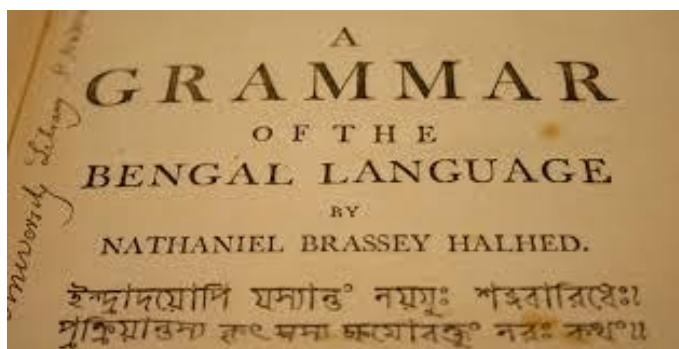
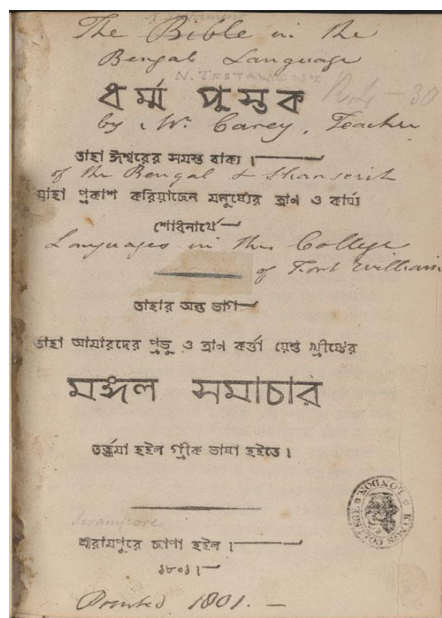


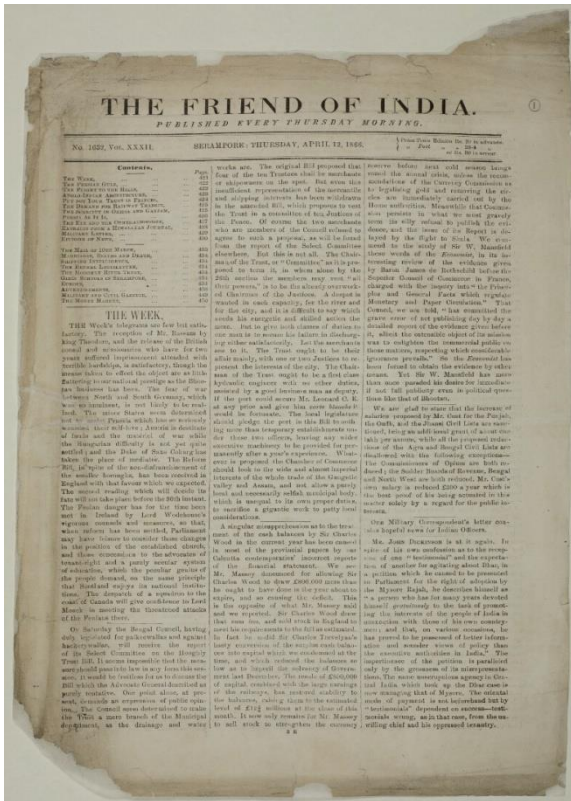
Image No 39 : Cover Page of 1778 modern Bengali Grammar Book

***A Grammar of the Bengal Languages*** is a 1778 modern Bengali grammar book written in English by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. This is the first grammar book of the Bengali language. The book, published in 1778, probably printed from the Endorse Press in Hugli, Bengal Presidency. Earliest printed book.

joined together in a common purpose in 1837.

Between the work of the Serampore Press and the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta, the complete Bible was printed in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit, and Chinese. In addition to Bible translation, these two presses produced an enormous oeuvre of various genres. Literature from some thirty languages of India, including Telugu from South India and Pushtu in Afghanistan, appeared in native fonts at these mission presses. In addition to Bibles and religious literature, a wide range of subjects (i.e. science, education, and commerce) appeared from these presses, including examination papers for all the universities in India. At its height, the Press employed over 300 persons.





In the early 1970s, the Baptist Missionary Society closed down the press and sold the land. The metal type was melted down, which

**Image No 40 : Between 1800 and 1834, the Press Printed Bible Translations in Almost 50 Languages, 38 of Which Were Translated at Serampore by Carey and His Associates.**

included the metal fonts that possibly had been created during the work of the Serampore Trio. In 1975, what was left of the BMP appeared as follows (exterior; interior). Currently, the former site of the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta is the headquarters for both Hindi and English language newspapers, Amrita Bazaar Patrika.

Newspapers in the Indian languages first appeared from the Serampore Mission Press in 1818. Also in 1818, Carey and his colleagues began publication of the Friend of India, an English newspaper that continued until 1875.

Eventually, Friend of India was incorporated in 1897 into Statesman and Friend of India, a contemporary daily newspaper in India.

**Image No 41 : In 1818, the Press also Published the First Bengali Newspaper and Magazine.**

**Hugli Printing Company** : Hooghly Printing is a subsidiary of Andrew Yule, a Central Public Sector Enterprise. It came into being in 1922. This was at a time when the printing industry was in its infancy in these parts. Hooghly Printing is part of the Andrew Yule Group of companies, which started operations in 1863 when a young entrepreneur from Scotland arrived in erstwhile Calcutta, then the Imperial capital. By 1875, the company had grown to mark its footprints in jute, tea, coal and insurance. Andrew Yule's control passed from one sibling to another, and Sir David Yule assumed full control of the company after the death of his brother George, who had run it since 1875. Hooghly Printing not only printed the Constitution but was also responsible for supplying the parchment paper on which it was printed. The first few copies were printed at the Dehradun printing facility of the Indian government as these were to be the best copies. The rest were printed at HPC.

## 4.2 Silk Printing

There are more than few hundreds of Silk Printing workshops at Talpukur,

Tarapur of Serampur Municipality, Chatra Mannapaa, Naoga, Moradan, boubazar of Baidyabati Municipality and Sheoraphully, Rajyadharpur and Piyarapur Panchayat involving more than ten

thousand people. Silk Block Printing art is not traditional to eastern India and was introduced to West Bengal in the 1940s. Highly skilled local craftsmen quickly mastered the textile art form. Today, Serampore city in West Bengal continues to be prominent in the production of block printed silk sarees and fabrics. As in the 20th century, motifs and patterns from West Bengal are market driven, thus block printing from this state is young. West Bengali block printed patterns adapt to contemporary fashion trends while Gujarati and Rajasthani block printed patterns perpetuate its traditional motifs. Block printing is a form of textile art that diffuses itself into thriving cultures, at the same time enriching them. In the 17th century, the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan and his court were widely known for their love of the arts. This gave motifs in block printing visibility to a wider audience in and outside of India. The British were in India from the early 17th century and were receptive to native culture even before the Raj formally came into being in the mid 19th century.



Image No 42 : Block Printing Artist, Rajib Das of Serampur 22°45'24.58"N 88°19'58.71"E

Block Printing Artist, Rajib Das of Serampur 22°45'24.58"N 88°19'58.71"E is associated with the work for long 20 years. According to him, the industry is facing huge crisis due to pandemic. Many workshops were shut down and artists have shifted their occupation. They are also facing challenges because of decline in Saree production.

The major products which are produced are -

Hand printed silk sarees

Hand printed scarves

Hand printed stoles

### 4.3 Boat Makers of Balagarh

**Balagarh** is a non-descript sleepy hamlet, situated 115 km North of Kolkata, by the river Hugli. It is the heart of Bengal's indigenous boat manufacture. The centre where the boat makers and workshops still uphold a centuries-old tradition is centered around **Sripur** market. The craft is at least 500 years old, with the boat makers of Sripur getting a mention in the writings of even **Abul**

**Fazal** (1551-1602). Way back in the 16th-century, rivers were the lifeline of trade and business. Adi Saptagram, on the Saraswati River, a distributary of the Hugli was connected directly with the Bay of Bengal and used to be a busy river port. It was about 20 km south of Balagarh and local merchants used the port for conducting trade with countries as far as Sri Lanka, Burma, the Indonesian archipelago and other places. The demand for boats was immense and Balagarh's craft plied every part of the Mughal Empire's richest province, which included today's Bihar and Odisha along with the old undivided Bengal. Rajbongshi wood craftsmen from Balagarh attended to them. Over the years, these craftsmen learnt boat-making and built boats for rivers as well as for seafarers. Interestingly, The Boat Makers of Balagarh used only Salwood earlier because of its sturdy quality but now they use Babla, Kapur and Shirishtoo. During monsoons, some fly-by-night boat builders use inferior quality wood as they lack funds to buy good quality wood. But to this day, they do not use modern technology. The tools are the same as those used 500 years ago. Measurements are still made with string and stick, the result checked by experienced eyes. The end product, however, is precisely engineered and even the most perfectionist can find no flaw in the product. The primary spine that grows slowly into a boat is called the 'daNra'. The planks are shaped by heating and pressing, then placed side by side and fixed by small iron nails. Measurements are taken at each step. When the work is done its accuracy is crosschecked and any extra parts are axed or sawed.



**Image No 43 : The Boat Making is Done Inside Bamboo Groves**



**Image No 44 : "Boat Making is Mostly Done Manually**

More than 300 years back in the year 1707, Raghunandan Mitra Mustafi (20th generation counting from Kalidas Mitra) (elder brother of my direct great great great great grandfather Anantaram) left our original zamindari estate of Ula-Birnagar and settled in Sripur, Balagarh. Before settling in Sripur-Balagarh, Raghunandan spent some time in Murshidabad Nawab Estate with his father Rameswar Mitra. Raghunandan was devoted religious person and had obtained divinely power. He was also highly educated and well versed in different languages like Arabic, Farsi & Sanskrit. Being impressed with Raghunandan's divinity, Raja Raghudev Roy of Bansberia, gifted him Zamindari of 75 Bighas land in Antiseora Village. Being influenced by Baishnabism, Raghunandan renamed Antiseora as Sripur. He mostly developed the magnificent boat making industry of Bengal.



**Image No 45 : Nowadays Babla Wood is Used for Boat Making**



**Image No 46 : Nowadays Babla Wood is Used for Boat Making**



**Image No 47 : Situated on the Bank of the Hugli, Balagarh's Tradition of Boat Making**



**Image No 48 : Situated on the Bank of the Hugli, Balagarh's Tradition of Boat Making**

Situated on the bank of the Hugli, Balagarh's tradition of boat making is believed to be several centuries old, with its boat builders even finding mention in the writings of Abul Fazal (1551-1602), the grand vizier of the Mughal emperor and the author of *Akbarnama*.

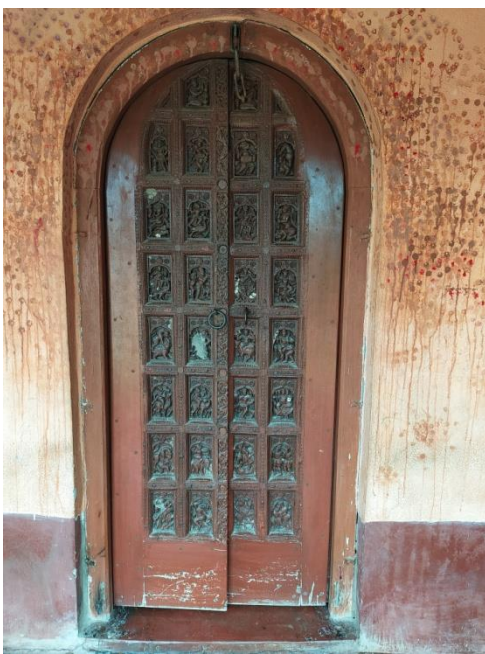
Boat manufacturers said the hard work that goes into boat making doesn't translate into a good income. "We spend around ten to twelve hours a day working. It normally takes a week to build a small boat, and the bigger ones take up to a month. However, the profit is dismal," rued 42-year-old Sheikh Sultan, a boat maker at Rajbanshi para (hamlet) in Balagarh. Sultan said the manufacturing cost of small boats is around Rs 10,000, and selling price is just Rs 12,000. The bigger boats cost anywhere between Rs 90,000 and Rs 95,000 to make, but are sold for around Rs one lakh. "We have to take loans from private money lenders as banks refuse to give us any monetary help," he complained.



**Image No 49 : Sheikh Sultan, Hereditary Boat Maker of Balagarh and His Creation**



**Image No 50 : Sheikh Sultan, Hereditary Boat Maker of Balagarh and His Creation**



#### 4.4 Wood Carving

There are many old temples of Hugli where we find beautifully carved out wood panels and doors. Specially the Chandimandap of Mitra Mustafi family of Sripur – Balagarh (Plate 55 A) deserves special mention. The

Jangipara of Hugli has a very ancient abandoned temple where there is a beautiful wood carved door. Though, Kotalpur Block is little outside our study area, we have included the temple because of its beautiful wooden carvings. There are also evidence of the existence of this art in the district. Location - 23° 7'57.18"N 88°26'53.16"E



spectacularly intricate work in the wooden panel shows the mastery over wood carving at about 300 years ago. However, at present we did not get any such hubs where wood carving is practised.

Image No 51 : Temple Gate With Beautiful Wood Carving



Image No 52 : Wood Carving of Chandimandap of Mitra Mustafi Family of Sripur, Balagarh

## 4.5 Clay Work of Hugli

All along the Bhagirathi Hugli there is clay workshops, where number of idols or potteries are prepared.

**a. Baidyabatii, Kumorpara, Hugli:** Senior artist Tarasankar Pal of Kumorpara informed us that the clay for making the idols come from Canning, South 24 Parganas. They are in this craft for 7 generations. Various types of



lamps are prepared during Kalipuja. During the Poush Sangkranti fair, near Nistarini Kali Temple a very special type of dolls are prepared. They are said to be as “Rani Putul”. The idols are prepared depending on the different pujas. Generally, 2 ft idol is of Rs.1500.

**Image No 53 : Clay Artist, Tarasankar Pal and His Creations 22°47'31.48"N 88°19'57.81"E**



**Image No 54 : Clay Artist, Tarasankar Pal and His Creations 22°47'31.48"N 88°19'57.81"E**



Image No 55 : Clay Lamp used During Kalipuja and Other Festivals

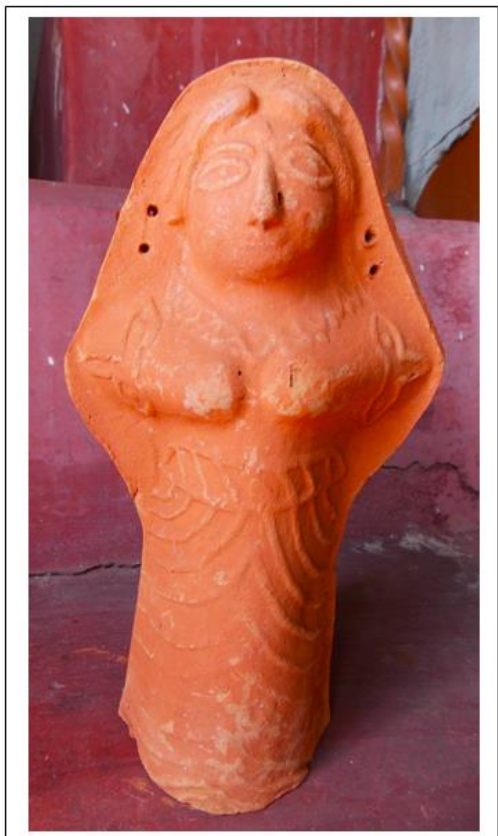
b. Kumorpara, Bhadrakali, Hugli: Idols are mostly prepared at Bhadrakali, Kumorpara.



Image No 56 : Workshop Where Clay Pots and Idols are Prepared 22°40'31.56"N 88°20'49.13"E



Image No 57 : Workshop Where Clay Pots and Idols are Prepared 22°40'31.56"N 88°20'49.13"E



Though Rani putul or Queen Doll is famous in Howrah District but in the borderline areas of Baidyabati , Sheoraphully , Hugli this unique dolls are available.

The structure of these dolls might have a resemblance with Shashti putul or Shashti dolls. People residing in South Patil, Narendrapur, Jagatballavpur refer to these magnificent dolls as 'Rani Putul.' The artisans of Howrah have been able to hold on to the legacy of the forefathers and still craft these queen dolls in present times. These artisans make these structures in a two-faced mould and fire them. The queen dolls are primarily made up of burnt clay. The modern day artists often apply a coat of paint or glitter to add lustre to these dolls. Some of them are also offered a coat of red paint with mica. Their legs seem to be covered by long ghagras which make the appearance seem royal. Queen dolls stand out in terms of style or pattern in the wide category of Bengals's dolls. Plate 61.

It may sound surprising but these queen dolls will not remind you of the queens of fairytale wonders like Thakumar Jhuli. The inspiration of the artisans rather lies in a real life queen made up of flesh and blood. According to art researchers, the artisans make these dolls keeping Queen Victoria in mind.

## 4.6 Weaving at Dhaniakhali :

Though Dhaniakhali do not falls exactly under our study area (buffer zone) but because of its global importance we have included it in our report.

Bengal has always been famous for its textiles and even the British frequently exploited the handloom weavers of this land to make them weave the best of Muslins and cotton handloom ware and take them back to Europe. British textile traders made huge profits in the process, leaving the weavers of Bengal a pauper, hardly paying them their dues. One of the regions that played a very important role in this textile boom was Dhaniakhali, a part of Hugli-Damodar Plain and today lies in the Chinsurah subdivision.

Dhaniakhali Saree has GI tag and traditionally has been in Kora or natural grey with either red or black plain border. The dyed yarn was first introduced in 1942. Dhaniakhali sarees nowadays are produced in Haripal, Rajbalhat Rasidpur, Dwarhata, Ramnagar, Gurap and Antpur of Hugli. Normally, cotton yarns of 80s to 100s count are used both in warp and weft with extra warp of 2/100s or 2/80s cotton yarn.



**Image No 58 : A master Weaver at Dhaniakhali  
22°58'10.03"N 88° 6'29.54"E**



**Image No 59 : Every Household has a Loom at  
Dhaniakhali**

Over the years the state government has been marketing the handloom sarees of Bengal, particularly the Dhaniakhali taant saree that even our Honourable Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee generally wears and has become a popular 'brand ambassador' of the same thus taking this saree to the global forum. The Bengal cotton sari has now turned into a fashion statement, wherever it is worn and have a market all over the world. Along with Dhaniakhali, Shantipur and Phulia taant are also marketed, but the Dhaniakhali sarees have a special place in everyone's hearts.

In Dhaniakhali block every household has at least one loom. The sari produced here is thus named after the area. The material for the Dhaniakhali saree is somewhat coarse and heavier than other textiles from Bengal but suits the middle-class budget and as

such is popular. Best part is it is very climate friendly and withstands the heat and humidity of India, keeping you comfortable. An ordinary Dhaniakhali saree takes a minimum of two days, pitching in 10–12 hours each day, to be woven. While the exotic ones take 4-5 days to weave and are sold for hefty sums. Interestingly, the Jamdani saris that originated in Dhaka and famous among the rich and aristocrats of the world are also produced in Dhaniakhali.



**Image No 60 : Every Household has a Loom at Dhaniakhali**

The weavers have co-operatives and many of them directly sell to the government and their stores which help the weavers get their dues on time. Tourists can take a day trip from Kolkata to tour the weaver's village where the legendary Dhaniakal Tant Saree is woven and can visit weavers in their homes and watch them in action on their handlooms. The Dhaniakhali saree making process is unique. The Jaquard weaving technique is followed by weavers of Dhaniakhali. The different steps of the weaving process like shedding, picking, beating-up, left off and take up can be seen. It is fascinating indeed to watch the variety of designs of these sarees ranging from the simple elegant horizontal stripes to intricate fish and conch shell motifs. The vertically running woven braided line near the anchal or pallu, is the identifying factor for a



**Image No 61 : The Exotic Handwoven Sarees of Dhaniakhali**

Dhaniakhali Saree. Women testify that, after a few washes, the comfort of a Dhaniakhali Saree is unmatched! In the last few years, there has been a remarkable turnaround in the designs and the Dhaniakhali Saree is in vogue again. Students from leading design schools of the country like NIFT and NID are working on the latest designs for Dhaniakhali Sarees.



Image No 62 : The Exotic Handwoven Sarees of Dhaniakhali.

#### 4.7 Weaving at Begumpur :

Begampur is a small town in Hugli district in West Bengal, the sarees woven here carries deep and bright colours. The economy of this place depends on textiles and also famous for dhotis. What reminds everyone when you say Bengal is handwoven cotton sarees and is the center for fine cotton weaving and these Begampuri cotton sarees are known for loosely woven light-weight and translucent and are extremely comfortable to drape. These cotton beauties would take one to two days to weave which are very simple ones and more intricate designs could even take five to six days to complete, although the saree fabric named after the city, the subtle madness look after wearing them is absolutely sophisticated.

**History :** In his book 'হুগলী জেলার ইতিহাস ও বাংলা সমাজ' (*The History of Hoogly district and Bengali Society*) (1968 edition), Sudhir Kumar Mitra has revealed an ancient history of this village in course of discussion of the origin of the name of 'Begampur'. According to one school of opinion it was named Begampur during the time of the Pathans. Sultan Giasuddin ordered Hazrat Sahsufi to attack this area and establish muslim glory after defeating the small landlords in battle and in the course of time the name of this place became Begampur. He also writes that according to another school, during the regime of King Akbar when the 'Peer' family of Furfura Sarif came from Delhi, seven hundred Muslim families settled here and the place was named Begampur.

For ages these weavers were manufacturing a well-known saree variety locally known as 'Matapar' sarees, which carries simple border without any ornamentation, coarse cotton yarns. Due to decline in sales, Begumpur Handloom Cluster Development Society came with a concept, which offered training in designing, dyeing etc which will further enhance the sales and appeal to the traditional yet modern grace to the saree. Based on the market demands they came up with exotic and opulent colors such as contrasting borders of red, black, blue and so on which became style statement for

the elite class. Weavers use a pit loom or frame loom for weaving Begampuri saree and they use traditional dobby designs

The less cost-effective sarees varieties are mainly stripes and check patterns and carries designs in the borders. The main body of the saree which carries checks, stripes are most loved. The esteem borders are Naksha border, Ganga Jamuna border, temple border, skirt border, dobby border, plain border and broad borders known as 'maathapaar' or 'Beluaaripaar' were often seen in two colors such as black and red with a solid weave thus making it more robust. One can see the Begampuri sarees are woven in such a way its texture is balanced with contrasting borders example red, purple, orange, black, green and so on. The plain coarse weave have now upgraded to new designs and motifs, many of such designs are been inspired by Bishnupur, terracotta temples made from the locally available laterite stones.



Image No 63 : The Beautifully Woven Begumpuri Handloom Saree Border



Image No 64 : The Beautifully Woven Begumpuri Handloom Saree Border



Today if you look at a Begumpuri, the extra weft work in the pallu is reminiscent of the Assamese and Manipuri traditions. And with this new aesthetics, these sarees got a fresh new lease of life. Today, these sarees are sought after for their comfort, their bright colours and their beautifully embroidered borders. Costwise, they are priced slightly higher than the Shantipur and Fulia taants and the Dhaniakhali sarees. Each saree takes anywhere between 2-6 days to complete depending on the complexity of the pattern.

#### 4.8 Coconut Shell Dolls of Bhadreswar:

Ashok Kumar Sahis, is an artist of Bhadreswar who creates coconut shell dolls. In the Handicrafts fare of Bengal there is a huge demand of these dolls. The shell is cleared and then different images of dolls and animals are engraved on the shells. It is more like wood engraving.



Image No 65 : Coconut Shell Doll, 22°49'39.25"N 88°20'44.25"E

#### 4.9 Shola Work of Sundarus, Hugli :

Though Sholawork is more famous in Murshidabad, Nadia or Purba Bardhaman, there is a shola hub at Sundarus. Though located outside the buffer-zone of our study area but still, considering its importance, we are including it in our report. The dolls for Raas Fare are mostly created at Sundarus. Since the Raas Utsav is mostly celebrated in the wild, many animals are created out of this milky white medium.

At present, many artisans have shifted their base to Kolkata for better livelihood. Gopal Das is one of them. He along with his family members are involved in this craft and sell their products at Notun Bazaar.



Image No 66 : Shola Flowers Used for Puja



Image No 67 : Shola Parakeet, Decorative Items Used for Rass Utsav.



Image No 68 : Preparation of Shola Flowers, Sunduras, Hugli 22°48'45.13"N 87°57'19.53"E



Image No 69 : Preparation of Shola Flowers, Sunduras, Hugli 22°48'45.13"N 87°57'19.53"E

#### 4.10 Terracotta Work of Guptipara & Sukharia Temples:

Terra cotta or terra-cotta is a “baked earth”, a type of earthenware. Bengal is the home of beautiful terracotta work. In the study area of Hugli, there are 2 major temple clusters where we find brilliant terracotta work. They are – Guptipara and Sukharia of Balgarh Block.

**Guptipara Brindaban jiu Temple Complex :** According to David J. McCutcheon the jor-bangla temple of Chaitanya in the Brindaban Chandra Math is the earliest Bangla-style temple still standing. It was built during the reign of Akbar (1542-1605). The at-chala Vrindabanchndra temple was built in 1801. The eka-ratna Ramchandra temple was built in the 17th century. The last temple has a rich terracotta façade.

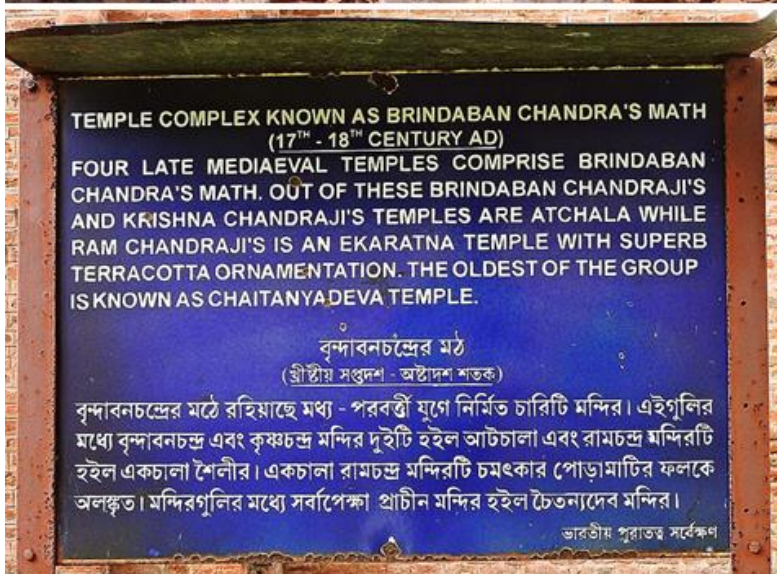


Image No 70 : Beautifully Sculpted Ramchandra Temple, Guptipara, ASI Board, Interior Painted Wall, Chaitnya Temple. 23°12'18.83"N, 88°24'16.83"E

The main temple complex houses 4 **Vaishnava** temples — **Chaitanya, Brindabanchandra, Ramchandra and Krishnachandra** — which offer an interesting mix of Bengal's temple architecture. The temples were constructed in different periods.

### Chaitanya Temple

The Chaitanya temple, built by Bishwar Roy in the mid-16th century, is the oldest. The temple consists of 2 thatched hut-shaped structures. The structure was adorned with some of Bengal's earliest terracotta carvings, but they didn't survive the march of time.



Image No 71 : Beautifully Sculpted at Chaitanya Temple

### Brindabanchandra temple

The 60-feet high Brindabanchandra temple, built in 1810, dominates the temple complex. The *aatchala* temple **doesn't have terracotta (burnt clay) work** but that is compensated by the colourful paintings on both the outer and inner walls. The Brindabanchandra temple is flanked on the left by the Ramchandra temple and on the right by the Krishnachandra temple.

### Ramchandra Temple

The *ekratna* (single pinnacled) Ramchandra Temple was constructed in late 18th century by Harishchandra Roy, the king of Seoraphuli. It may be called the most **elegant temple** in the complex. The single-storey temple with an octagonal turret contains rich terracotta work on the walls and the turret. The carvings depict war scenes from the *Ramayana*, royal processions, voyages and glimpses of everyday life.



**Image No 72 : Beautifully Ornated Door Panel, Ramchandra Temple, Guptipara**



**Image No 73 : Bengal Boat in Terracotta at the Walls of Ramchandra Temple, Guptipara**

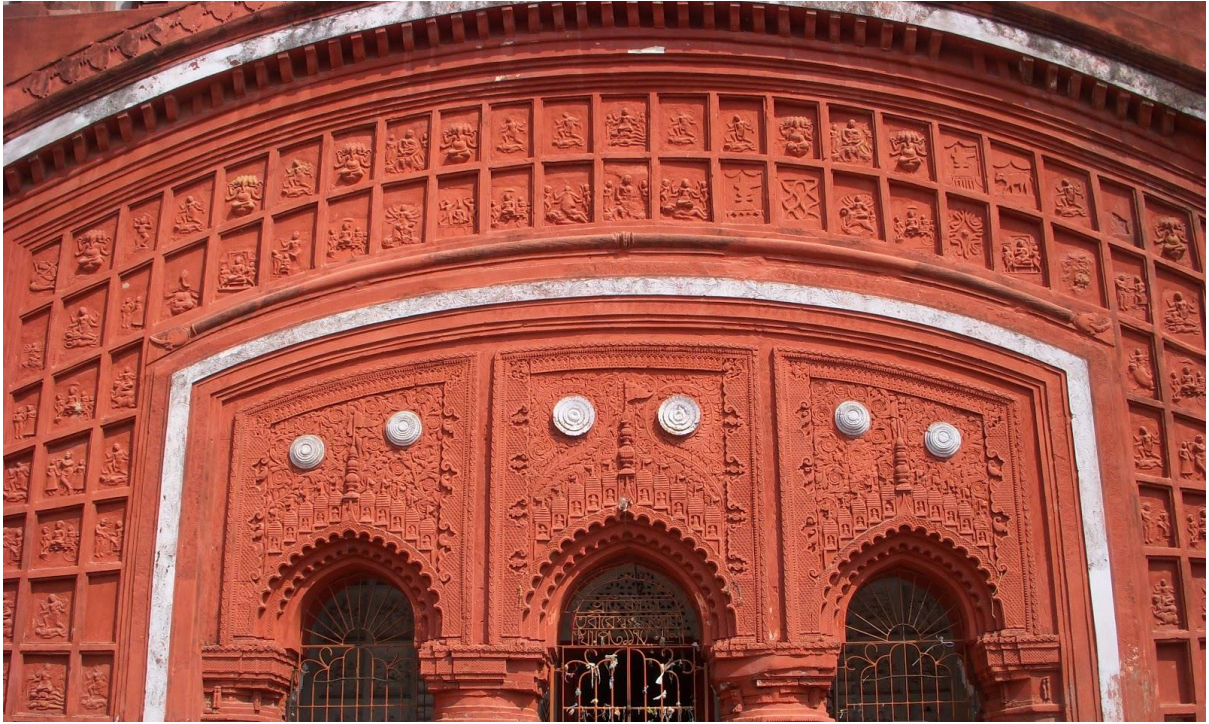


Image No 74 : Anandomoyee Temple wall Terracotta at Sukharia, Balagarh



Image No 75 : Anandomoyee Temple Wall Terracotta at Sukharia, Balagarh



Image No 76 : Anondomoyee Temple Wall Terracotta at Sukharia, Balagarh



Image No 77 : Anondomoyee Temple Wall Terracotta at Sukharia, Balagarh



#### 4.11 Bamboo and Cane Baskets of Guptpara :

Guptipara of Balagarh Block also specialises in Bamboo basket making. This is a family oriented craft where all the members participates. The entire para or zone is involved in bamboo craft. The most important items are baskets which are used for fish storing, rice husking, fruits and vegetable storage etc.

Basket making is an ancient craft and mostly practised by Dom and other lower caste community. At present about 60 families of the same community are involved in bamboo basket making.



Image No 78 : Bamboo and Cane Baskets Making at Guptpara

## CHAPTER 5 : FOOD AND DRINKS OF HUGLI

### 5.1 Portuguese influence on the sweet culture of Hugli

The story of Bengali confectionery started sometime in the 16th century when the Portuguese came to **Bandel**, Hugli. Among other things, they taught the locals how to make chhaana. This simple process of curdling milk to get a velvety cheese proved to be the turning point in Bengal's culinary history. And moiras (the sweet makers) began experimenting with chhaana to dish out exquisite sweets we now know as Bengali mishti. Five centuries later, these small town moiras continue to be culinary alchemists and turn curdled milk into sweet gold.

At the early stage, chhana and chhana made sweets were somehow remissible for a religious cause. In the Vedic period, milk and milk made foods- Ghee, curd, butter were considered as the food of Gods. Especially butter was favourite to Lord Krishna. So, those milk made foods were considered the best food. But, As per Manu's opinion, chana was considered as inedible as it was made by distorting milk. Sukumar Sen wrote in his book 'Kalikatar Kahini' regarding the topic that, latex, butter, ghee, curd are the normal state of raw milk. These are not the distortion of milk. But chana is the artificial distortion of boiled milk. Bengalis have lacerated milk adding other ingredients to separate solid and aquatic parts of the milk. It was first known as "Chhena" in Bengali as milk was lacerated such way, and now it is known as "Chhana" in



Image No 79 : Chhana Made Sweets Basket

standard Bengali language. Chhana is not mentioned in Sanskrit or any other language. As it was unknown to all, there was no custom of offering Chhana to worship of the Gods. Sweets made by Chhana were not mentioned in the description of Nihar Ranjan Roy in his book "BanglaerItihas" where he discussed about Bengalis' sweet foods. Milk made sweets like curd, payesh, and latex are included in the book. It also included Sandesh but not of chana- Sandesh. Sandesh was very popular as sweet-food until the origination of Chhana. Sandesh was made with sugar, pea-flour, coconut, and moong dal/ Yellow Split Gram (one kind of pulse). He said that it was the custom of "Kojagori Purnima" to have the taste of parched rice and coconut made Sandesh with the kith and kin (Friends and relatives) and spend a sleepless night playing dice. Besides, one kind of wafer/sweet made from only sugar was also called Sandesh.

**a. Bandel Cheese :** Bandel Cheese is an Asian cheese that originated in the erstwhile Portuguese colony Bandel in eastern India. It was introduced by the Portuguese and was made by the Mog (Burmese) under Portuguese supervision

**Production :** It is made by separating the curds from whey with lemon juice. It is then molded and drained in small baskets and smoked. Bandel Cheese is known for its dry, crumbly and smoky flavor.

Primarily utilising a procedure that is at least 500 years old, Bandel Cheese originally was a fresh cheese made of cow's milk curdled with lemon juice, and was then preserved in saltwater to lengthen the shelf life of this otherwise fresh cheese. However, it took the Portuguese some time to realize the fact that these didn't last very long on their own, and so, the little round balls would be smoked to give them some flavour and increase their shelf life too, so that they could



**Image No 80 : Bandel Cheese**

be carried during long sea voyages.

Allegedly, a group of sea-faring cooks

from Chittagong who worked in these ships as cooks, also known as 'mowg' cooks, would find it of a lot of value and carry them along, and they would be served only after getting an overnight soak in freshwater, to get rid of some of the brackish taste and also to hydrate the cheese a bit to ensure a bit of creaminess rather than the springy texture you would expect of firm tofu or Halloumi, revealing a texture similar to Feta cheese. Also, it is highly aromatic and fresh as it is sold in circular flats straight away after production. Available in two varieties, plain (white) and smoked (Brown). Bandel cheese is well salted and can be stored. It is an indigenous unripened, salted soft variety of cheese made in perforated pots. Today, the production is concentrated in the towns of Tarakeswar and Bishnupur, Bankura, near Kolkata, West Bengal, India. It is similar to **Surti paneer**, a goat milk cheese introduced by the Portuguese in Surat, Gujarat, India, but made from cow's milk.

**Use :** Widely used in Anglo-Indian cuisine in Kolkata but Bandel cheese is hardly used as an ingredient in Bengali household. It is used as a salad dressing. The plain or non smoked version can be eaten on its own. The smoked version, which has more intense notes is used as pasta, risotto and salad topping. Home chefs and menu consultants have started using Bandel Cheese as an ingredient. It is deep fried and served with gooseberry chutney. Smoked Bandel Cheese is added as a topping to fig and almond tart. Even chefs outside Kolkata are using Bandel Cheese as an ingredient.

In 2017 the Food Technology and Biochemical Engineering Department of Jadavpur University has started a scientific study of the Bandel Cheese under Debabrata Bera. The project funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of West Bengal aims at the hygienic production of Bandel Cheese in a controlled environment. The project also aims at measuring the economic potential of the cheese both in the domestic and international markets. The project also aims at training the artisans who presently making the cheese. Presently the cheese is being made by a single family in a village near Arambagh in Hooghly District. Finally the project aims at exploring the opportunities of getting a Geographical indication tag for Bandel Cheese. The project also aims at developing several by-products with medical and pharmaceutical values, including probiotic drinks.



Image No 81 : Shops Selling Cheese

## b. Some legendary sweets and sweet shops of Hugli

i. **Felu Modak (1848)** : About 175years ago, the scion of the Modak family, engaged traditionally in sweet making, Felu Charan De, started his own enterprise on the southern part of Rishra whose father was Kartick Chandra De. The traditional business has crossed nearly five generations and their present location is situated at the junction of Srimani lane, G.T. Road and N.C. Pakrashi Lane. Having an innovative mind and the



Image No 82 : Shop of Felu Modak

palliative anthropology of

Bengalis, Felu Charan invented scores of sweetmeats by facing various contemporary odds by way of sheer honesty and dexterity. Eaters had criticized many of the sweets he manufactured and accordingly he modified them to give maximum taste without sacrificing the quality and the health aspects of the eaters. This attitude of Felu went down to his future generations and as a result the

present assortment of sweets are not only superior in quality but also leave a lasting memory in those who have had the opportunity to eat them.

His son, Nandalal Moira alias khyada, continued his father's philosophy and took the entire operation to new heights by way of injecting enriched taste and purity and thus the fame of the sweets went beyond boundaries from Rishra. The tradition continued with his son Madhusudan De who lived for only 44 years. But his sons, Baidyanath, Shankar and Amarnath and Amitava De are very much in the forefront to consolidate the brand of Felu Modak with the help of modern technology and business acumen. As such the brand has reached every nook of Southern Bengal and beyond.



Image No 83 : Traditional Nikhuti (like gulabjamun) , Kalojaam Labangalatika, Jhoori Bonde etc



Image No 84 : Traditional Nikhuti (like gulabjamun), Kalojaam Labangalatika, Jhoori Bonde etc

**c. Surya Kumar Modak & Jalbhara :** Another legendary sweet of Hugli is the mouthwatering sweet the 'Jalbhara Sandesh' . 'Jalbhara' literally means - 'filled with water' and it is exactly so. It is a sweet made from chana and sugar which has rose water in its core. It is a marvellous sweet because the water inside it remains as it is for a couple of days without drying. It was first discovered by Late Surya Kumar Modak about 100 years back.

Surya Kumar Modak was asked to make some new sweets for the new bridegroom of the local zaminder. Creating an oasis by pouring Rose Syrup inside the sandesh was the main invention of



Image No 85 : Jol Bhara of Surya Modak

Surjya Kumar Modak in the year 1818. The name of the newly invented sandesh was 'Jalbhara Talsansh Sandesh'. Now, it more popular by name Jalbhara Sandesh. Surjya Kumar Modak also invented Motichur Sandesh, Aam Sandesh, Khirpully Sandesh at the same time. Nobel laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore often visited Chandannagar and he was an ardent admirer of 'Jalbhara'. Many other renowned persons e.g., Mahatma Gandhi, Rashbehari Bose, Shyama

Prasad Mukhopadhyay also appreciated the speciality of Chandannagar.



Image No 86 : Motichur Sweets of Surya Modak



Image No 87 : Shops of Surya Modak



Image No 88 : Shops of Surya Modak

**d. Mahesh Chandra Dutta and Gutke Sandesh :** It is a historic and legendary sweet shop in Serampore. There are several myths and legends associated with this shop. The myth goes like, once Sri Sri Radhaballav Jiu (the famous 800yrs old deity of Ballabhpur or Serampore) wished to have Gutke (a special type of sweet Sandesh made by this shop owner Sri Mahesh Chandra Dutta).



Image No 89 : Mahesh Chandra Dutta, Serampur

With the disguise of a little boy Sri Sri Radhaballav Jiu came to the shop owner asked for The Gutke sandesh. Receiving the sandesh the disguised little boy ate them quickly, but in being asked for money by the shop owner Mahesh Chandra Dutta, the little boy admitted that he had none. Mahesh

Chandra did not allow the Boy to go away without paying him. The boy then asked Mahesh Chandra to keep the golden bangles which he wore on his hands. And promised that his father would pay the money. Mahesh Chandra eventually let him go. On that morning the main priest of Sri Sri Radhaballav Jiu started crying loudly as he saw that the one of golden bangle pair of Sri Sri Radhaballav Jiu idol is missing. Informed by this sad incident Mahesh Chandra came to the temple and showed the bangles to the Priest and sebayits. And surprisingly found that The Bangles were the same. From that very day the shop is very much acceptable to the devotees and followers of Sri Krishna specially Sri Sri Radhaballav Jiu.

Other Products: Monohara, Gutke Sandesh, Mishti Doi.



Image No 90 : Gutke Sandesh is Sold in Traditional Way



Image No 91 : Gutke Sandesh is Sold in Traditional Way

**e. Gupo Sandesh of Guptipara :** Guptipara is a great place for Bengal sweet lovers. The most famous of these is the Gupo Sandesh, considered by many to be Bangal's first branded sweet – meat. It is made of channa extracted from cow's milk. Guptipara is also the birthplace of sweet



maker Bhola Moira, who was famous not for sweet making skills but for his Kabi gaan (Folk Songs). The famous musical duel of Bhola Moira and the Anglo – Indian Antony Firingi, has been made immortal by Uttam Kumar’s movie Antony Firingi. Guptipara is a small ancient town, some 80 kilometers from Kolkata (Calcutta), on the Bandel-Katwa railway line. Guptipara sits beside the Bhagirathi River and was once a citadel of Vaishnavite culture. Even



**Image No 92 : Gupo Sandesh, a Form of Monda of Guptipara**

today, residents observe Ras, Dol and Ratha-Yatra, which is Guptipara’s greatest festival. It was also an ancient seat of learning. Many Sanskrit scholars and Nyayashastra pundits hailed from Guptipara. According to lore, centuries ago, during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar, a mendicant named Satyadev Saraswati stopped on his track as he was mesmerized by the beauty and peaceful ambiance of the place on the bank of the river and decided to terminate his journey there. He built an ashram on the bank of the river and established a temple dedicated to Sri Vrindavan Chandra Jiu. The adjoining area came to be known as Gupt Vrindavan Pally and from there it was shortened and colloquially came to be known as Guptipara, a name that became its identity.

Guptipara is a delightful haunt for sweetmeat gourmets. The famous Gupo Sandesh, considered by many to be Bengal’s first branded sweet, originated here. It is believed that the dessert was named thus because it was created by local confectioners of Guptipara. Pure cow milk is used to make this sandesh. Cow milk is curdled by adding food acids such as lemon juice and calcium lactate and straining. It is very similar or analogous to cottage cheese but is formless. The cheese curd (Chhena) is wrapped in a cloth and beaten vigorously to expel the extra water. Sugar or gur (molasses) is added to the chhena and then the cheese is twisted and given a roundish shape with hands. During winter, molasses (Nolen Gur or Khejur Gur) is mixed with chhena, but at other times it is sugar. Gupo Sandesh is also known as Jora Sandesh. This Sandesh was patronized by the royalty, the nobility and rich zamindars from distant lands. Local sweetmeat makers used to export freshly made Gupo Sandesh to patrons by boats from Guptipara. Various types of mouth-watering sweets were made along with Gupo Sandesh which included Murki, Batasa, Mukha Sandesh and Bata Sandesh. In those days, Guptipara supplied this popular sandesh to all corners of Calcutta. But things have changed now and the demand for Gupo Sandesh has dwindled. Lack of expert karigar (makers of the sweetmeat) has also affected the demand for this delectable dessert. Despite all odds, a few shop owners are fighting against all odds to keep the tradition of making Gupo Sandesh alive. But lack of promotion is affecting the sales of this traditional tasty sweetmeat. If adequate steps are not taken to preserve the heritage, this tasty dessert will become extinct someday.



**Image No 93 : This is the 7th Generation Running Sweet Shop of Guptipara. Selling Gupo and Makha Sandesh From Ancient Times**

#### **f. Tilkut (Sesame Crunch) of Konnagar :**

Another important sweet of Hugli is Tilkut (Sesame Crunch) from Konnagar. However, very few shops sell tilkut nowadays. Among them one of the oldest is “Mullick Sweets “of Madan Mohan Mullick, 2.N.C Mitra Road. It is popular as Madan Da r Dokan. At present the shop is run by the elder daughter of Madan Mohan Mullick, Moushumi Biswas Mullick.



**Image No 94 : Mousumi Biswas, Present Owner of the Shop**

White sesame seeds are grinded and mixed with sugar or gur. Khoya Kheer is mixed with the dough to prepare crunchy sweets. The mixture is poured down on the wooden tray (Baarkosh). When it cools down pieces are cut down. Generally, the sweets are prepared in the weekends. The price is only Rs.6/pc. Besides, this signature sweet they also prepare many traditional sweets like Chandrapuli, Kheermohon, Rosogolla etc. Sweet making blocks are also available in this shop.



Image No 95 : This Old Shop is Famous For Sesame Crunch.

## 5.2 Portuguese influence on a typical meal:

From the late 15th century European ships from various countries began to touch the shores of India in order to establish mercantile relations with Indians. The art of cartography and the voyages undertaken by the Iberians during the 15th century opened up new sea routes from the west to different corners of the globe. The Portuguese were the first to set their foot on the Indian subcontinent, gradually followed by the Dutch, French, Danes and the British. On the other hand, America and different parts of Africa also became colonies of these European powers, from where colonizers extracted various kinds of commodities. For instance, the bullion exported from the Americas was used to pay for the spice carried away from the east. Apart from these precious items, the Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to arrive, also brought along with them some new vegetables and food items such as potato, chili pepper, okra, tomato, cauliflower, cabbage, bread, cheese, jelly and biscuits (Habib 2014:54–60, Sen 1997). But notably, those new vegetables and food items were not so popular until the British became the administrators of Bengal and promoted those things for mass consumption (Ray 2009).

Collin Taylor Sen in an article entitled 'The Portuguese Influence on Bengali Cuisine' provides a table where she mentioned the names of different fruits and vegetables brought by the Portuguese and usages of these items in Bengali daily life.

Apart from these vegetables many other food items also came with the Europeans. In 1660, the famous French traveler Francois Bernier, describing his visit to Bengal, mentioned that in Bengal the

supply of inexpensive biscuits to the crews of European ships was very common (Achaya 1991:193). This indicates that the small-scale production of biscuits had already started in Bengal during the 17th century. The industrial production of biscuits was a later phenomenon and initially the Europeans imported these from outside the colony. Even in the first half of the 19th century, the Calcutta Gazette, run by W.S. Setton-Karr, started to publish advertisements regarding the sale of these food items for the Europeans.

A typical meal starts with **shukto**, a bitter dish intended to simulate the appetite. Shukto is a mixture of diced vegetables, such as white radish, potatoes, beans, and bitter gourd or karela, a vegetable also used in Chinese cuisine (though apparently indigenous to India). The vegetables are lightly sautéed in ginger, mustard seed, and cumin, and then cooked with milk and water. Potatoes are almost always a component of shukto. Shukto is followed by rice and dal (spiced lentil soup), accompanied by one or more fried, boiled, and sautéed vegetable dishes. Cut and sautéed tomatoes are often added as a flavoring to dal. Poshto is a mixture of potatoes and other vegetables cooked in a paste made of white poppy seeds. Chheshki consists of julienned root vegetables, usually potatoes, and onions stirfried in a little oil with chili, mustard seed, and cumin seed. In a non vegetarian household, fish and meat would now be served, cooked in a light gravy and perhaps accompanied by one or two vegetable dishes in gravy, a rice pullao and bread. Typical seafood dishes are lau chingri, prawns cooked with marrow, said to be of Portuguese origin; macchher jhol, a pungent fish stew; and malai curry made with coconut milk. Plain boiled rice accompanies every course. If bread is served, it could be luchhi, unique to Bengal in that it is made of white flour, not wheat flour perhaps another legacy of the Portuguese bakers. The next-to-last course is a sweet and sour chutney made with tomatoes, apples, mangos, pineapples, or other fruits. This quintessentially Bengali dish may also reflect the influence of the Portuguese preserve and pickle makers. Chutney plays the role of sorbet in European cuisine: It is intended to clear the palate for the piece de resistance: the sweet or dessert course. Bengalis are famous for their love of sweets, which borders on an addiction. In Calcutta there is a sweet shop on almost every corner. In homes, sweets are served at the end of meals (not throughout a meal, as in Western India) and with afternoon tea. Tea is an important meal since dinner is traditionally eaten very late (10:00 p.m. or even later in some Calcutta households) Tea also includes salty and fried snacks, Western-style cake, delicate cucumber and tomato sandwiches, and, of course, tea, served English-style with milk and sugar (never with spices.) Sweets are also eaten as snacks throughout the day; in the old days, very rich landowners were said to have lived on a diet of sweets alone. The two basic ingredients of Bengali sweets are sugar and milk. The milk is thickened either by boiling it down to make a thick liquid called khoa, or by curdling it with lemon juice or yogurt to produce curds, called channa. There is some debate as to whether the latter was a traditional technique or a Portuguese contribution. Portuguese cheesemakers in Bengal used to produce curds by breaking milk with acidic materials. One of their products was a salted smoked cheese called Bandel Cheese, which is still made and sold in Calcutta. According to Achaya, 12 this routine may have lifted an Aryan taboo on deliberate milk curdling and given the traditional Bengali sweet-maker a new raw material.



Image No 96 : “Shukto” and “Lau-chingri” are Very Common Dishes Having Portuguese Influenced



Image No 97 : “Shukto” and “Lau-chingri” are Very Common Dishes Having Portuguese Influenced

## CHAPTER 6 – FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN HUGLI

Our study area includes the areas under Uttarpara, Serampur, Rishra, Baidyabati, Sheorafuli, Chandannagar, Chuchura, Hugli, Konnagar, Lalgola, Balagarh, Mogra which all have their individual lists of local festivals and fairs.

We have created a monthly cycle of festivals and rituals which are very predominant in this district specially in the banks of Bhagirathi-Hugli. They are :

- a) **Baisakh - Jhara Narayan, Annapurna, Shitala**
- b) **Jaisthya- Jamai Sasthi, Aranya Sasthi,**
- c) **Ashar – Rathajatra, Ambubachi**
- d) **Shravana-Manasha, Janmasthami, Srabani Mela**
- e) **Bhadra – Arandhan, Biswakarma, Dhaner Lakshmi, Chapra Shasti**
- f) **Ashwin- Durga Puja, Kojagori Lakshmi**
- g) **Kartick – Kali, Dipanwita Lakshmi, Itu, Raas, Jagadhatri**
- h) **Agrahayan-Nabanno, Itu**
- i) **Poush – Poush Parban, Auni Bauni, Notun Dhaner Lakshmi, Borodin**
- j) **Magh-Saraswati Puja, Sheetal Shasti**
- k) **Falgun-Dol**
- l) **Chaitra – Gajan, Ashok Sasthi, Neel Sasthi, Shitala, Olaichandi**

**Some of the major festivals of Hugli District in our study area :**

### 6.1 Jagadhatri Puja :

Perhaps, one of the most gorgeous festival of Bengal after Durga Puja is Jagadhatri Puja of Hugli (Chandannagar) Jagatdhatri or Jagaddhatri. The beauty of the festival in Chandannagar is mainly due to the collaborative conception between the French and Bengalis. Remarkable feature remaining its procession, second largest in the world after Rio de Janeiro's, with its magnificent lightings

Jagaddhatri (Bearer of the World) is an aspect of the Hindu goddess Parvati, who is particularly worshipped in the Indian states of West Bengal and Odisha. Her worship and rituals are directly derived from Tantra where she is a symbol of sattva beside Durga and Kali, respectably symbolized with Rajas and Tamas. According to the puran Jagadhatri is the incarnation of Siddhidhatri. She is also said to be the combine form of Sri Tripura Sundari and Maa Durga. In Bengal, her puja is celebrated as comeback of devi especially in Chandannagar (Hugli) and Krishnanagar.

The oldest temple of Jagadhatri is in Somra (Balagr, Hugli). It's known as Mahavidya temple. Besides, in every block and municipalities of Hugli there are Jagatdhatri Pujas which were more than 100 years of age. Here, we have tried to document some of the major Jagatdhatri Puja of Hugli District.

**a. Oldest Baroyari** (12 families started this puja) puja of Bengal- In the late 1700, a group of young men were refused entry to Durga Puja underway at a local zamindar's grand house. Angry at this

refusal they decided to carry out their own puja. Thus, the first Puja committee was formed with twelve families/friends (Baro means 12 and yaari means friends) At this point the deity worshipped as Bindabashini, a form of Goddess synonymous to Jagatdhatri. The puja continued for 7 days and became very popular. Eventually, this occasion gained popularity across West Bengal.



Image No 98 : Oldest Barowari (community)



Image No 99 : Oldest Barowari (community)



Image No 100 : Bindabasini Jagatdhatri Puja of Guptipara

b. **The oldest Puja of Chandannagar** : During the reign of Raja Krishnachandra Roy of Nadia, the popularity of Jagadhatri Puja increased in Bengal. Following the Krishnanagar Rajbari Jagadhatri Puja, Dewan Indranarayan Chowdhury (French Government) started this event and rituals of Jagadhatri Puja at Laksmiganj near Chawalputty, in Chandannagar. More than 300 pujas take place in Chandannagar alone.



Image No 101 : Oldest Puja of Chandannagar



c. **Adi Haldarpara Puja** : Another very gorgeous old puja is celebrated at Adi Haldarpara. It is almost contemporary to Chaulpatty Puja.



Image No 102 : Adi Haldarpara Puja

d. **Lakshmiganj Choumatha Puja** : It is said that, in the year 1768 , there were a split between Lakshmiganj Chaulpatty traders with Yellow Cloth merchants of the neighbourhood area. So, they started a separate puja under Sasadhar Bannerjee near Lakshmiganj Choumatha.



Image No 103 : Lakshmiganj Choumatha Puja

e. Khalisani Sarbojonin in the Northern Chandannagar



Image No 104 : Khalisani Sarbojonin in the Northern Chandannagar

f. Mankundu Sarbojonin in the southern Chandannagar



Image No 105 : Mankundu Sarbojonin in the Southern Chandannagar

g. Gondalpara Sarbojonin in the Southern Chandannagar

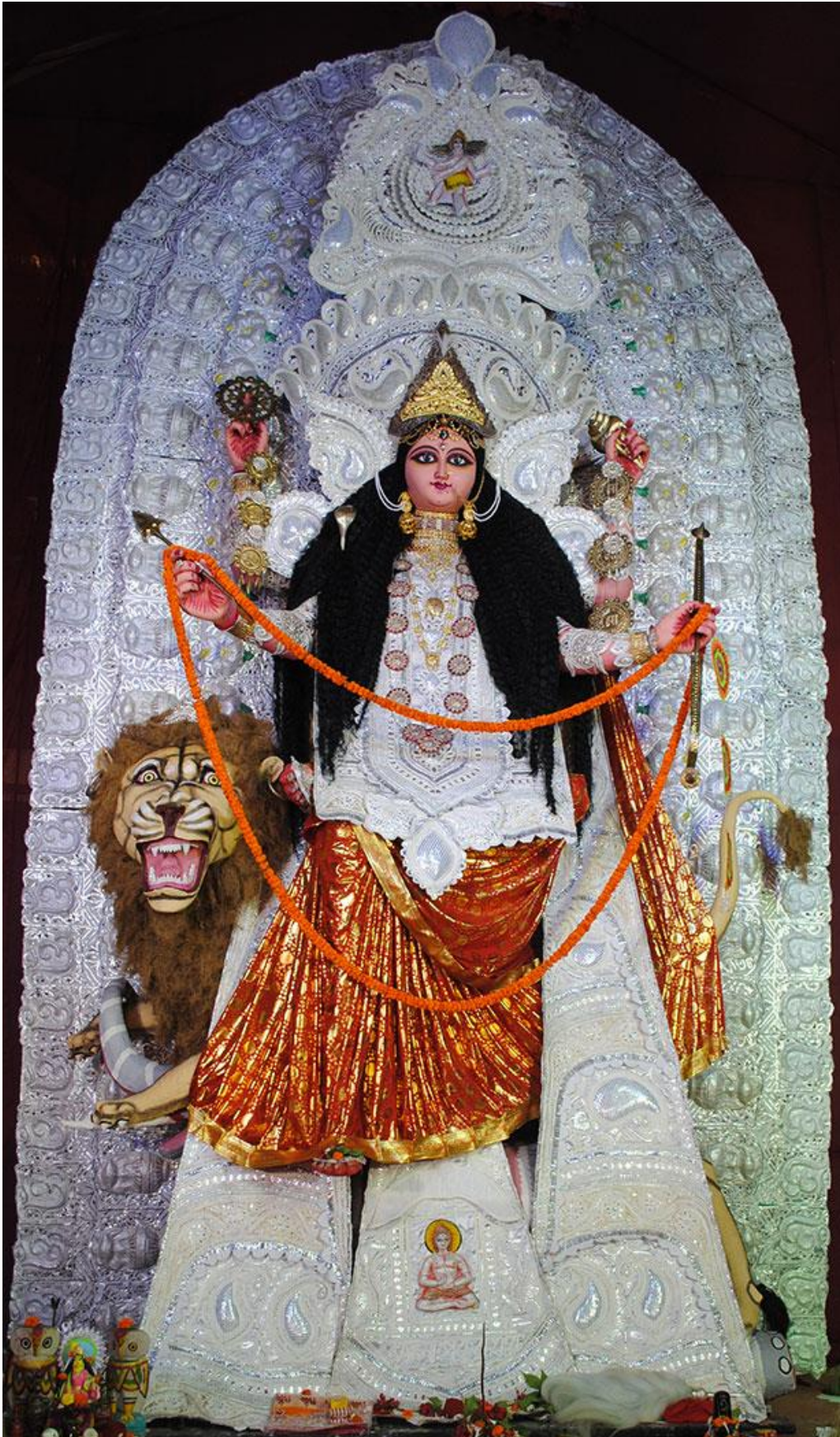


Image No 106 : Gondalpara Sarbojonin in the Southern Chandannagar

#### h. Sridhar Das : Chandannagar’s master Illuminator

It was Sridhar Das who made Chandannagar’s Jagadhatri Puja world-famous, got numerous awards for his outstanding lighting for various Pujas, and also representing India on a global platform. What makes his achievements even more remarkable was that his many wonders were made possible with zero use of advanced electrical mechanisms. As a student, Das received a budget of Rs 10 from the headmaster of the Narua Siksha Niketan to pull off a Saraswati Puja celebration, in competition with other schools, in 1955. Hoping to win laurels for his school urged Das, then in Class Seven, to do his best. His vision saw the face of Goddess Saraswati come alive with the use of small, coloured lights. As interviewed, Das, slipping back into the past remembers his first experience with setting up running lights, in 1965.



Image No 107 : Fine Work of Sridhar Das

“Using a flat wooden board, running lights were first created for Narua’s Jagadhatri Puja. I single-handedly created a couple of 10 feet high arches at the entrance,” he says, adding with a laugh, “But the Puja Committee had them removed because people thought they weren’t bright enough!”

The next year, when he designed the lights for the Vidyalyanka Jagadhatri Puja, however, was a different story. People queued up in huge numbers at the pandal, drawn by the stunning light displays Das had engineered. It proved to be a career milestone, as it helped Das now had the confidence, he needed to truly pursue his creative ambitions.

By 1969, he was experimenting with running naked lights through the middle of a pond for another Jagadhatri Puja celebration — while ensuring the water wasn’t electrified.

Years later, you can almost see the glow of the illuminated pond reflected on Das’ face, as he speaks of his feat. “People from not only Chandannagar but also all the neighbouring areas started visiting. The electric company actually sent officers to verify if the pond indeed had been lit up!” Das says.

“In 1985, Dadu represented India at Russia’s ‘India Festival’. The organisers were amused to realise that all of his running lights were done on a wooden roller. They requested a roller to display in their museum,” Samragngi Roy says. “Then festivals in Ireland, London happened. Dadu also created ‘Bula Di’ — an AIDS awareness mascot made with lights, in Los Angeles.” It wasn’t just about his individual success. Sridhar Das was a pioneer in the community of light artists, and many other bright talents would emerge from the same field.

“As I started getting a lot of assignments, those generated employment opportunities. I have trained several artists who are working independently now. I would manage 200 workers each year and send each batch for international tours annually,” Das says.

The current big names in the field — Babu Pal, Sukumar Biswas, Dipendu Biswas, Pintu Das — were once employed and trained by Das. And as is the natural order of things, slowly, the new generation has replaced the old. Babu Pal says his success would not have been possible without Sridhar Das' guidance and training. His first assignment was under Sridhar Das. Pal trained with the master for over a year before deciding to strike off on his own. "I feel proud to say I won the first prize for Best Lighting in the Jagadhatri Puja that very year," says Pal.

Pal now gets the contracts for the biggest Durga Pujas — be it Sreebhumi or Suruchi, has lit up Amitabh Bachchan's house for various festive occasions, and also worked on the wedding's lights for the Ambani family and also the Priyanka Chopra-Nick Jonas nuptials.

Sridhar Das' era saw artists work with 6.2 lights, whereas Pal introduced LED lights in the field.



Image No 108 : Light Decorations of Chandannagar

## 6.2 Kartick Puja of Bansberia :

Kartik has, since time immemorial, been perceived as a symbol of unity, serving as a bridge connecting Shaivism, Buddhism and Dravidian theology. According to Rupchand Pal, a former parliamentarian and an erudite resident, offered two different strands of thought to explain Bansberia's veneration of Kartik.

Bansberia is believed to be one of the seven villages that constituted Saptagram, the flourishing port-town in early medieval Bengal. One constituency that patronised Saptagram is thought to be of

sailors from Tamil Nadu who were traditional worshippers of Kartik. Another contention is that the tradition in Bansberia, which coincides with the onset of the Raas festival, may have begun under the influence of the festivities in Katwa in neighbouring Burdwan.

Several kinds of Kartik are worshipped here,” Pal pointed out patiently. There is, according to one quip, “General Kartik” — this idol has two sentries on either side. “We also have the Babu Kartik, representing the Bengali landed elite,” Pal added. Apparently, some of the idols portray aesthetic elements that are integral to Kannada sculpture, highlighting another underexplored connection with the land south of the Vindhyas. Recently, Bansberia had surprised even the veteran watcher Pal with a Kartik who sported denims and held a gun.



Image No 109 : Kartick Puja of Bansberia

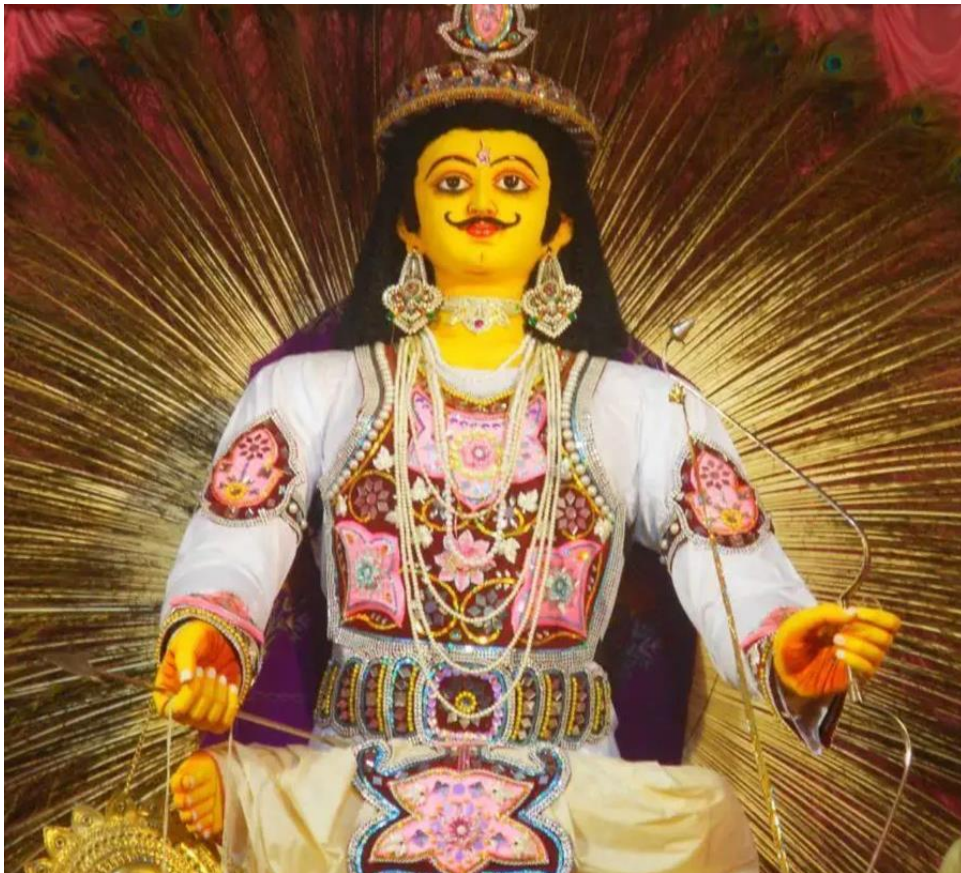


Image No 110 : Raja Kartick of Shahaganj, Bansberia



Image No 111 : Six-headed Kartikeya. Kartikeya is Worshipped in Tantrik Paddhati





Image No 112 : Sepoy Kartick, Bansberia, Hugli

There are several types of idols found in Bansberia, particularly Sahaguange. Huge pandals are prepared where Kartick and other Gods and Goddesses are also worshipped. It is a huge colourful event of the entire district.

**Kartick Puja of Chuchura :** In Chuchura of Hugli district , Kartick Puja was started by SilFamily whose connection is to be found from the traders family of Ramgarh , Ayodha , Uttar Pradesh . During the

time of Adisur, Sreshthi Sanak Adhya came from Ramgarh, Ayodhya with 16 traders' family. Along with them came 30 more traders' family and settled down in different parts of Begal from Bikrampur to Bardhaman. They are popularly known as Subarna Banik families of Bengal. Among them was the Shil family who got settled in Panchra, Bardhaman with their family deity Shridhar Jiu. From this family, Yadab Shil came to Saptagram for trading. They got involved with Sultani traders and received the title "Mallick". The first "Tankshal" that is "Mint" was established in Saptagram, by Sultan rule by 1335AD. The Bardhaman branch of Sil family settled down in Shahaganj of Bandel till 1757. Gradually, the time passed by and Saraswati River started drying up. At that time Maratha invasion was prominent and. The business centre of Saptagram lost its glory. With the introduction of Portuguese, the Hugli River became more prominent trading route. As the Maratha invasion started in 1740's, this family shifted its base to more protected Dutch colony of Kanaksali, Chinsurah, 1758. This family started "Saraf business" (Banking System). At about 1763, the present day Boro Shil family established their mansion. Slowly they spread their business to Murshidabad, Bardhaman, Kalna, Katwa, Khirpai etc. From 1803, Kartick Puja was started by Jagamohon Sil in Chuchura.

### 6.3 Rathayatra of Hugli :

Two of the largest Rathayatra festival of Bengal takes place in Hugli District.

#### i. Mahesh, Serampur :

**History :** It was the fourteenth century. Drubananda Brahmachari, a great Bengali sage went to Puri for pilgrimage. He had a desire to offer Lord Jagannath 'Bhoga' with his own hand. But the Temple authority prevented him do so. Broken-hearted Drubananda decided to fast until death. On the third day, he heard the Lord's voice in his dream, "Drubananda, go back to Bengal. At the bank of Bhagirathi, you will find a place called Mahesh. There I shall send you a huge Daru-Brahma (Neem trunk). Make Balarama, Subhadra and my Idol with this trunk. I am eager to have 'Bhoga' in your hand." So Drubanada returned to Mahesh and started his Sadhana. Then in a scary rainy night, that Daru-Brahma appeared at Mahesh. He jumped into the water and received it. Then he made the Idols of the Holy Trinity and established a Temple.

After taking sanyas, Sri Chaitanya left for Puri. In the way, he reached at Mahesh. After visiting Drubananda's Temple, he lost his sense, and absorbed in deep Samādhi. Sri Chaitanya christened Mahesh as 'Naba Nilachal' meaning the 'new Puri'. Later old Drubananda requested him to take charge of the temple. On his request he made Kamalakar Piplai, the fifth of his twelve Gopalas, the sebit of the temple. After few days Dhrubananda died.

Kamalakar Piplai was, as it is mentioned earlier, fifth of the twelve Gopalas of Sri Chaitanya. He was the son of the Zamindar of Khalijuli in Sunderbans. He came to Navadwip to study Logic. Later he became a favorite of Mahaprabhu and joined his ministry. He was the first of the 64 Mohantas. After taking the charge of Mahesh Temple, he remained there and it is he who started the famous chariot festival, more than 600 years ago. His heirs still live in Mahesh and some in Kolkata as the Sebit or 'Adhikary' of the Temple.

**Present Scenario :** But nor the Ratha neither the Temple of Kamalakar has existed. The modern Temple was made by Nayanchand Mallik of Pathuriaghata, Kolkata in 1755. It cost Rs. 20,000.



Image No 113 : Mahesh Rathayatra, Serampur

Nothing about the first Ratha is known. Once a devotee of Baidyabati donated a ratha to the Temple. In 1797, Sri Ramakrishna's famous disciple Balarama Basu's grandfather Krishnaram Basu donated another Ratha. His son Guruprasad Basu renewed the Ratha in 1835. But after some years the Ratha was burnt. Then Kalachand Basu made another in 1852. But one day a person committed suicide inside the Ratha. Taking this as a sign of evil, Biswambhar Basu made a different Ratha in 1857, but it also got burnt. Then Dewan Krishnachandra Basu ordered an Iron-Chariot from Martin Burn This Ratha is still inexistent.

The present ratha or the chariot was constructed under the patronage of Krishnaram Basu by the Martin Burn Company in 1885. The cost of the construction was two million rupees. The ratha is a Nabaratna temple having nine shikharas. The ratha has a steel framework with wooden scaffolding. It is fitted with twelve iron wheels each measuring twelve inches in circumference. The ratha is four storied, measuring 50 feet in height and 125 tonnes in weight. Two copper horses are attached to the front.

**Snanyatra** : The snanyatra is held on the full moon day preceding the rathayatra. On the day of snanyatra, the idols of Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra are bathed in generous quantities of milk and Ganges water. It is believed that the idols suffer from fever due to the heavy bath.[8] So three physicians, one each from Arambag, Goghat and Ghatal are summoned to treat the deities. They offer a liquid mixture as the medicine, which are then administered on the idols. Gradually their fever lapses and they regain normal health.

Unlike the idols in Puri's Jagannath temple which are changed every twelve years, the same idols prepared by the founder Kamalakar Pipilai is used till date. However, two days after the snanyatra and just two weeks before the rathayatra, the angaraga ceremony is held. This is a three-day ceremony where the idols are repainted using herbal pigments behind closed doors. The

artist covers his face and hairs while painting the idols and has only one vegetable meal a day for three days. He doesn't charge any money for the services.

A day before the rathayatra, Jagannath is sworn in as the king. On the day of the rathayatra, the Jagannath idol placed on the highest storey of the ratha. The idols of Balaram and Subhadra are also placed in the ratha. A neelkantha bird is brought and made to sit at the topmost shikhara of the chariot. When the bird flies away the procession starts.



Image No 114 : Mahesh, Ultorathyatra

Not only this festival is the oldest but also the biggest Rathayatra in Bengal. Nearly 2-3 lakh people come to see the month-long fair. Lord goes to Gundicha Temple and remains there till Punarjatra, or Ultorath, as it is popularly known in Bengal.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, his wife Sarada Devi, dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh and others came to visit the famous fair of the lord.



Image No 115 : Mahesh Snanyatra, Different Rituals



Image No 116 : Mahesh Snanyatra, Different Rituals

**Guptipara, Rathayatra** : The Guptipara Rathayatra is being celebrated in Guptipara in Hugli District of West Bengal since the 1730s. The chariot is a nabaratna-style wooden temple, where the presiding deity in the chariot is that of Radharaman Jiu. The Guptipara Rathayatra is second only to the Puri Rathayatra in terms of the distance covered. One of the unique events of Guptipara Rathayatra is the *Bhandara loot*, which is held a day before the purnayatra or the ulto rath. A month-long fair is held in Guptipara on the occasion of the festival. Every year thousands of devotees take part in the festival.



Image No 117 : Rathayatra Brindaban jiu Temple

The year when the rathayatra started is not clear. According to some sources, the rathayatra is more than 400 years old. According to other sources, the rathayatra started somewhere between 1735 and 1740. According to another source Swami Madhusudananda of Shree Shree Vrindavan Chandra Jiu Math started the rathayatra in the year 1740. In 1858, one lakh devotees participated in the bhandara loot, according to Swami Govindananda Puri of Shree Shree Vrindavan Chandra Jiu Math. In 1873, Swami Prithananda, the dandiswami of Shree Shree Vrindavana Chandra Jiu was run over during the rathayatra in an accident. Following that incident, the number of shikharas of the ratha was reduced from thirteen to nine.

The present ratha or the chariot is a wooden Nabaratna temple having nine shikharas. The framework of the ratha is made of Shorea robusta hardwood. The ratha has a square base measuring 34 feet by 34 feet. It is four storied, having a height of 36 feet. The ratha is fitted with 16 wheels made from Vachellia nilotica hardwood. It has four ropes in the front, each 300 feet long which are used for pulling the ratha forward. There is one more rope at the back which acts as a brake. One of the front ropes is reserved for women.

The present ratha is the same chariot that was being used in the first year of the rathayatra. It is nearly 280 years old. During the entire year the ratha is kept inside a giant metallic cage. Weeks before the festival it is brought out and prepared for the festival.



**Image No 118 : The Procession Starts From Guptipara Shree Shree Vrindavan Chandra Jiu Math and Proceeds Towards Gundicha House in Gosainganj Barabazar**



Image No 119 : The Procession Starts From Guptipara Shree Shree Vrindavan Chandra Jiu Math and Proceeds Towards Gundicha House in Gosainganj Barabazar

**Bhandara Loot :** The Bhandara loot event is held on the day before the PurnyaSnanYatra or the Ulto rath. According to Binay Ghosh, this event is a folk event and has nothing to do with the scriptures. On that day the worship of the deity is held behind closed doors at mmashir bari or Jagannath's aunt's place. After the worship, huge quantities of mprasada are offered to the deity. The mprasada consists of khichuri made of Gobindobhog rice, mlabra a mixed vegetable dish, a paneer dish, brinjal and pumpkin fries, payesh, malpoa, khir, chhana, other sweets and fruits. The prasada is kept in more than 400 malsas or earthen bowls in an adjacent store room. Each mmalsa contains nearly five kilograms of mprasada. The devotees begin to gather outside the store room from mid day. According to Binay Ghosh, the majority of the devotees in these events are the local Gops, some of whom rehearse for the event from the morning. The priest opens all the three doors of the store room at 5 pm and the devotees rush inside the store to loot the prasada. Many of the locals do not cook at home that night and even on the following day.



Image No 120 : Bhandara Loot, Guptipara

**Rathayatra, Telinipara, Bhadreswar - Bhadreswar**, a municipal town of Hooghly district of West Bengal can be reached both by road and rail. It is roughly forty minutes from Howrah by train in the Howrah-Bandel section of Eastern Railway. This industrial town finds mention in Bipradas' *Manasamangal*. During the medieval times this area was a renowned seat of Sanskrit learning.

The place has several temples of which Annapurna Mandir of Telinipara built by Baidyanath Bandopadhyay in 1208 Bangabda (1801 A.D) deserves mention. A close look into the temple will reveal that it deviates from the traditional nabaratna style of Bengal's temple architecture. The present temple has undergone major renovation according to Sri Adwaitya Banerjee, family member and trustee of the temple. The presiding deity is Devi Annapurna made of astodhatu and Lord Mahadev of silver placed on a wooden throne. Apart from the traditional festivals, daily worship is performed here.



But the thing which is unique about the place is **Rathayatra** or **chariot festival** on the auspicious day of Akshay Tiritiya held in the Bengali month of Baisakh (April-May) every year. When we speak of Akshay Tiritiya, the first thing that comes to our mind is halkhata (opening of new book) in many business establishments including shops. Akshay Tiritiya is an annual spring festival of the Hindus. It falls during the Sukla Paksha. Akshay means prosperity, success and tiritiya denoting third. Hence, it is named as “third lunar day.” Rathayatra in Telinipara on the day of Akshay Tiritiya attracts a lot of devotees. Initially, it sounds strange; but on the chariot instead of Lord Jagannath are seated Devi Annapurna and Lord Mahadev. A special puja is held on that day in the morning. The chariot which is used now has nine pinnacles and made of brass; though I was told that previously it was

of silver. The rathayatra is special in the sense that after coming out from the temple in the morning the chariot stops at each and every household so that the people can offer their worship to the deities. Is is not interesting? Maa Annapurna wants to enquire about the well being of the



Image No 121 : Rathayatra of Maa Annapurna

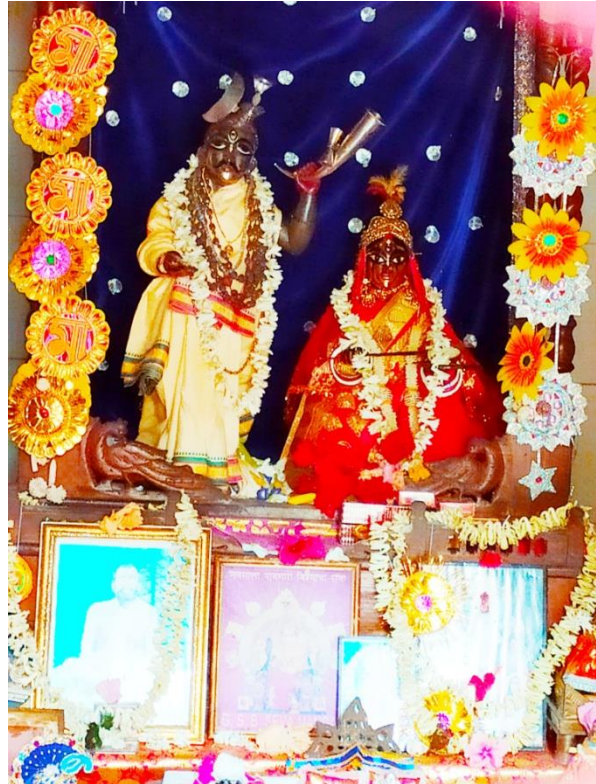


Image No 122 : Bhaatradreswar Rathay

people of Telinipara as if the mother is enquiring about the well being of her children. The celebration continues till the evening.

At the Ganges Ghat people are offered khicuri (a meal made of rice and pulses), labra (a vegetable preparation), payesh (a preparation made of milk with rice) and chutney. In the evening during the return journey, the chariot suddenly stops at Telinipara Barowaritala as if Devi Annapurna refuses to return to the temple where she will remain for the entire year. To convince her to return, the idols of Lakshmi-Narayan Jiu are brought in a palanquin from the main temple to the place where the chariot is waiting. It is late evening and the night is approaching. Following the age-old tradition, the male members of the Bandopadhyay family sing songs while carrying Lakshmi-Narayan Jiu. The devi is finally convinced to return. But during the

return journey, the palanquin goes first carrying Lakshmi-Narayan followed by the chariot. The goddess finally returns to its place of worship late in the evening where she is bathed with seven seas oil, water, perfume and dressed in new clothes and again placed in the wooden throne in the temple. Here the devotees can touch the goddess and perform rituals by offering sindur (vermillion). I have been informed that after Maa Annapurna returns to her temple, devotees are offered sweets, watermelon and sarbaat. Kirtan is also performed on this occasion.

**Uttarpara Rathayatra :** Just opposite to Dakhineswar Kali temple Rani Rashmoni , lies another very famous temple called Muktakeshi Temple. This temple was built more than 300 years ago by the family members of Uttarpara. But because of river shifting the original temple got submerged. Almost 120 years ago, Nivanani Devi got a divine order of establishing Jagannath Dev with Krishna form. Her husband, Anukul Chandra Majumdar re established Muktakeshi Idol and temple near Uttarpara Ganga Ghat. Along with that Krishna formed Jagganath Dev was established by them.

Every year, rathayatra of Jagganath Dev takes place in Uttarpara. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest rath of Hugli after Mahesh and Guptipara.



Image No 123 : Uttarpara Rathayatra

## 6.4 Vel Vel of Bandel :

This festival is truly a confluence of culture with a perfect fusion of Thaipusam, ChaitraNavratri & Sheetala Pujo. VelVel in Bandel near Kolkata is different with flavors from Tamil & Bengali community coming together forming a unique experience.

**Background :** Heading southwards from the Bandel station, a shallow road will be seen on the right hand side which directly lead you to the Madrasi community (Tamil) where about 150-175 Tamil families live. History says that once these Portuguese had settled in the bank of the Bay of Bengal, a place called São Tomé de Meliapor (near Madras). Gradually they started developing the region with their prosperity. Some of the Tamil people got attracted by their progressive development and convinced them to trade with them sailing across various placed namely Nagapattnam, Pipli (orissa). In course of the journey, due to some technical failure, they landed on Bandel while going to Chittagong for few days. With few certain reasons they started liking the place and in 1599 they established friary, rather Rest House to use it as the center to halt. In the later year, they built the Bandel Church which is the oldest Roman Catholic Church in West Bengal. Not only Church they planned to developed some other things also which may not be possible without help of Madrasi/Tamil people, this is the reason of todays Tamil community in the Bandel. They came here with these Portuguese sailors and settled here. The seed of the Tamil dominity started to blossom itself in trees and their branches faced an economic crisis. They had no wider ways to have a source of income since they were not well adopted with the Bengal culture, so they initially robbed people and earned their livelihood. Today also some of the Madras cultures are equipped by this culture but the majority of them shifted in the profession of selling south Indian food business.

Vel is a divine javelin (spear) associated with Murugan, a Hindu war God also known as Vel murugan. Spears used by ancient Tamils in warfare were also commonly referred to by this name. “Vetrivel! Veeravel!” (“Victorious Vel, Courageous Vel”) was a commonly used battle cry by ancient Tamil kings and soldiers. According to Hindu mythology, Goddess Parvati presented the Vel to her son Murugan as an embodiment of her shakti or power in order to vanquish the evil asura Soorapadman. According to the Skanda Purana (i.e. Kartick Purnima observed on November month every year), in the war between Murugan and Soorapadman, Murugan used the Vel to defeat all the evil forces of Soorapadman. When a complete defeat for Soorapadman was imminent, the asura transformed himself into a huge mango tree to evade detection by Murugan. But not fooled by Asura’s trick, Murugan hurled his Vel and split the mango tree into two halves, one becoming Seval (a rooster) and the other Mayil (a peacock). Henceforth, the peacock became his vahana or mount and vehicle and the rooster became the emblem on his battle flag. Vel, as a symbol of divinity, is an object of worship in the temples dedicated to Murugan. The annual Thaipusam festival celebrates the occasion when Murugan received the divine Vel from his mother. During this festival, some of the devotees pierce their skin, tongue or cheeks with vel skewers while they undertake a procession towards the Murugan temple. Adi-Vel is a major festival observed in Sri Lanka by Tamil Hindus in the month of July/August, known as Adi. The festival takes place cities such as Kathirakamam and Colombo.

**The Madrasi/Tamil community of Bandel (West Bengal) observed Vel festival** on April month, which is completely different timing. They observed this festival to worship **God Sitala**. God Shitala (Sheetala), also called Sitala, is a folk deity, worshiped by many faiths in regions of North India, West

Bengal, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. As an incarnation of Supreme Goddess Durga, she cures poxes, sores, ghouls, pustules and diseases. Transformation of Tamil festival with Bengali festival is very unique. Furthermore, Tamil people used to start their journey from Olai-Chandi Tola (Oladevi is the goddess of cholera and the wife of the Asura Maya and is worshipped by people in the region of Bengal) and finished their journey at Sitala Mandir. So, there are fine lines of similarity between the religious cultures of Bengali and Tamil community. This religious celebration does not only confine within their society but has a widespread impact among the non-Bengalis' also. The culture dictated that a person has to be authentic after bathing in a little pond and wearing new garments symbolizing shadows of the God Sitala in them, because they used to stop the messenger by calling "Maa" (i.e. Mother). Vel or Murugan can't be a female character here, which is the main evident that they (Tamil community of Bandel) observed this festival to worship God Sitala. In celebrating this puja, they are performed certain unusual dance steps. They used to descend from Olai-Chanditala towards Sitala Mandir, near about 3 KM.



Image No 124 : Rituals of Vel Vel



Image No 125 : Rituals of Vel Vel



Image No 126 : Rituals of Vel Vel



Image No 127 : Maa Oolaichandi, Bandel

## 6.5 Gajan Festival at Sandeswartala, Chuchura :

Chinsurah or Chuchura is the district headquarters of Hugli. It is situated about 37 kilometers north of Kolkata by the western side of the Ganges. This town was previously a Dutch settlement till 1825. The town had a number of heritage monuments.

Chinsurah is famous for Clock Tower (Gharir More) which was constructed in the memory of King Edward VII in the year 1914. Chinsurah had a number of temples dedicated to different gods and goddesses including Lord Shiva of which the temple of Shandeswartala near the banks of the Hooghly River deserves special mention. It is not only the most important but also the oldest among the temples of Chinsurah. It was said that the Shiva lingam was installed by one Digambar Halder in the sixteenth century. Later a temple was established by Siddheswar Roychowdhury. Much later the present beautiful temple was constructed. This temple attracts a large number of pilgrims throughout the year and especially from the last day of the Bengali month of Chaitra (March-April) every year to the last day of Baisakh (April-May) when pouring the holy water of river Ganges on the lingam is regarded as “an act of great religious merit.”

The **Gajan festival of Shandeswartala** is very famous and attracts a huge number of devotees. It is observed for the remaining ten days of Chaitra and, therefore, is the most important festival of that place. The current temple is very beautiful to look at and it is pretty high. A flight of stairs from the Ganges ghat will lead you to this temple. When I visited the same more than four years ago on a cold winter December afternoon, the temple was closed, for which I could not take the photograph of the lingam; but the place was very peaceful.

The last Dutch Governor of Chinsurah Daniel Anthony Overbeck (1818-1825) made a present of two large brass drums (dhak) to Lord Shandeswar, one of which is still beaten during the 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.



Image No 128 : Sandeswar Shiva Idol



Image No 129 : Dhunapora Ritual During Gajan

### Neelabati's Marriage, a part of Gajan Festival.

One day before Chaitra Sangkranti, Neel Puja takes place where actually marriage of Shiva and Durga occurs. According to Puranic tales, after the mortal life sacrifice of Sati, she took birth as a beautiful daughter of King Niladdhwaj. Her name was Nilabati. Her father got her married to Shiva. But on the marriage night, Neelabati sacrificed her life by taking the form of a flower. Her parents die out of sorrow. In Bengal, the marriage of Nilabati takes place in different parts. In Chuchura, Shandeswartala, the marriage happens with great aplomb. There is a Mahogany Tree in the temple Complex which is treated as Nilabati. The tree is adorned with Varanasi Saree and with all the ritual, marriage ceremony takes place with Shandeswar Deity. All the priests come as Bride or Bridegroom's guests. Next morning, Malpoa (a popular sweet is distributed as Prasad) to all the bhaktas. Many people assemble during the ritual.



Image No 130 : Mahogany Tree is Treated as Nilabati and Marriage Ceremony Occurs With Shandeswar Shiva.

**Charak;** On the tenth day of the Chaitra Sangkranti, innumerable pilgrims come to temple complex to put water on Shiva's head. Shiva idol is taken out for bathing at Ganges. The Charak Pata (slab or brick tiles) were also worshipped and washed properly. Number of rituals are performed surrounding the bathing ritual. In the afternoon and evening several acts of penance were performed by the Sanyasis.



Image No 131 : Bathing Ritual of Baneswar Shiva in River Bhagirathi Hugli



Image No 132 : Bathing Ritual of Baneswar Shiva in River Bhagirathi Hugli





Image No 133 : “Jhapan” the Sanyasis Perform Their Penance Acts



Image No 134 : “Jhapan” the Sanyasis Perform Their Penance Acts

“Jhapan” the Sanyasis perform their penance acts. 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.

## 6.6 Ganga Puja, Tribeni :

Tribeni is a locality in Bansberia Municipality of Hugli district. It is an old holy place for the Hindus, the sanctity of which has been recognized for many centuries and had been mentioned in Pavanaduta, a Sanskrit piece of the last quarter of the 12th century. Tribeni is believed to get its name from the divergence of three rivers- Kunti, Ganga and Saraswati. The probable earlier names were "Muktaveni", which distinguished it from Prayag, Allahabad, known as Yuktaveni; it also featured in James Rennell's map of Bengal in 1781 where it was spelled as "Terbonee".



Image No 135 : Maa Ganga Idol, Tribeni

The river Saraswati surfaces from the south of the famous Hindu cremate area, commonly known as 'Shashan ghat', westwards into Saptagram. The Yamuna, commonly pronounced as Jamuna in Bengali, had earlier branched off from the Ganges towards south east, but the confluence has silted up with course of time. This leaves the river Ganges, variedly known as Hooghly or Bhagirathi to descend to the sea. The Ghat in Tribeni which lies beside the confluence was built by a Hindu king of Orissa, Mukunda Dev and that left an influence of Odisha in Tribeni apparent from the temples near the ghat. The Muslims took it over during early phases of their conquest of Bengal, also referred to as Turkish conquest in the thirteenth century. The place retains its holiness for multiple centuries, even beyond that which was primarily due to the rivers it hosted, corroborated by records of the bathers at different timelines, who thronged during the festival of Makar Sankranti. Of the many odes written on



Image No 136 :Debi Ganga Idol Near Tribeni Gat, Tentatively Pal Yuga Idol

the Ganges in various Indian languages, one that was recited and entered as a ritual offering to the river by the Brahmins during the medieval period, was presumably written in Sanskrit by Gaji Jafar Khan during his stay in Tribeni.

Every day, Ganga Puja is done in the Ghat area. Many people take sacred bath in this area. In the Ghat area there is a temple where we find a very ancient diety. At one time Tribeni was a famous Sanskrit centre where many tolls and chatuspathis were found. It was also a popular Ayurvedic centre. Many scholars and Pundits used to stay here like Jagannath Tarkapancharatna.



Image No 137 : Jaggannath Dev with Radha Gobindo Idols Worshipped at Tribeni Ghat

## 6.7 Kali Puja

**a. Hangseswari, Bansberia:** Hangseswari temple (also spelled as Hanseswari temple) is a Hindu ratna temple located in the town of Bansberia at Hooghly District, West Bengal, India. The presiding deity of the temple is Hangseswari, a form of Maa adi parashakti jagatjanani dakshina Kali in Hindu mythology. In December 1799, Raja Nrisinhadeb Roy Mahasay laid the foundation stone of this temple. But after completion of the second storey in 1802, the founder died leaving this far-famed temple incomplete. His second wife Rani Sankari completed the rest of the work in 1814. The temple is known for its unique ratna architecture.

Rani Hanseswari was the mother of Raja Nrisingha Deb Roy; hence the deity is worshipped as Maa Hanseswari. The deity is worshipped as a form of Maa Kali in Hindu mythology. The temple complex has another temple — Ananta Basudeba temple — besides the main temple. Also, near is the Swanhabha Kali temple built by Raja Nrisinha Deb Roy Mahasay in 1788. The Hanseswari temple has a distinctive architecture different from the usual pattern present in this area, consisting 13 minars or Ratnas, each built as a blooming lotus bud. The inner structure of the building resembles human

anatomy. It was started by Raja Narsingha Deb Roy Mahasay and later completed by his widow wife Rani Sankari in 1814.

The Hangeswari temple has a distinctive architecture different from the usual pattern present in this area, consisting 13 minars or ratnas, each built as a blooming lotus bud. The inner structure of the building resembles human anatomy. It was started by Raja Narsinghadeb Roy and later completed by his wife Rani Shankari. According to a legend King Narsingha Dev Rai, while staying in Varanasi during the year 1792 to 1798 learnt deeply “Kundalini” and “Six cyclic centers (Six Chakras)” in the human system. Cancelling his plan to visit Britain he endeavored to build a temple at Bansberia based on “Kundalini and yogic concepts”. At that time rupees one lakh or more was spent in procuring marbles from a hilly area called Chunar situated near Benaras (Varanasi, U.P). Skilled artisans were also brought from this place to build up the temple. Unfortunately, the King left for his heavenly abode in the year 1802 in the midway of construction of the temple. His queen Shankari took the



Image No 138 : Hangeswari Kaali Maa

initiative and the temple was completed in the year 1814. The temple has both the Deities of Shiva and Shakti and hence the name is “Hansheswari”. On the top of thousand petals blue lotus, lies the eight petals bloodred lotus. Image of white “Shiva” is found to be found lying on six triangular marbles.

From the navel of “Mahadeva”, a lotus stem has come out carrying twelve petals blood-red lotus. On this, four-handed “Mother Shakti” is standing on her right leg resting the left leg on her right thigh. The upper left hand is carrying a sword to represent her power to curb the demons, the lower left one is carrying a severed head of a demon; the upper right palm is posed in a “Fearless-Mudra (Abhaya Mudra)” so as to depict her as the “Protector” of the world from the evils whereas the lower right hand is posed in a way as if to offer her blessings to all (“Bar-Mudra”). The Deity is blue in colour and made of wood derived from “Neem” tree. The room beneath the Central Minar has a white marbled “Shiv linga”.

**b. Sheoraphuli** fell under the Zamindari of Raja Manohar Roy, a Raja in Bengal during the reign of Akbar the Great of the Mughal era. Raja Raj Chandra Roy, also known as Jotey Raja (the king with dreadlocks), Zamindar of Sheoraphuli built the temple of Ram-Sita at Sripur (Serampore) in 1752. He resided in the Rajbari of Sheoraphuli built by him, which also served as his temporary residence apart from his abode in Patuli. His third son Raja Harischandra left Patuli for Sheoraphuli, which served as their permanent dwelling thereafter. After him the Zamindari was demarcated into the 'Barataraf' and the 'Chototaraf' which has been retained.

Later on, Zamindar Nirmal Chandra Ghosh (Barataraf) and his descendants of the Raj Parivar continue to reside in the Rajbari. The Saraphuli Raj Debuttar has been traditionally renowned for the policy of self-effacement.

## 6.8 Some of the Popular Vrata rituals of Hugli :

Since Hugli has been urbanized long time back therefore the rural folk cultures are not profoundly found in this area. However, in some families these Vrata Katha (rituals) are performed. Since many of them are related to rivers, we have mentioned few of them.

**a Itu Puja of Hugli :** The tale of Itu, an orally transmitted tale of the vratakatha genre, is told by senior female members of Bengali Hindu households to junior members during the Bengali months of Kartick and Agrahayan. It is the worship of Sun God in Agrahan month in Bengal. Itu Puja begins on the most recent day of Kartik month and is seen on all Sundays of the next month Agrahan. Sunday is viewed as propitious for satisfying Surya. The puja was initially implied or the conservation of seeds of the winter crops. The puja is performed by both hitched and unmarried ladies. Once embraced, a lady proceeds with its execution until her demise or until the point that she passes it on to her girl or little girl in law. A bowl loaded with earth and a pot loaded with water are kept alongside other family unit gods amid the puja.



Image No 139 : Itu Puja of Bhadrakali

All along Bhagirathi Hugli, hindu women are found to perform Itu puja.

**Oral Version :** *Oral Version There lived a lazy and poor Brahmin who had two daughters, one named Umno and the other Jhumno. One day in the month of Agrahayan he told his wife that he had a craving for pancakes. Since they did not have the necessary ingredients at home he went begging and soon collected enough flour and ghee. He gave these to his wife and ordered her to prepare the cakes. Being a mean old man, he strictly forbade her to give any of them to his daughters. After the*

daughters had gone to bed the Brahmin's wife started to make the pancakes. This wicked man did not even trust his wife! While she cooked, he hid himself behind the kitchen to make sure that his daughters did not get anything. The Brahmin was uneducated and did not even know how to count! So, he devised a way in which he could keep track of the cakes — every time he heard the splash of batter falling into the hot ghee, he tied a knot on a piece of string. As the Brahmani was frying the pancakes, Umno and Jhumno came in and asked her to give them some. The Brahmani told them that their father had strictly forbidden this, but as they kept insisting, she could not refuse. She gave a cake to each, hoping that their father would not miss a couple. As the Brahmin sat down for his meal, however, he matched the number of pieces with the number of knots. When he found out that his daughters had gotten two of the cakes, he was furious, and decided to punish them by abandoning them in the forest. The next morning, he woke his daughters early and went with them into the forest, as if he was taking them for a walk. They walked for a long time, until the two girls got tired and asked to rest a while. The girls were so exhausted that they fell fast asleep the moment they lay down. The Brahmin was waiting for just this opportunity. As his daughters slept, he poured some red alta [the red paint with which Bengali married women adorn their feet], scattered some sticks nearby, and quickly left. When the girls woke up their father was long gone. Umno, noticing the alta and sticks, started to cry, assuming that their father had been eaten by a tiger. But Jhumno was not fooled so easily. Realizing exactly what had gone on while they were asleep, she said, "Now don't be silly, and stop crying. Don't you see that those are not real blood and bones! It's only some alta and sticks that father scattered to fool us. He was cross yesterday because we ate his pancakes, so he abandoned us in this forest. Let's see if we can find our way home on our own." So, the two sisters set off, though they did not know which way to go. After walking through the woods for a while they came to a clearing near a spring. There they noticed that several pretty women were busy washing themselves and getting ready for some type of ritual worship. The girls were curious and, after greeting them, asked what they were doing. The women answered that they were going to worship Itu. The two sisters had never heard of such a thing before and asked them why they were doing so. The women answered that it brings good fortune to the worshipper, and invited the girls to join them. Umno and Jhumno readily agreed, and they all worshipped together. After the ritual was over the women disappeared. While the girls were still sitting by the spring, the king of the land and his minister passed that way on a hunt. Attracted by the beauty of the two girls, the king decided to marry Umno and the minister agreed to marry Jhumno. On the journey back to the palace Jhumno remembered that the date for another Itu ritual had arrived; she reminded her older sister about the morning fast necessary for the ritual, but Umno replied, "I don't need to perform any more rituals! I, m going to be the queen soon enough. Go ahead and do it on your own if you wish. Don't call me!" Jhumno went away disappointed, but kept the fast by herself. Soon they arrived at the palace and word got around that the king and his minister had brought their new brides with them. Everyone was very happy and set out to welcome them. The king's mother brought out her best gold platter and filled it up with spices and food in order to perform the baran ceremony in welcome of her daughter-in-law-to-be. The minister's mother did likewise with her best silverware. But what a surprise! As soon as the elder queen touched Umno's forehead with the golden platter, the gold turned into silver! At the same time, when the minister's mother touched Jhumno with her silver platter, the silver turned into gold. The king was very upset with this turn of events and ordered his minister to kill Umno at once. The minister's family was very happy with Jhumno, however, and she became the minister's wife. When she learnt of Umno's plight she implored her husband not to kill her sister. The minister could not refuse his new brides request and they decided to hide Umno in

their house. A few days passed this way, and another day of Itu arrived. Jhumno told her sister beforehand that she must not miss the ritual this time, as it was very clear that such bad things had happened to her because she had neglected it. On the morning of the fast Jhumno called her sister to accompany her to the bath, but Umno told her that she could not go as she had picked up some food from a child's platter and eaten it. So Jhumno kept the fast all alone. The next time, to make sure that Umno would not miss the ritual, Jhumno put her sister in a huge earthen pot the night before. When she went to get her sister in the morning, however, Umno told her that she had felt hungry during the night and had eaten a few grains of cereal that were lying in the pot. Thus, Umno could not worship Itu that time either. The next time Jhumno slept in the same bed with her and tied a lock of her hair to one of her sister's, so that she would be able to stop Umno from eating anything during the night. Finally, the two sisters were able to perform the ritual successfully. About this time the king began feeling remorseful for his hasty decision. One day he asked his minister if he could bring Umno back. The minister replied, "Where shall I find Umno now? You yourself ordered me to kill her some time ago!" The king did not listen to him and finally threatened to punish the minister if he did not restore Umno to him. So, the minister went away promising to do his best about the matter. The next day, he brought Umno back to the palace and the king married her with great pomp and splendor. In the meantime, news of his daughters had reached the Brahmin. Being lazy and illiterate, he had remained as poor as before. When he heard about his daughters, prosperity he decided to get help from them. He set out with his wife towards the royal palace. After a long journey they arrived at the capital, where they saw the huge, magnificent palace. The Brahmin went up to the guards and told them he was the father of their queen. But naturally the guards did not believe him. How could this ragged old Brahmin be the father of their beautiful queen Umno? They shooed him away. So, he devised a new plan, and went with his wife to the spring from which the royal maids fetched bath water. There they waited. Thus, when the maids came to get water for their queen, they found an old couple sitting next to the spring. When they asked the Brahmin who he was, he replied that he was the father of the queen and wished to meet her. The maids were quite skeptical, but agreed to convey his message to their mistress. To make sure that the maids wouldn't forget, the Brahmin wove a ring from some grass and dropped it into their receptacle. Later, as his two daughters were pouring out the water, the grass ring fell out on them. The sisters were quite alarmed, and asked the maids, "What trick are you playing on us?" The maids replied, "Oh yes, we forgot to mention. A ragged old couple is waiting for you by the spring. They claim to be your parents." As soon as the two sisters heard this they rushed to the spring and received their parents with great honor. They described how the grace of Itu had brought them such good fortune. They persuaded their father to observe the ritual fast, and as a result he became quite learned. At about this time the king was looking for a new court pundit. Hearing that his father-in-law was perfect for the job, he appointed him to the position and they all lived happily ever after with the blessings of Itu.

## **Itu Puja Mantra**

### **1. Flower durba set offering mantra:(spell 3 times)**

Sada kochu, kalo kochu lak lak kore  
 Sonar kouta rupar khil  
 Khil khute laglo chor  
 Amar baap vai hok lokhessor

**2. Offering Ganaga jal or fresh water mantra: (spell 3 times)**

*Sujni kalmi lak lak kore*  
*Rajar bata pokkhu mare*  
*Marlo pokhu sukhar bil*  
*Sonar kouta rupar khil*  
*Khil khute laglo chor*  
*Amar baap vai hok lokhessor*  
*Lokho lokho dilem bor*  
*Dhone dhanne dotte purte barutarr ghor*

**3. Offering Set of eight durba and eight rice grain (wet) mantra: (spell eight times)**

*Asto chal asto durba*  
*Kalash patra thue*  
*Sonre itur khottha*  
*Ak mon pran die*  
*Itu den bor*  
*Dhone dhanne*  
*dorte purte*  
*Baruttar ghor*

**b. Purni Pukur Vrata :** In the summer season (Baisakh) when the temperature rises and the water from the adjoining ponds dries out , then the women perform this vrata where they artificially create small ponds and put water by making hole in the earthen vessels. They all chant these lines –

"গঙ্গা গঙ্গা ইন্দ্র চন্দ্র বরুণ বাসুকি  
 তিন কুল ভরে দাও ধনে জনে সুখী।।"

**c. Aam Baruni :** Aam Baruni, the bathing festival held on the eve of the fourteenth lunar day of the dark fortnight of chaitra every year. People hailing from Bangladesh celebrates this day by offering a raw mango along with flowers to lord Shiva asking for his blessings and love. The raw mango has a unique tangy taste along with its benefits. Eating raw mango during summer months prevents dehydration as it replenishes sodium chloride reserves in the body. It is also rich in vitamins and helps cure diarrhoea, constipation etc Raw mango can be eaten just by sprinkling salt on it or made into pickles and chutney. Aam pora sherbet is another delicious drink which is famous across Bengal. Bangals also make Tok daal using raw mangoes in their daal which is refreshing and tasty at the same time.

**d. Mangal Chandi Vrata :** In the Tuesdays of Jaisthya season all the women assemble together and read out mangalchandi vrata katha. They keep fasting throughout the day and break it by swallowing banana leaf, paddy seeds, jab with banana. Flat rice and mangoes with milk are usually consumed by them. The stories from Mangal Kavyas and Chandimangal were recited.

**e. Vaduli Vrata :** In the end of Rainy Season ( Bhadra) the women folk performs Vaduli Vrata all along the river bank. It resembles Vadu festival of South Bengal.



**f. Karam Parab :** The Karam festival is a worship of Karam devta, the god of power, youth and youthfulness. Karam is held on the 11 of moon in Bhadra month. Groups of young villagers go to the jungle and collect wood, fruits and flowers. These are required during the Puja of Karam God. During this period people sing and dance in groups. The entire valley seems to be dancing with the drumbeath day of the phases. This is one of the rare examples of such a vital and vibrant youth festival in Jharkhand's tribal area.

In Baidabati area of Hugli, there is some oraoon community who performs this Karam Parab.



Image No 140 : Rituals Associated With Vrata Katha path. Alpana is Given by Womenfolk During the Vrata Katha



Image No 141 : Rituals Associated With Vrata Katha path. Alpana is Given by Womenfolk During the Vrata Katha



Image No 142 : Different Ways Celebrating Vrata – Tulsi and Other Plants are Worshipped



Image No 143 : Different Ways Celebrating Vrata – Tulsi and Other Plants are Worshipped

## 6.9 Ram Mandir of Hugli :

Lord Rama appeared in Bengal's religious scene with the advent of Bhakti movement in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, mainly under the leadership of Mahaprabhu Chaitanya who worshipped Krishna and Rama as the supreme manifestations of god's human avatar. Over the next five centuries, however, Chaitanya himself became far more popular among Bengali Hindus than Rama, while Krishna continues to be one of the most popular deities in the state.

The iconic 'Hare Krishna' chant Chaintya coined also includes 'Hare Ram'. However, while festivals related to Radha and Krishna transcended all sects among Bengali Hindus, and the state has innumerable temples dedicated to Radha-Krishna, temples dedicated to Rama are, indeed, difficult to find. Rama, as deity, has not been part of Bengal's socio-religious culture. In the district of Hugli, however we found very significant Ram Temples in at-least 5 major areas – a. Serampur, Uttarpara, Bhadrakali, Chuchura & Guptipara.

**a. Serampur / Shri Rampur :** Approximately about 250 years ago, on 1160 Bongabdo or 1750 Raja Raj Chandra established Ram Mandir at Srirampur or Serampore. It is said that may be the name Sri Rampur has emerged from this deity which is made up of asthadhatu.



**Image No 144 :** From the Time of Krittibas Ojha, Ramchandra Worshipping Got Popular in Bengal. Shri Ramchandra of Shri Rampur.

**b. Bhadrakali :** Almost in the contemporary period , in 1169 bongabdo , Raja RajChandra established another Ram Mandir at Bhadrakali. Here we find the standing image of Ram Chandra along with Sita, Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughna.



**Image No 145 :** Ramghat Near Uttarpara.

**c. Uttapara :** Near Ramghat , there is 300 year old Ram Temple where colourful idols of Ram –Sita & Laksman are found.

**d. Chuchura :** Near Akhon Bazaar of Chuchura , black coloured Ram Chandra is found. Sita, Laksman and Bharat are yellow coloured and Shatrughnya is of green colour. Choubey family looks after the temple and regular puja.

**e. Guptipara :** There is a unique idol of Green colour Ramchandra at Raghunandan Rai.



Image No 146 : About 200 Year Old Raghunandan Temple of Guptipara

The idol is very unique where Ramchandra is in seating posture accompanied by Radha & Krishna Plate



Image No 147 : Ramchandra of Brindaban Jiu Temple Complex

## 6.10 Gouranga Temple, Kashiswar Pith, Doltala Mandir, Doltala, Chatra - Serampur :

A 500 old Gouranga temple is located at Serampur. According to many this temple was created by Basudev Bhattacharya. But others opine that it was created by his son Chaitnya Parikar Kashiswar Pundit. In the plaque of the temple, it is mentioned that the establishment year is 1534(or 1680 – debated). In this temple along with Radha Krishna, Gouranga, Bishnupriya idols are also found which are very rare. It is said that Gouranga himself came to this temple from Nimaitirtha Ghat and became very angry by seeing his idol beside Krishna Radha. With his directions the old idol was immersed in River Ganga. Later on, grandson of Kashiswar Pundit again established his idol. During the festivals of Sri Krishna (like Rash Yatra, Dolyatra, Jhulan Yatra, etc), the mandir gets decorated with different colors and lights. Small fair is also set up in the adjacent area.



Image No 148 : A 500-Year-Old Deity Found in Shrirampur

## 6.11 Uddharan Datta Thakura

Uddharan Datta Thakura is one of the twelve Gopals. In order to assist Nityananda Prabhu's pastimes, he appeared in the town of Saptagram in the year 1481 AD. His parents were named Srikara and Bhadravati and they belonged to the gold merchant class. Any caste in which a Vaiṣṇava appears is holy, the earth itself is blessed by the appearance of a Vaiṣṇava, and his or her mother has achieved the perfection of motherhood. Vrindavan Das has written: Nityananda Prabhu remained a few days in Khardaha and then went on to Saptagram with



Image No 149 : Madhabitala of Adisaptagram

his troupe of associates. The Lord stayed at the home of the fortunate Uddharan Datta on the banks of the Trivenī. Completely surrendered to the feet of Nityananda Prabhu, Uddharan Datta worshiped Him without any false pretense. The entire caste of gold merchants was purified by the presence of Uddharan Datta in its midst, of this there can be no doubt.

In 1541, Uddharan Dutta left his material world and in his birthday every year there happens “Magh Utsab”. In the locality this house is popular as Thakurbari. Here Shri Shri Nityananda himself planted a Madhabilata tree. 6 handed Mahaprabhu, Nityananda and wooden Gadadhar idols are also worshipped. Along with them there is Ashtadhatu Uddharan Dutta Image.



Image No 150 : Idols of Uddharan Dutta Sripat of Adisaptagram Along River Saraswati

## 6.12 Kestopur Macher Mela, Debanandapur, Hugli :

The location of the main fish fair is in Krishnapur, Debanandapur of Adisaptagram. This fish fair is also called as Adisaptagram macher mela of krishnapur macher mela. Kestopur fish fair is one of the largest and oldest fish fairs in West Bengal.

In 2021 Adisaptagram fish fair turns 514th year. In this fair you can find various types of edible fishes. In this fair you can find Vhetki, Bhola, Magur, Koi, Kalbos, Maurala, Hilsa, Ar, Bagar, Shankar, Topse, Pabda, Shawl, Shoal, Boal, Ban, Aila, Rupchanda, Bamboo, Fasha, Kachanki, Kazri, Gurjali etc. types of fish. The techniques of cutting the fish are awesome. All these kinds of fish are allowed to be sold here by the government. The fair ground is the



Image No 151 : Chaitnya Mahaprabhu & Nityananda, Sri Raghunath Goswami

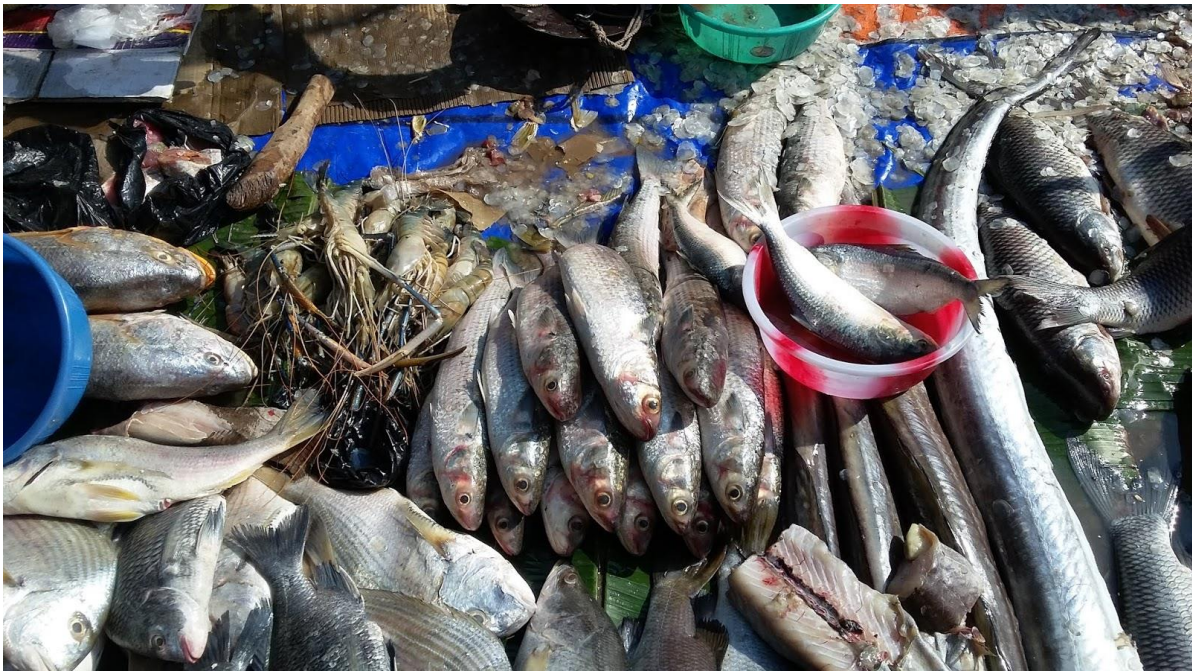
best picnic spot in adisaptagram. Adisaptagram fish fair is one of the oldest fish fairs in West Bengal.

**History :** Krishnapur is a small village situated in Adisaptagram, Hooghly. It is nearly 1.5 k.m. away from the Adisaptagram railway station. The village is famous for the house of Sri Raghunath Das Goswami, an associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Prabhu Nityananda. Every year on 1st of Bengali month *Magh* (typically 15/16 January) a big fair is held in here. The main attraction of this fair is different types of sweet water and saltwater fishes. Because the Sun starts to move towards the Northern hemisphere from 1st of *Magh* onwards the fair is called Uttarayana Mela. Uttarayana in Bengali means moving towards the north.



**Image No 152 : Chaitnya Mahaprabhu & Nityananda, Sri Raghunath Goswami**

But doesn't it sound odd that a Fish fair is held near a Vaishnava temple? Well, the story goes like this. Once some Vaishnavas came from Vrindavana to test the devotion of Raghunath Das Goswami. They asked him to feed them with Hilsa fish and Mango in winter. But Mangoes and Hilsas can only be found during the time of summer and monsoon. still with his immense devotion, Raghunath fed them with Hilsa from his pond and Mangoes from his garden. The day was 1st of *Magh* and to commemorate that every year this fish fair is held.



**Image No 153 : Maacher Mela or Fish Mela of Adi Saptagram**



Image No 154 : Maacher Mela or Fish Mela of Adi Saptagram



Image No 155 : Crabs Are Also Found in the Mela. The Mela is Also Called as Uttarayan Mela



Image No 156 : Crabs Are Also Found in the Mela. The Mela is Also Called as Uttarayan Mela





Image No 157 : Fish are Also Found in the Mela



Image No 158 : Displaying of Large Size Fish is a Tradition in the Locality

### 6.13 Saraswati Puja of Mogra :

Like Jagaddhatri puja of Chandannagar and Kartick Puja of Bansberia, Mogra celebrates Saraswati Puja with much aplomb. Huge pandals are created with exquisite Saraswati Images. Ornamentation is done through lighting the entire area. It is a picturesque affair and attracts many people from outside the districts also.



Image No 159 : Devi Saraswati Idol at Mogra Community Puja



Image No 160 : Huge Pandals with Decorations Mogra



Image No 161 : Beautifully illuminated Mogra during Saraswati Puja. We can Get the Flavour of Jagaddhatri Puja of Chandannagar



Image No 162 : Beautifully illuminated Mogra during Saraswati Puja. We can Get the Flavour of Jagaddhatri Puja of Chandannagar



Image No 163 : Illuminated Pandals & Light Show, Mogra



Image No 164 : Illuminated Pandals & Light Show, Mogra

### 6.14 Muharram At Hugli Imambara :

The 200-year-old Hooghly Imam Bara is one of the historical and largest *Imambara* of India. Located on the banks of the river Hugli at Hugli, just 40 km from Kolkata, it's also the largest *Imambada* of West Bengal.

In the days of Muharram, this *Imambara* presents a picture of religious tolerance. Thousands of people of different religions come here on the seventh day of Muharram. The mourning of Muharram in Hooghly *Imambara* is very different. Apart from Shias and Sunnis, a large number of people of other religions also participate in it.

The Hooghly *Imambara* was built by Haji Muhammad Mohsin, a liberal businessman from Bengal. His ancestors who were traders had migrated had from Murshidabad to Hooghly. Locals liked him for his generosity. During the famine in Bengal, he helped the hungry and needy in a big way. The buildings and institutions he constructed include Hooghly Madrasa, Hooghly Mohsin College and Imam Badabara Sadar Hospital. Muhammad Rizwan, the caretaker of Barhgali *Imambara* said that the condolence meeting on the occasion of Muharram at Hooghly *Imambara* is different from other places. Here the mourning procession is like that in Karbala, Iraq. The hours of mourning also match those of Karbala.



Image No 165 : Tazia at Imambara

On the seventh day of Muharram, about 50,000 devotees come here from far and wide. In other words, Muharram here is also different because people of different religions come here on the seventh day of Muharram and pray in their respective ways.



Image No 166 : Huge Congregation During Muharram



Image No 167 : Muharram at Hugli Imambara



Image No 168 : Muharram at Hugli Imambara

### 6.15 Christmas at Bandel :

The Basilica of Holy Rosary, commonly known as Bandel Church, is one of the most revered Roman Catholic churches of our country. It was established by a Portuguese Captain named Pedro Tavares in the year of 1599, right at the dawn of European settlement in Bengal. Bandel is a small town on the banks of Hooghly River, around 60 kilometers from state capital. It owes its name to a Bengali word 'Bondor' (meaning 'harbour') which eventually became 'Bandel'. Once the port city of the Portuguese merchants who had settled couple of kilometers away from Bandel, this thriving town of Bengal is still known for its rich past. This oldest Church in eastern India celebrates Christmas in a

big way. Each year, over a lakh visitor cutting across religious beliefs visit the Bandel Church during the Christmas season. It has larger-than-life statues of popular Christian saints like Mother Mary, Mother Teresa, Don Bosco, St Joseph, St Augustine, St Francis Xavier and others. The Bandel Church has recently restored and put back on display a historical 'mast', which was damaged during a storm in 2010. The mast was a votive offering to the Church from the captain of a Portuguese ship that was miraculously saved in a tempest in the Bay of Bengal in 1655. The Archaeological Survey of India has declared the mast a heritage item.



**Image No 169 : Christmas Decoration, Bandel Church**



**Image No 170 : Christmas Decoration, Bandel Church**





Image No 171 : Illuminated Bandel Church During Christmas



Image No 172 : Candles are Lighted During Christmas & The Ancient Mast of the Ship (Bandel) Kept Protected at the Church

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