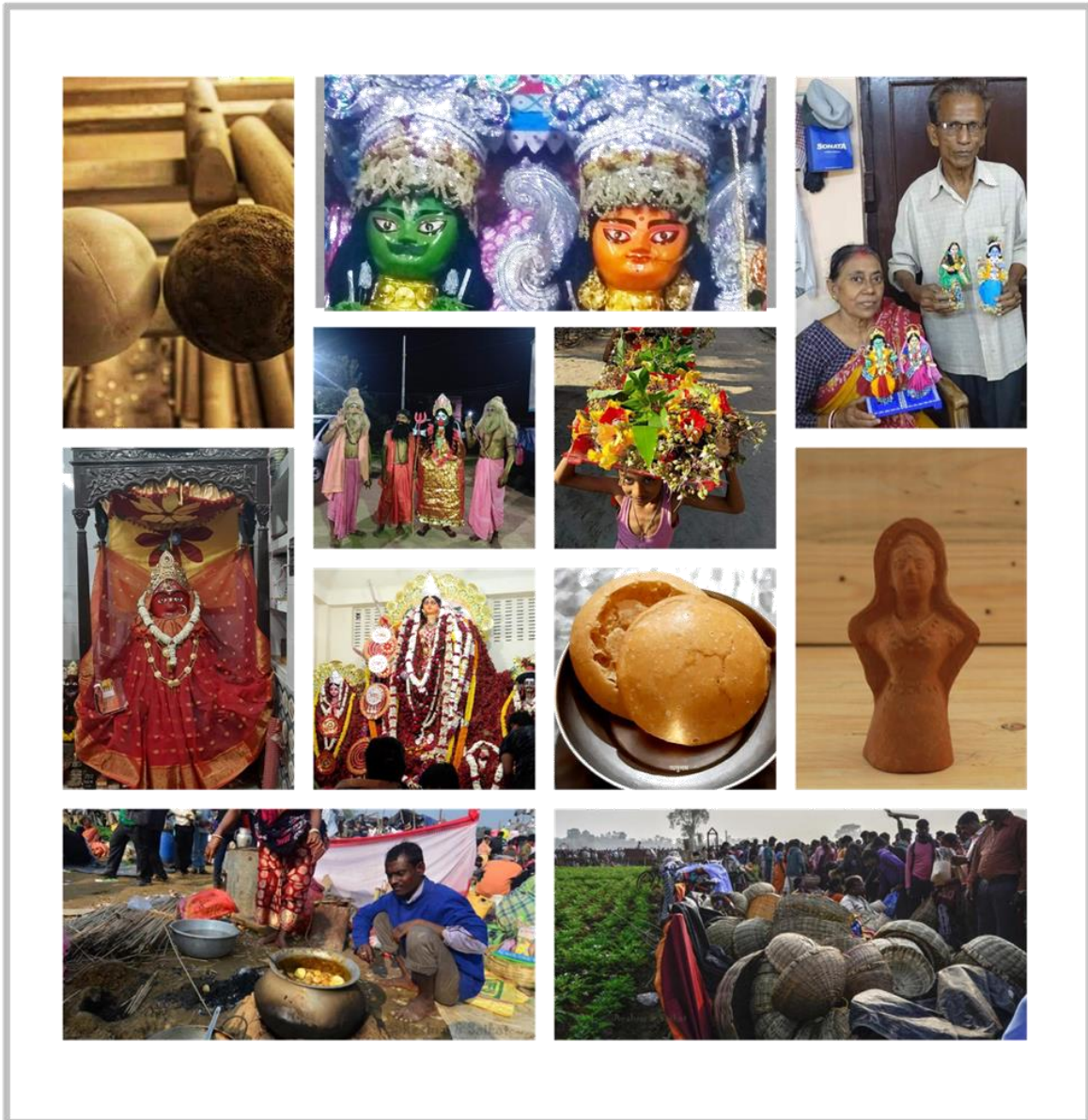




HAORA

GNAMAMI GANGE

DOCUMENTATION OF GANGA FROM GOMUKH TO GANGASAGAR



Report submitted by:

Intangible Cultural Heritage Documentation

GANGA CULTURAL DOCUMENTATION

Haora District

Intangible Cultural Heritage Documentation

December, 2021

Sponsored by :



National Mission for Clean Ganga

Authored By :



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1. Introduction

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, *shramdaan*, 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.

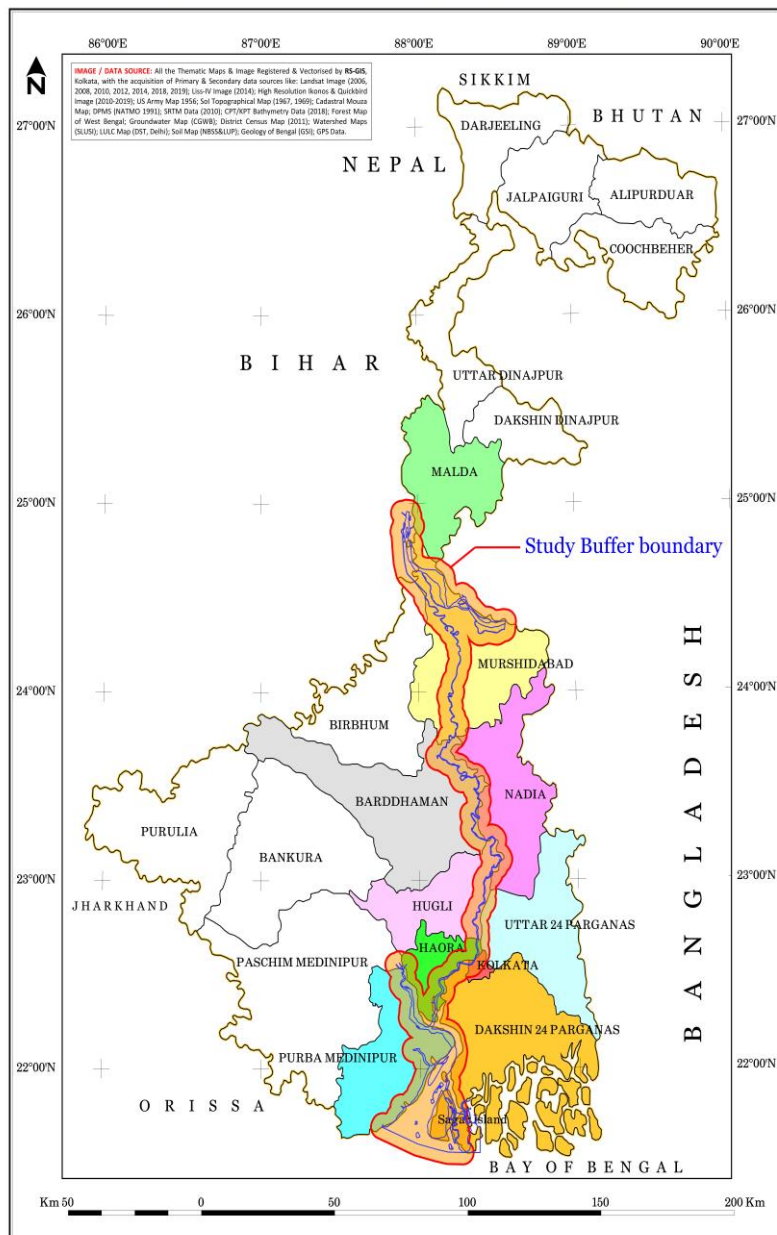
1.2 Ganga Cultural Documentation

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).

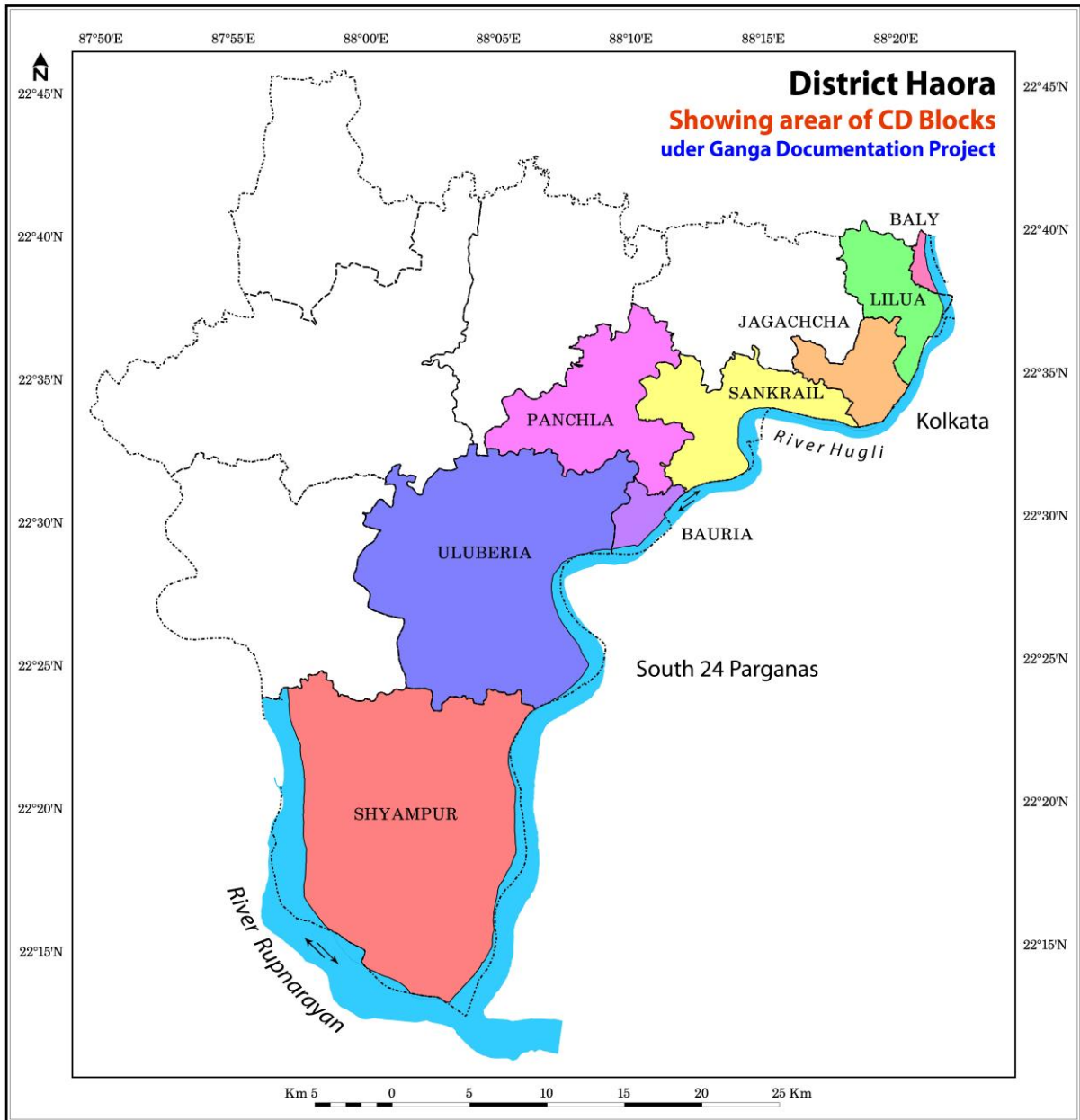
Sl.	Head Details		Quantitative Information		Remarks	
1.	State Name: West Bengal		-	-		
2.	Geographical Extension of Bhagirathi-Hugli		N	E		
			N	E		
3.	Areal coverage in 5km Buffer					
4.	Areal coverage in 10km Buffer					
5.	Total Number of Districts coverage		10			
6.	District wise Police Station & Ward coverage	District		Number of PS/ Wards	Length of Hugli River	
		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- Haora district stands out amongst the most important territories of West Bengal. Situated just on the opposite side of Kolkata, it is a part of the Presidency Division and bounded by Hooghly district on the North, on the east it is bounded by Kolkata along with North 24 Parganas & South 24 Parganas districts, on the south it has Purba Medinipur district and on the West it is bounded by Paschim Medinipur and some parts of Hugli district. Hugli river flows on the Eastern side of the district separating it from Kolkata. The city of Haora is saturated with history and culture while its heritage dates back to thousands of years in the form of great Bengali kingdom of Bhurshut. Haora has immense significance in the economy of West Bengal since a lot of manufacturing plants is situated here and hence it is known as the 'Sheffield of the East'.

WEST BENGAL
Showing the area of Study along Bhagirathi - Hugli River



Map No1: West Bengal Map showing the location of Hugli



Map No2: Haora District Map showing Study area

2. Haora Through Ages

2.1. The history of Haora or Haora, prior to the advent of European merchant adventurers, is practically unknown, and any attempt to trace it must necessarily lead along a wide and somewhat insecure track of conjecture. It may, however, be assumed that it was inhabited long before the Christian era, for adjoining it to the south lay Tamralipti (Tamluk), a famous sea-port of Eastern India, often mentioned in the Mahabharata in the old scriptures of the Jains and Buddhists, and in Ptolemy's Geography. It may also be inferred from the nature of the country, a low-lying fen land bounded by great waterways, that its earliest inhabitants belonged for the most part to fishing and boating tribes. Even now *Kaibarttas*, the great Bengali caste of fishermen and boatmen, form nearly a third of the total population of the district. At the dawn of history, it probably formed part of the territory of either the Suhmas or Tamraliptas, and eventually became attached to Tamralipti, which is mentioned as a separate kingdom up to the time of Yuan Ohwang (Hiuen Tsiang), until the close of the first half of the seventh century A.D. On the decline of Tamluk it probably passed under the rule of the more powerful Suhmas, or, as they were called later, the Radhas.

2.2. Towards the end of the 13th century the Muhammadans took possession of Satgaon, land in all probability extended their conquest southwards as far as the mouth of the Damodar. But no early Muhammadan remains have been yet found in the district, and the distance from their capital, Lakhnauti or Pandua, must have precluded their exercising any effective rule over this outlying part of their dominions. The real rule of the Muhammadans probably began in the time of Husain Shall {circa 1494-1520), who consolidated his power over Bengal and Bihar, and whose generals invaded Assam, Orissa and Chittagong. A generation later the district appears to have been overrun by the Oriyas, for their last Hindu king, Makundadeva Hari Chandan, was apparently in possession of the country as far north as Tribeni, where a flight of steps leading down to the Ganges is said to have been constructed under his orders. His hold over the country was soon lost, for in 1568 the

army of the Bengal Sultan, Sulaiman Kararai, drove him out, and finally conquered the whole country as far as the Chilka lake, purging the reign of this latter king a part of Haora district, with the adjoining mahdfs, was grouped into a new mrlldr called after him

Sulaimanabad.



Image No 1: Goddess Betai Chandi at Betor

2.3. On the defeat and death of his son Baud Kararani in 1576 A.D., Bengal formally became a part of Akbar's empire. In 1582 Todar Mai drew up his famous rent-roll, which so far

as the subah of Bengal was concerned merely accepted the state of things as it existed during Afghan rule from the reign of Sher Shah to that of Sulaiman Kararani. From this rentroll

the district appears to have been distributed between three sarkdrs, Satgaon, Sulaimanabad and Mandaran, and the following mahdk can still be traced in Satgaon U) Purah (the modern Boro, in which lies Haora town), (2) Balia, (3) Muzaffarpur, (4) Kharar; the modern Khalar) ; in Sulaimanabad, (5)

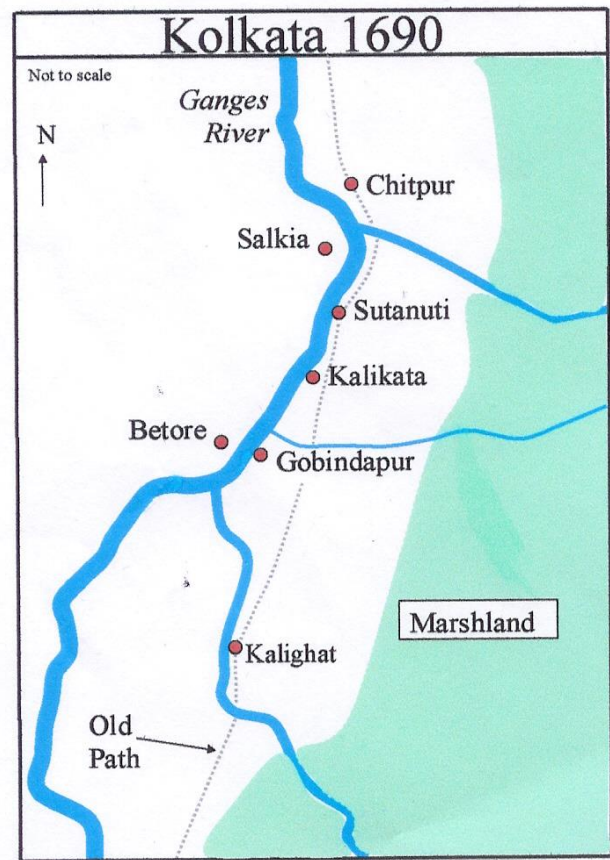
Basandhari, (6) Bhosat (the modern Bhursutb) (7) Dharsa ; and in Mandaran, (8) the great mahal of Mandalghat.*

A few local details of the district at this early period of its history may be gathered from an old Bengali poem and from the old maps of Gastaldi and De Barros. The Bengali poem

Report on Intangible Cultural Heritage Documentation: District; Haora – West Bengal of Bipradasa, dated 1495 A.D., describes the voyage of a merchant called Chand Saudagar from BurdwSn to the sea,*Chand went by Ariadaha on the east and Ghusuri on the west, and then rowing along the eastern bank passed by Calcutta, and at Bator worshipped its presiding goddess Betai Chandi. Ghusuri, a place not mentioned in any other old work, is now the northernmost portion of Haora city, and Bator is a part of the city south of Sibpur.

2.4. Bator was a rendezvous for trading ships unable to proceed higher up the shallow reaches of the river, and that what is now called a *hat* or periodical market was held there. The centre of this trade was Satgaon, from which were exported in the 16th century “rice, cloth of Bombast of diverse sorts, Lacca, great abundance of sugar, mirabolans, dried and preserved, long popper, oyle of ferzeline, and many other sorts of merchandise.” The same Impression of Satgaon as a thriving port fed by numerous subsidiary marts is gathered from the account of Ralph Fitch (1586). “ Satagam is a fair city for a city of the Moors, and very plentiful of all things. Here in Bengala they have everyday in one place or other a great market, and they have many great boats, wherewithall they go from place to place and buy rice and many other things.”

2.5. This trade, originally monopolized by the Portuguese, was gradually shared in by the Dutch, the English and the French. As European trade in Bengal expanded, it led to an extension of cultivation and to the settlement of weavers and other artisans along the river bank, so much so that, after the capture of Hugli from the Portuguese, a Faujdder had to be specially posted to Hugli to control the growing trade along the river.



Map No3: Old Map of Kolkata showing the location of Bator

2.6. These pirates infested the estuary of the Hugli, but gradually became more daring, and sailed higher up. To check their raids, the Musalman Government built, apparently about 1666, a fort on the west bank known as Tanna Fort. In December 1686 the rupture with the Viceroy Shaista Khan led to the retreat of the British from Hugli under Job Charnock. The refugees found temporary shelter at Sutanuti, the present site of Calcutta, but the country was up in arms and a large array was advancing against them. It was accordingly decided to fall back on Hijili further down the river. On the way they stormed and took the fort of Tanna. The war was concluded in August 1687 by a treaty under which the British were allowed to move up from Hijili and settle on a tract of land near Uluberia, to erect magazines and construct a dock for shipping; but they were forbidden to go beyond the Tanna fort and had to restore all the ships they had seized. Charnock and his little band now moved on to Uluberia (on the 17th June), but after a short time went to Little Tanna, from which, with the permission of the Mughal authorities, they returned to Sutanuti. At first Charnock had recommended that the British should make their headquarters at Uluberia, but afterwards the Bengal Council changed their minds and reported in favour of Sutanuti. To those curious about such things it is a quaint reflection that Uluberia, now a quiet provincial town, might have been the capital of India.

2.7. Six years later the existence of the infant settlement was threatened by the rebellion of Subha Singh. One party of the insurgents laid siege to Fort Tanna, but the British, at the request of the Faujdar of Hooghly, sent a vessel with some guns to assist the garrison, and the insurgents were compelled to retreat. For some years after this the district had peace, and the foundation of Calcutta assisted its development. Bator indeed declined, most of its trade being transferred to the other side of the river; but new villages sprung up, docks were opened for repairing ships, while gardens and villas were built in Haora city as suburban retreats. Captain Alexander Hamilton, who visited Calcutta about 1706, thus described Haora: "On the other side of the Eiver are Docks made for repairing and fitting their ships' Bottoms, and a pretty good Garden belonging to the Armenians, that had been a better place to have built their Fort and Town for many Reasons. One is, that where it now stands, the Afternoon's Sun is full in Front of the Houses, and shines hot on the Streets, that are both above and below the Fort, The Sun would have sent its hot Bays on the Back of the Houses, and the Front had been a good shade for the Street."

2.8. On the accession of the Emperor Farrukhsiyar, the Bengal Council decided to send a deputation to Delhi with a petition for the renewal of their farman. In this petition they applied for a lease of additional villages, five on the west side and thirty-three on the east side of the Hooghly. The list of villages is given in the Consultation Book of the Council under the date May 4th, 1714, and mentions “Salica” (Salkhia), “Harirah” (Haora), Cassundeah (KSSundi), Ramkrissnapur” and “Batter” (Bator), all in parganas “Borrow” and “Paican” with an annual rent of Rs.1,450.*The deputation under John Surman and Khoja Sarhad Armenian did not start till after March 1715, and after a delay of 2½ years, Mr, Surman came back with 33 farmims and hasbul-hukums. The deputation was successful in getting orders about the talukd^ri of all the villages applied for, but could not secure a lease of the five Haora villages, because the landlords were prevented by the Nawab from parting with their lands on any terms.

2.9. During the next 12 years the rent-roll was twice revised, first in 1722 by Jafar Khan alias Murshid Kuli Khan and again in 1728 by his son-in-law Shuja-ud-din. During these revisions the zamindari of Burdwan received large additions, the whole of Uluberia and a large part of the Haora subdivision being included in it. Furthermore a strip of land on the west bank of the river from Hooghly down to Haora was separated and raised into a distinct zamindari called Muhammad Aminpur.+ In this way the lands of Haora district, excepting certain khrijmahdls, came to be under two Hindu zamindaris, Burdwan and Muhammad Aminpur, as is shown in Rennel’s Atlas.

2.10. In 1741-42 A.D, the Maratha cavalry under Bhaskar Pandit swept over Western Bengal, and forced Ali Vardi Khan to retire precipitately from Burdwan to Katwa, The whole tract from Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) to Midnapore and Jaleswar came, we are told, into the possession of the Marathas.§ Mjr Habib made himself master of Hooghly, and the Marathas led by him overran the lands on the western side of the river and are said to have seized the Tanna Fort, The war continued till 1751, and the land suffered frequently from the incursions of the Marfitha cavalry, and also from the bands of dacoits that sprung up amid the disorganization of administration. Fort Tanna again came into

2.11 It remains to note the administrative changes which have taken place since the district passed under British rule. In 1787, the Government, wishing to reduce the charges of district administration, amalgamated part of Hooghly with Jessore and part with Nadia ; and apparently the strip of land known as Muhammad Aminpur was transferred to Nadia.t

After the decennial settlement, in 1795, Hooghly, with the greater part of Haora, was detached from Burdwan and created a separate magisterial charge ; but no change was made in the Collectorate. At that time thanas Bagnan and Amta were placed in the Hugli jurisdiction, but Haora city formed a part of Calcutta, its criminal cases being tried by the Magistrate and Judge of the 24-Parganas, who used to come over once a week. In 1814 thanas Rajpur (now Dumjor), and in 1819 thanas Kotra (now Syampur) and Uluberia were transferred from the 24-Pargana to Hugli. On 1st May 1822 the Hooghly and Haora Collectorate was entirely separated from Burdwan.

2.12. In the meantime, the city of Haora had been growing steadily, and its increasing importance led to another change, the magisterial jurisdiction of Haora being separated from that of Hooghly in 1843, when Mr. William Tayler was appointed Magistrate of Haora with jurisdiction over Haora, Salkhia, Amta, Rajfipur, Uluberia, Kotra and Bagnan*. For 20 years the Magistrate remained subordinate to the Judge of the 24-Parganas, but in 1864 the district was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Judge of Hooghly. Since then there have been minor changes in the boundaries of the district, but for the administration of revenue and civil justice it is still included in the jurisdiction of Hooghly.

2.13. No old remains have yet been found in this district, probably because the rivers have changed their courses so much that ancient sites, if any, have been washed away. The oldest temple appears to be that of Melai Chandi at Amta with a Bengali inscription said to be dated



Image No2: Melai Chandi of Amta near Damodar River

1056 Bengali Sava, c., 1649 A.D. In Haora city and in some places in the interior, c\g.^ Narna, Dumjor, &c., there are a few temples in the ordinary Bengali style of architecture and more or less modern. The Bhot-bagan temple at Haora, dating back to the end of 18th century, is somewhat peculiar, being roofed like a Bengali temple with a portico and having Tibetan figures carved on the outside.



Image No3: Bhot Bagan, one of the oldest places of Haora, Ghushuri. Image No4: The statue of Prajna Paramita. Image: Marble Plaque near the gate. Image No5: The translation of the inscription



The English translation of this inscription is-

**BHOT BAGAN
MOTH
5, Gosain Ghat Road,
Ghushuri
Howrah-711107
Math Construction
Period Bengali 1189
San
Consecrated the
metallic
Prajna Paramita Lakhs
mi brought
By Bholagiri from
Lhasa, Tibet
English- 15th November
1825**

3. Celebrated Citizens

3.1 Suniti Kumar Chatterji: Bhashacharya Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterji (26 November 1890 – 29 May 1977) was an Indian linguist, educationist and litterateur. He was a

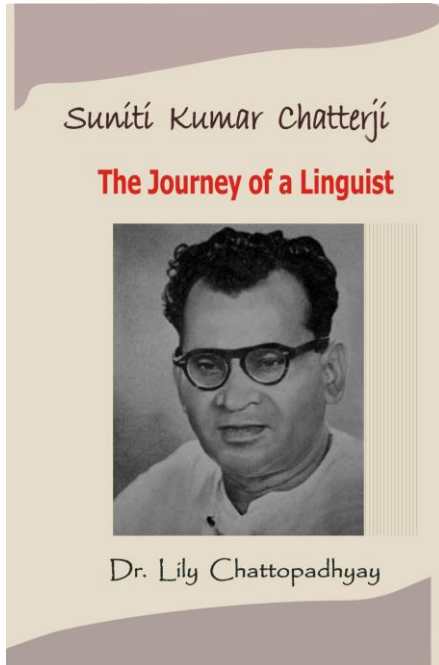


Image No6: Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay

recipient of the second-highest Indian civilian honour of Padma Vibhushan. Chatterji was born on 26 November 1890 at Shibpur in Haora. He was the son of Haridas Chattopadhyay, an affluent Kulin Brahmin. Professor Chatterji's great grandfather Sri Bhairab Chatterji, had migrated to a village in the district of Hooghly from his ancestral village home in the district of Faridpur in East Bengal, now in Bangladesh. Bhairab Chatterji, like many other Kulina Brahmins of the day, subsisted mainly on polygamy. Bhairab had a few wives, but he lived with the one who had belonged to the village in Hooghly. Bhairab's son Isvarchandra, the

grandfather of Chatterji, had served the East India Company in North India during the Mutiny. After

retirement he built a modest one storied house for himself in Calcutta and shifted there the residence of the family from the Hooghly village. Isvar's son Haridas Chatterji was the father of Suniti Kumar. Suniti Kumar was a meritorious student, and passed the Entrance (school leaving) examination from the Mutty Lal Seal's Free School (1907), ranking sixth, and the FA (pre-university examination) from the renowned Scottish Church College, standing third. He did his Major (Honours) in English literature from Presidency College, Kolkata, standing first in the first class in 1911.^[citation needed] His childhood friend was the famous industrialist Nagendra Nath Das founder of Power Tools And Appliance Co. Ltd. In 1913, he completed his M.A. in English literature, again standing first. The same year, he was appointed lecturer in English at Vidyasagar College, Kolkata where his colleague was the thespian, Sisir Kumar Bhaduri. In 1914, he became assistant professor of English in the Post-Graduate Department of the University of Calcutta, which he held till 1919. He went abroad to study at the University of London where he studied Phonology, Indo-European Linguistics, Prakrit, Persian, Old Irish, Gothic and other languages. He then went to

Paris and did research at the Sorbonne in Indo-Aryan, Slav and Indo-European Linguistics, Greek and Latin. His teacher was the internationally acclaimed linguist, Jules Bloch. After returning to India in 1922, he joined the University of Calcutta as the Khaira Professor of Indian Linguistics and Phonetics. After retirement in 1952, he was made Professor Emeritus and later in 1965, the National Research Professor of India for Humanities.

Suniti Kumar accompanied Rabindranath Tagore to Malaya, Siam, Sumatra, Java, and Bali, where he delivered lectures on Indian art and culture. He was Chairman of the West Bengal Legislative Council (1952–58) and President (1969) of the Sahitya Akademi.

3.2 Andul Dutta Chowdhary: Dutta Chowdhury family also Chowdhury family, of Andul was an erstwhile revenue collector (zamindar), during Sultanate and Mughal periods, of Muzaffarpur pargana portion of present-day Haora), consisting of several villages, namely Andul, Mahiary, Dhulagore, Sankrail, etc., founded by Debdas (Tekari) Dutta, in the late 14th century CE. Since Dutta acquired the entire pargana as his estate ownership from his father he was designated as Chowdhury (Farsi: چوددی) of the area by Sikandar Shah, the second Sultan of Bengal.

It is believed that name of the place 'Andul' was derived from the word Anand-er-Dhuli , meaning 'dust of joy', coined by the 4th Chowdhury of the pargana - Krishnananda Dutta

The family is an offshoot of Duttas of Bally of Southern – Rarh region, founded by Bharadwaja clan Purushottam Dutta, a Kshatriya by race and Kulshrestha Kayastha by caste, who arrived from Kannauj in circa 10th century CE.

The present descendants of the Chowdhury family are scattered throughout India, Bangladesh and United States. A large genealogical tree of this family is there at their residence in Chowdhury Para of Andul. Kashiswar Jiu temple (কশিস্বর জিউ মন্দির) is in Andul of Haora district near the Saraswati river, West Bengal in India. The presiding deity is a Banlinga which was recovered from the river in mid-17th century CE by family's Kashiswar Dutta Chowdhury (b.1607 CE). In 18th century CE a stone made yoni-like structure commonly known as Gauripatta, symbolizes goddess Shakti, has been attached with the Linga. There are other Shiva linga temples in the debottur premises, namely Bisheshwar (Lord of the Universe), Nakuleswar (Destroyer of ego) and Saurendra Mohaneshwar (Shiva is the lord of every material things of the Solar system). Chowdhury Madhav Chandra Ray Bahadur,

the 22nd descendant of the family installed Madhaveswar Shiva temple at Chowdhury para in Andul in the year 1757 CE.

3.3 Mani Shankar Mukherjee: Shankar, (born Mani Shankar Mukherjee, and generally known in English-language literature as Sankar) is a writer in the Bengali language and the Sheriff of Kolkata. He grew up in Haora district of West Bengal. Sankar is the son of Avaya Mukherjee known as Gouri Mukherjee. Sankar's father died while he was still a teenager, as a result of which Sankar became a clerk to the last British barrister of the Calcutta High Court, Noel Frederick Barwell. At the same time he entered in Surendranath



Image No7: Mani Shankar Mukherjee getting felicitated by Governor.

College (formerly Ripon College, Calcutta) for study. He worked in various field as typewriter cleaner, private tutor, Hawker for the livelihood. After Noel Barwell's sudden death, Sankar, the professional version of his name adopted for the law courts, sought to honor Barwell. "First, I wanted to build a statue. It was not possible. I then wanted to name a road. Even that was not feasible. And then I decided to write a book about him," according to Sankar. That impetus led to his first novel, about Barwell, that according to some critics is perhaps the most stimulating -- Kato Ajanare (So Much Unknown).

Around the same time in 1962, Sankar conceived Chowringhee on a rainy day at the waterlogged crossing of Central Avenue and Dalhousie - a busy business district in the heart of Kolkata. The novel, set in the opulent hotel he called Shahjahan, was made into a cult movie in 1968. It is wrongly said that Sankar marketed his literary work to Bengali households with the marketing slogan A bagful of Sankar (Ek Bag Sankar) and collections of his books were sold in blue packets through this marketing effort. He has been rewarded with Sahitya Akademi Award on 18 March 2021 for his outstanding metronomic creation of Eka EkaEkashi.

3.4 Purnendu Patri (sometimes Anglicised as **Purnendu Pattrea**) was an Indian poet, writer, editor, artist, illustrator, and film director. He was best known for his poems and

stories, particularly for his poetry collection *Kathopokathan* in Bengali, and for his experimentation with book cover design. He also was a researcher of the history of Kolkata. Pattrea was admitted to Indian Art College in 1949.^[1] He started contributing his painting and writing to the film magazine "Chitrita", and the cultural magazine "Deepali", which were edited and co-edited respectively by his uncle Nikunjabihari Pattrea.¹ His first collection of poems, *Ek Mutho Rod* ("a Handful of Sun", was published in 1951. In 1958, his first novel, *Dnarer Moyna* ("Caged Myna"), won him the then prestigious award 'Manik Smriti Purashkar' by Ultarath Publication. He was the first art director of the Ananda Bazar Patrika group of publications, from 1971 to 1984/85.¹



Image No8:Purnendu Patri

Pattrea was the director and screenwriter for the 1972 film *Strir Patra*. This was awarded the Rajat Kamal (Silver Lotus) for Best Feature Film in Bengali, at the 20th National Film Awards. The film also received the Award for Best Direction at the Tashkent Film Festival. His other films included *Swapnoniye*, *Malancha*, *ChhenraTamsuk*, *Chhotobakulpurerjatri* etc.

His first solo painting exhibition was held in British Council, Kolkata in 1982. He also had his other solo exhibitions held in Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay and Cema Art Gallery, Kolkata. He started a research project on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 'Bankim Jug' (The Era of Bankim); unfortunately, only the first of five planned volumes was published before his death.

3.5 Kanan Devi :Kanan Devi (22 April 1916 – 17 July 1992) was an Indian actress and singer. She was among the early singing stars of Indian cinema, and is credited popularly as the first star of Bengali cinema. Her singing style, usually in rapid tempo, was used instrumentally in some of the biggest hits of New Theatres, Kolkata. Kanan was born on 22 April 1916 in Haora, West Bengal. In her autobiography, entitled "Sabaray Ami Nami", Kanan has observed that those she considered as her parents were Ratan Chandra Das and Rajobala, who lived together. After the death of her adoptive father, Ratan Chandra Das, young Kanan and Rajobala were simply left to fend for themselves. Her life story is a true

tale of rags to riches. Some say she did her schooling (not completed) from Haora's St. Agnes' Convent School.

A well wisher, Tulsi Banerji, whom she called Kaka babu, introduced Kanan when she was only ten to Madan Theatres/Jyoti Studios, where she was cast in a small role in Jaidev (1926), followed by Shankaracharya in 1927. She was known as Kanan Bala. Kanan Devi, as the first lady of the Bengali screen, received many honours for her contribution to Indian cinema. An honorary degree from Vishwabharati, the Padma Shree in 1968 and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 1976.

3.6 SaratchandraChattopadhyay: 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. After returning from Burma, Chattopadhyay stayed for 11 years in BajeShibpur, Haora. Then he made a house in the village of Samta, in 1923, where he spent the later twelve years of his life as a novelist. His house is known as Sarat Chandra Kuthi. The two-storied Burmese style house was also home to Sarat Chandra's brother, Swami Vedananda, who was a disciple at Belur Math. His and his brother's samadhi are within the house's compound. Trees like bamboo and guava planted by the renowned author still stand tall in the gardens of the house. The phenomenal popularity of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay has been attested by some of the most prominent writers as well as literary critics across India in their writings. Most of the authors in Assam and Odisha, at least before the Independence, read him admiringly in original Bengali; rest of India read him in translations in varying quality. Publishers were never tired of reprinting his works; he remains the most translated, the most adapted and the most plagiarized author. His novels also reached a number of people through the medium of film and he is still an important force in Indian cinema. O. N. V. Kurup writes "...Sarat Chandra's name is cherished as dearly as the names of eminent Malayalam novelists. His name has been a household word". Dr Mirajkar informs "the translations of Sarat Chandra created a stir amongst the readers and writers all over Maharashtra. He has become a known literary personality in Maharashtra in the rank of any popular Marathi writers including H. N. Apte, V. S. Khandekar, N. S. Phadke and G. T. Madkholkar". Jainendra Kumar, who considers that his contribution towards the creation and preservation of cultural India is

second, perhaps, only to that of Gandhi, asks a rhetorical question summing up Sarat Chandra's position and presumably the role of translation and inter-literary relationship: "Sarat Chandra was a writer in Bengali; but where is that Indian language in which he did not become the most popular when he reached it?"



Image No 9 &10:Deulti house of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya

3.7 RamKrishnaMission and Swami Vivekananda :In the beginning of 1897, Swami Vivekananda arrived in Baranagar, Calcutta with his small group of Western disciples. Two monasteries were founded by him, one at Belur, which became the

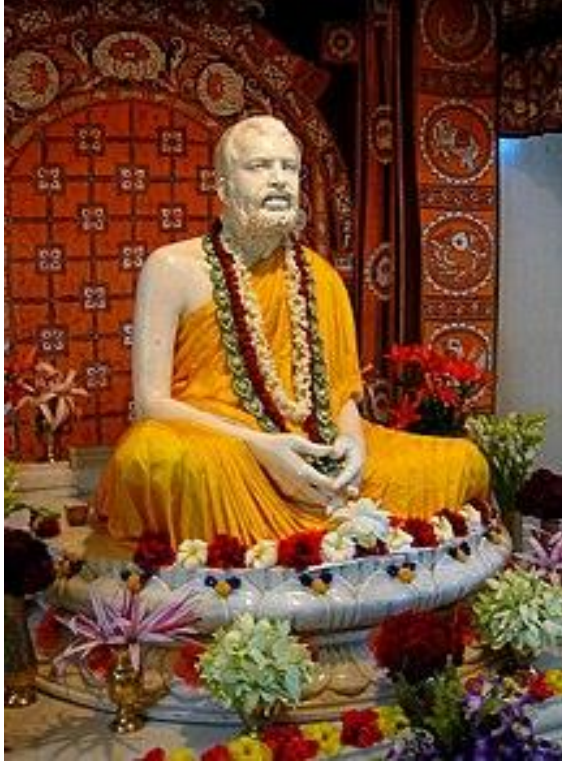


Image No11: Marble Statue of Ramakrishna at Belur Math.

headquarters of Ramakrishna Mission and the other at Mayavati on the Himalayas, in Champawat District, Utrakhand, called the Advaita Ashrama. These monasteries were meant to receive and train young men who would eventually become sannyasis (religious ascetic) of the Ramakrishna Mission, and to give them a training for their work. The same year the philanthropic activity was started and relief of the famine was carried out.

Swami Vivekananda's days as a parivrajaka (wandering monk) before his visit to Parliament of Religions, took him through many parts of India, and he visited several architectural monuments like the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri palaces, Diwan-I-Khas, palaces of Rajasthan, ancient temples

of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and other places. During his tour in America and Europe, he came across buildings of architectural importance of Modern, Medieval, Gothic and Renaissance styles. It is reported that Vivekananda incorporated these ideas in the design of the Belur Math temple.

Swami Vijnanananda, a brother-monk of Swami Vivekananda and one of the monastic disciples of Ramakrishna, who was, in his pre-monastic life, a civil engineer, designed the temple according to the ideas of Vivekananda and Swami Shivananda, the then President of Belur Math laid the foundation stone on 13 March 1929. The massive construction was handled by Martin Burn & Co. The mission proclaims the Belur Math as, "A Symphony in Architecture" The 40-acre (160,000 m²) campus of the Belur Math on the banks of the Hooghly includes temples dedicated to Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, in which their relics are enshrined, and the main monastery of the Ramakrishna Order. The campus also houses a Museum containing articles connected with the history of

Report on Intangible Cultural Heritage Documentation: District; Haora – West Bengal Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Several educational institutions affiliated with the Ramakrishna Mission are situated in the vast campus adjacent to Belur Math. The Belur Math is considered one of the prime tourist spots near Kolkata and place of pilgrimage by devotees. The ex-president APJ Abdul Kalam regarded Belur Math as a "place of heritage and national importance. The Belur Math conducts medical service, education, work for women, rural uplift and work among the labouring and backward classes, relief, spiritual and cultural activities. The center also celebrates annual birthdays of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sarada Devi and other monastic disciples of Ramakrishna. The annual celebrations of Kumari Puja and Durga Puja are one of the main attractions. The tradition of Kumari puja was started by Vivekananda in 1901.



Image No12: Inside the Ramakrishna Belur Math

3.8 Sailendra Nath Manna (1 September 1924 – 27 February 2012), known popularly as Sailen Manna, was an Indian international footballer who is considered to be one of the best



Image No13:Sailendra Nath Manna

defenders India has ever produced. He has represented and captained India in different international competitions including Olympics and Asian Games. He also has a record of playing for Mohun Bagan, one of the best clubs in India, for a continuous period of 19 years. He is the only Asian Footballer ever to be named among the 10 best Captains in the world by the English FA in 1953. Manna started his playing career for Howrah Union, then a club in the 2nd Division Kolkata Football League, in 1940. After turning out for the club for a couple of seasons, he joined Mohun Bagan in 1942 and continued playing for the club till his retirement in 1960. Between 1950 and 1955, he featured

as the club's captain. During his 19-year association with the club as player, he reportedly earned only Speaking to Sportstar in 2006, he reasoned that he "played out of love for the sport and was happy with the salary I got from my employer, the Geological Survey of India. Sailen Manna was a part of the Indian Football Team for the 1948 London Olympics, where Indian lost to France by a margin of 1–2. Under Manna's captaincy, India won the gold medal in the 1951 Asian Games and also won the Quadrangular Tournament for four consecutive years from 1952 to 1956. In 1953, the England Football Association rated him among the 10 best skippers of the world in its yearbook. Manna was also the captain of the Indian team in 1952 Olympics and a member of the 1954 Asian Games. He used to keep a picture of the Hindu goddess Kali, barefoot conqueror of demons, tucked away in his pocket. Two of his greatest regret in life are – (1) missing the first penalty kick against France in the London Olympics, and turning down the chance of taking the second penalty because he was afraid of missing again, (2) India had not gone to the 1950 World Cup in Brazil, with him as captain, because the Indian Football Federation had not realized its importance.

3.9 Tulsi Chakrabarti (3 March 1899 – 11 December 1961) was an Indian actor and comedian who worked in Bengali cinema in the 1940s and 1950s. His most notable role could be the lead role in ParashPathar, directed by Satyajit Ray. Tulsi Chakraborty was born on 3 March 1899 in the small village called Goari, Haora. His father, Ashutosh Chakraborty, was an employee of the Indian Railways and the family had to move around various places in



Image No14:Tulsi Chakraborty

undivided Bengal. So, young Tulsi had to spend a lot of time in Calcutta staying with his paternal uncle Prasad Chakraborty, the elder brother of Asutosh Chakraborty. Prasadbabu was a talented tabla and harmonium player who was an employee of the renowned Star Theatre, the legendary Bengali commercial theatre stage and production company. He had a small group of musicians who used to play live background music during theatrical performances. It was through his uncle's contacts that Tulsi was able to watch the finest actors of the generation at work and this fostered his own ambitions to become a singer-actor. Before launching in theatre, Tulsi Chakraborty engaged himself in a number of odd-jobs, starting from dishwasher in a small North Calcutta eatery to working as a clown in a circus in Burma (now Myanmar). In films, he started with character roles before performing as a comedian. He was known for his realistic acting. He never used any make-up or extra arrangements. Usually, he was clad in a white dhoti accompanied by a sacred thread on his shoulder. One of Chakraborty's notable performances was in *ShareyChuattor*, which was the debut film of the popular pair of Bengali cinema: Suchitra Sen and Uttam Kumar. In *ParashPathar* directed by Satyajit Ray, he acted in the lead role of Paresh Dutta. He unleashed memorable roles in Uttam Kumar-Suchitra Sen starrers *EktiRaat* and *ChaowaPawa*. In both these films, Chakraborty played a sceptical inn owner; in the latter, he teamed up with Rajlakshmi Devi. He also had a small role that of a village pandit cum grocer in *PatherPanchali*. Ray once remarked that if Chakraborty has been born in the United States, he would have been awarded an Oscar for his acting.

3.10 Alamohan Das was a famous pioneering industrialist in pre-independence and post-independence Bengal. He ventured into various industries like jute, cotton, heavy machinery, drug, banking etc. Amongst all his achievements, a very significant one is India Machinery Company, one of the earliest indigenous machine making industries of India. Alamohan Das



Image No15:Alamohan Das

was born in a middle-class peasant family in Khila-Baruipur, Howrah district of West Bengal, India. He had little formal education as a child, except attending a village pathshala and a middle primary school. But as he hailed from a business minded Mahishya family, he came to Kolkata at the age of 15 and started his business career by selling parched rice, small things, but gradually switched over to industrial items. He started to read avidly to acquire knowledge for his betterment and fulfilling his ambitions. He was very much influenced by Bankim Chandra's Anandamath and Tagore's 'Banglar Mati BanglarJwal'. He

took the spirit of Swadeshi movement in his heart. In 1930, he founded the India Machinery Co., which, according to Government reports, was one of the few companies that produced machines of grade 1 category. Amongst the products of the company were lathes, weighing machines, textile manufacturing machines, and printing machines. In 1937 he started **Bharat Jute Mill**.

Dasnagar ai Haora is named after him.

3.11 Narayan Debnath: Narayan Debnath (25 November 1925 – 18 January 2022) was

an Indian comics artist, writer and illustrator. He created the Bengali comic strips HandaBhonda (1962), Bantul the Great (1965) and Nonte Phonte (1969). He holds the record of longest running comics by an individual artist for HandaBhonda comics series which completed its continuous 53 years of running. He was the first and only comics artist in India who has received a D.



Image No16: Narayan Debnath

Litt. degree. Debnath was awarded Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India, in the year 2021.

His other creations like Rabi Chobi was published to celebrate the birth centenary of Rabindranath Tagore in the May 1961 issue of the weekly magazine called Anandamela. The full length 50-page comics were first published in the book format by Sarvodaya Sahitya Prakashan, Varanasi. Rajar Raja (was published in 1962), it was illustrated by Narayan Debnath and written by Bimal Ghosh to celebrate the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda.



Image No17: The Comic characters

Narayan Debnath was born and spent most of his life living in Shibpur, Howrah, India. His family hailed from Bikrampur in what is now Bangladesh but had migrated to Shibpur before his birth. In an interview published by Laalmati Publication in Narayan Debnath Comics Samagra, Debnath confessed that he was interested in visual arts from a very early age. The family business was retailing gold and he had ample scope to design patterns for jewellery. During the time of World War II, Debnath would study fine arts at the Indian

Art College for five years. He did not continue to get his degree but instead discontinued in his final year. For the next few years he freelanced for advertising agencies creating movie slides and logos. Debnath recounts in Narayan Debnath Comics Samagra, Vol. 2 that on the day of his wedding Gandhi was assassinated, which caused much inconvenience to the guests. The four volumes of Narayan Debnath Comics Samagra provide rich information about the life of the author.

In 1950 he was introduced to Dev Sahitya Kutir, a major publishing house through a friend. People such as Pratul Chandra Banerjee, Shailo Chakraborty, Balaibandhu Roy, and PurnachandraChakraborti were associated with the press at the time. From 1950 to 1961 he illustrated a number of children's books including adventure novels and Western classics in translation. His journey in comics started in 1962 with 'Handa-Bhonda' in Shuktara.

He began as a freelancing comics-artist and soon went for comics on his own . However, when still a struggling freelancer, he was instructed by the publisher to adopt 'well accepted foreign comics' to make comics for their magazine(s) to get easy business.

The suggestion to work in comics in Bengali came from the editors at Dev Sahitya Kutir. Also the name 'HandaBhonda' was their suggestion. Debnath had been familiar with foreign comics, but comics in Bengal, to his belief, had yet to take off. 'Shiyal Pandit', a comic strip created by Pratul Chandra Lahiri for the Jugantar newspaper was one of the earliest ones. Handa-Bhonda became an instant success and continues to be printed in Shuktara every month . Handa-Bhonda was initially penciled and inked by Debnath and had no coloured

frames. Later it would be printed in the grey-scale.



Narayan Debnath's first comic characters in color were for the comic strip and book 'Bantul The Great'. By Debnath's admission, he thought up the idea of the superhero while returning from College Street, Calcutta. The came to him instantly and he thought up the figure of the protagonist rapidly. Batul the Great, written and illustrated with red and black ink made his first appearance in comic strips in the May–June (Bengali Baishak), 1965 issue of the monthly children's periodical called Shuktara, published by Dev Sahitya Kutir (henceforth DSK) publishing

Image No18: Characters of Bantul and other characters

house. Apart from *Batul the Great*, Debnath also illustrated *Rabi Chobi* (1961), written by Bimal Ghosh about the childhood days of Rabindranath Tagore. His *Rajar Raja/Chobite Vivekananda* (1962) recreates the life and times of Swami Vivekananda, while his *ChitreDurgeshnandini* (1962) re-imagines Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's novel *Durgeshnandini* in graphic novel techniques. But it was his *HandaBhoda* (1962), Nonte Phonte (1969) and *ShootkiarMootki* (1964) that revolutionized the comic genre in Bengal through the familiar trope of the 'terrible twins' at boarding school. This trope could be traced back to the German artist Wilhelm Bosch's *Max and Moritz* (1865) – an illustrated story in verse, which later found its way into the English world as *The Katzenjammer Kids* (1897) of Rudolph Dirks and Harold H. Knerr. The trope is also found in Hergè's *Quick and Flupke* (1930).

Collections of Debnath's comics have been published serially in *Shuktara* and *Kishor Bharati* and irregularly in *Kishor Mon*, *ChotoderAsar*, *Pakhkhiraj* etc. His comic books featuring '*HandaBhonda*', '*Batul the Great*' and '*Nonte Phonte*' have been published since the early 1980s. Since the late 1990s, the Nonte Phonte comics have been anthologised and published in softcover format. From 2003 onwards, the earlier comics have been re-inked and published in full-color. Recently, Debnath gave permission for animation film based on the characters from '*BatulThe Great*', '*HandaBhonda*' and '*Nonte Phonte*', and these provide access to the original stories to a whole new generation of children.

Debnath's style incorporating characters speaking in the typical language of Bengali adda (the quintessential Bengali gossip sessions lasting hours) and hundreds of nonstandard, yet most commonly used expletives in daily life like "Uls" (describing reaction to a delicious food) or "Aoofs", "Yiofs", "Arghhh"(similar to ouch). Subtle punning is also aplenty in his comics but the main source of comedy is slapstick. Though his comic characters have immense popularity, Narayan Debnath himself has rather lived reclusively, distancing himself from publicity and media.

3.12 Sachin Nag :SachinNag was an Indian swimmer. He competed in the men's 100 metre freestyle at the 1948 Summer Olympics. He also competed in the water polo at the 1948 and 1952 Summer Olympics.He scored four goals on behalf of India. He won the first gold medal for India in the Asian Games when he won it in men's 100 metre freestyle swimming at the 1951 Asian Games in



4. The art and craft of Hugli

4.1 Rani Putul (Clay Pressed Queen Doll), the treasure of Haora: Haora is a district which is primarily known as the industrial hub of Bengal. But, since yesteryears, majestic dolls called Rani putul are crafted in various



Image No19: Colourful Rani Putul

areas of Haora district. 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 Haora 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’ dolls. It may sound surprising but these queen dolls will not remind you of the queens of fairytale wonders like ThakumarJhuli. Even the artisans say that their unique craftsmanship is not influenced by the myriad fairytales of Bengal. The round face of these dolls might further confuse you. 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. Queen Victoria’s love and deep connection for Bengal is known to all. She had asked the royal officials to treat India with empathy and love and disestablished the rule of East India Company. Her attitude towards India thoroughly impressed and touched the hearts of Indians. She became the empress of India in 1876 and also received the title of ‘Qaisar-i-Hind’. The popularity of Queen Victoria had also left a deep impact in the Patachitra art of Kalighat. Similarly, the artisans of **South Patil or Jagatballavpur** crafted Queen dolls whose face had a striking similarity with Queen Victoria. According to the art historians, the attire and hair style of the magenta or red coloured queen dolls also indicate the same. Today, the artisan family of Dibapakar Pal of



Image No20, 21 &22: Rani Putul with mica dust & normal terracotta doll. Dibakar Paul of Santragachi is making these dolls from atleast 200 years. According to him the dolls have veil on their head and thus said to be as Rani Putul.



Haora still crafts these queen dolls with utmost love. Looking at these, it seems that a human has been transformed into a doll magically. It is a certainty that the Rani putul or Queen dolls will certainly add a majestic appeal in the décor of your home.



Image No23: Pressed Dolls of Haora are mostly done by women of the potter families. The horse is mostly used in the Dargah of Pir. One of the important artists is Bechi Pal

4.2 Wheeled Dolls of Jagatballavpur, Haora : Along with the wheeled dolls , there are



also wheeled Dolls of Jagatballavpur . Prabir pal is a veteran potter who is involved in making these clay items.

Image No 24: Wheeled carts of Jagatballavpur.

4.3 Doll village of Kulgachia, Chandipur : Kulgachia is a non descriptive quaint potters village located in the Chandipur village near Bagnan . Named as Potuapara , almost all the family members are involved in making various clay items. But most interesting amongst them is the clay dolls of Palpara. Swapan Pal with his wife Alpana Pal and his sisters Chabi Pal and Arati Pal makes mainly 2 types of dolls . “Bou Putul” (bridesgroomdoll) and “Tepa Putul “ (pressed doll) . Generally women folks are involved in making dolls. Centering Rathayatarafestival , local fairs takes place in the different areas. The dolls are mostly supplied to these fairs. Beside dolls they also prepare some clay play items like palki , wheel cart etc. Like Patihaal area they are also involved in making clay animals like tigers , elephants, horse etc. Puspa Pal of Patihal is a very famous clay artist who prepares dolls ,



Image No25, 26 & 27: Different dolls of Kulgachia





Image No 28 &29:Differnt hand pressed dolls of Kulgachia



4.4 Clay Potteries : Along with the clay pressed dolls , Haora district has also clusters where clay potteries are made at Uluberia and Santragachi .



Image No 30 &31: Clay potteries of Uluberia &Santragachi.



Image No32: Potter’s hub at Sitapur beside Damodar River where about 30 families are involved in making clay articles. At one point of time, sweet shops of Kolkata used to take earthen vessels for sweet containers. But now the importance have dwindled. The potters are shifting from their old profession .

Beside Sitapur , Chak Kashi of Bauria ,Bakshihaat of Santragachi also have potters hub in the study area. Sitaram Pal of Bakshihat has 12 members team who all are involved in making jug , lantern , kulhar etc. Because of dwindling demand , the families are shifting their profession. Like according to Kalipada Babu of Bakshihat , now only 2 families out of 25 families are still associated with clay art. It is because of plastic that clay items are loosing their importance. Nabakumar Pal of Beral at Amta II Block informed that about 187 families were involved in clay work at one point of time. But now , only 13 families are involved.



Image No 33: 250 families of Palpara,Kantakhali of Uluberia are involved in making lamps

4.5 Ancient form of clay Palki and boats of MajuGram, Jagatballavpur:



Image No 34&35: The Boat makers of Uttar MajuGram, Haora prepares these clay itemns from ancient period.

4.6 Tressmakers of Parbatipur, Domjur, Haora: Post Partition, much of the jute industry went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Facing shortage of raw material, artificial jute hair was in demand across the state during Durga Puja. Sensing a market, Ekhlakh *chacha* convinced the villagers to work with him. Having no other industry, villagers agreed, and soon puja organisers began to flock here to buy artificial hair. Now around 50–60 Muslim families and a few Hindu families are engaged in making artificial hair, providing employment to over 900 villagers.



Image No36: The workshops where jute fibre is stacked

Most villagers do their work in their houses, involving their family members. The raw jute is dyed in the courtyard; dyeing involves chemicals, and the furnace produces toxic fumes, hence can't be done inside homes. Once the dyed jutes are dried they are distributed among workers to detangle. The process of combing is done in separate rooms or temporary workshops outside the house. The dust generated from brushing the jutes is another health hazard. Sometimes the workers just use pieces of cloth to cover their faces. The village does not have proper sewage or disposal process for the residue chemical waste either. Due to the introduction of automated machines, manual workers are losing their work. Though

the quality of machine-made hair is not at par with their handmade variety, it is cheaper, hence popular in the wholesale market. The cost of raw materials is also increasing every year. The introduction of GST has increased the price further. Earlier hair prepared in Parbatipur was exported all over India, and some also exported to Bangladesh. But now the idol makers of other states and Bangladesh are taking hair from their local hair makers to avoid increasing transport cost and export cost. After almost 60 years, the craft is still a small-scale cottage industry, with no market beyond the idol-making craft.



Image No37: Women are involved in various processes of tress making

Because of its dependence on idol-making, the artificial hair-making industry is of a seasonal nature. Hindu festivals do take place throughout the year, but the main demand is just after monsoon, beginning from August, when the idol-making studios get busy with preparation for the festive season. After monsoon they buy raw jute from Hooghly and Nadia districts as jute is only harvested during the monsoon season. The raw jute is dyed and takes long time to dry in the open. Workers have to keep constant vigil on weather because sudden rain extend the drying process. Usually it takes two to three days to dry in sunlight. Women of the household are involved in many stages of work. They clean, comb and separate the

jute and roll them on sticks. The finished hair is packaged and shipped to wholesalers in Kolkata and other parts of West Bengal.



Image No38: The fibres are dyed and bleached according to the need.

Before the pandemic, artificial hair was supplied for an estimated 30,000 idols during Durga Puja festival and other festivals like Kali Puja, Jagadhhatri Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Saraswati Puja. But the business has been badly hit due to the COVID-19 Pandemic this year. Orders have dropped because many festivals have either been cancelled this year or, if happening, there has been a reduction in budget and numbers. The workers associated with hair-making craft have no alternate means of livelihood. With reduced earnings, and very little savings to fall back on, the workers are expecting help from the government in this period of crisis. The health crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19 has added to the already existing health concerns of workers who work without standard protective gear. Parbatipur, though located close to Kolkata, remains largely unknown and is one of the finest examples of communal harmony in Bengal. Durga Puja is considered a sarbojaninutsav, meaning a festival for all, and the festival is incomplete without the contribution of the Muslim families of Parbatipur who do not let their religion come in the way of their dedication to their profession.



Image No 39 & 40: The coloured fibres are dried, curled and then supplied to potter's hub



4.7 Ornamental Wooden Dolls of Santragachi :Samar Ghosh of Santragachi is specialised in making ornamental wooden dolls . He is making these dolls for the last 40 years. Bride Bridegroom, Brahman-Brahmani , Dhak Player etc are mostly prepared by him. Each dolls are 4 to 7 inches in height. The price is in between 40 Rs to 250 Rs.



Image No 41: Wooden Dolls of Haora.

4.8. Metal Band / Noa Craft : Gaza is one such dark, obscure village sandwiched between three tributaries of river Ganges, river Mundeswari and river Damodar in Haora district, West Bengal. The former is known as the ‘Insane river’ while the lake is known as “Sorrow of Bengal” because of the uncertainty and destruction the rivers bring into the lives of people year after year. The only fame the village and boast of is its proximity to the native village of one of the greatest sons of Bengal Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a social reformer and revolutionary radical thinker who challenged and successfully altered the very social foundation of religious orthodoxy. For the people in Gaza, life is a difficult journey in the form of a vicious cycle from disaster to another, plunging them into the clutches of



Image No 42 &43: Metal bands of Gaza where women are involved in the craft.

poverty and disillusionment. It was in such a background that a group of young and educated people, inspired by the teachings of their revolutionary ancestors, decided to dedicate their lives for the welfare of their fellow beings. Noa (a kind of bangle) is widely used by the women only produced in the village GAZA, Udaynarayanpur Block, Howrah out of India. It

is even regarded as the sign of womanhood. Besides Hindus use this item in many festivals like puja (worship) offer contains this in several renown worship houses at Tarekeswar, Gangasagar, Tarapith, Kalighat, Dakshineswar and many other festivals. As for this it has huge demand in the market. However, outside the border of Bengal many states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, U.P. and others looking for this item during their indigenous festivals. So the marketing potentiality of this product is very high.

4.9 Shola Craft of Uluberia : Shola pith, also known as ‘SholarKaj’ is a dried milky-white spongy plant matter derived from a tall perennial plant that can be pressed and shaped into delicate objects of art. It is harvested from waterlogged marshy areas, hence easily available for production. Households use this as a symbol of sanctity at religious events and also as decorative items. There are two types of shola, Kath shola, a harder version, and Bhatua shola, which is soft and light. A premium quality pith comes in pure white color that doesn't possess nodes and has soft barks while coming to the pith. This plant which grows up to 7 to 8 feet in height and 2 to 3 inches in diameter, basically grown in states like Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Mr. Ramapada Neogi and Mr. Koushik Neogi from Uluberia village of Howrah district from West Bengal have been making Topors and Mukut for decades, which are used during Bengali weddings.

Shola plants are hydrophytes and usually grows as a riparian vegetation. The swampy areas Bongaon, Habra, Bashirhat, Kalyani used to be home of these plants. But the major market used to be our Haora – Uluberia – Shibpur areas. There are still some families in the Shibpur, Uluberia area where traditional fine shola craft is prepared.

Dawn Family of Shibpur – Ashok Kumar Dawn learnt shola craft from his ancestors. His entire family is involved in shola craft. Usually they prepare Shola ornaments for Durga idol. His wife, Kalpana Dawn regularly helps him to prepare various decorative items including head gears for bride and bridegrooms. They also prepare fine wire decorative, golden decorative etc. According to him the price of shola is becoming very high. Last year it was 15-20 Rs/10 pcs. Now it has become Rs 40/-. Besides that, there are other decorative items like rolex sheet, beads, velvets etc are required for decorations which all are becoming very expensive.

Dawn Family of Uluberia :Pranab Dawn collects the Shola plants from Sheikh Siraj of Bhogpur, Purba Medinipur. These premium quality shola is used for making Ornaments (headgears) of Devi Durga at Jadurberia and Baniban. Pranab Dawn and his family members

like Sudipa Dawn , Pranab Dawn , Prabir Dawn are involved in making the shola ornaments from generations. This Dawn family came from Arambagh of Hugli District. Then they started preparing the shola ornaments for Kolkata market.

Pranab Dawn is a renowned artist as well. They all belonged to Malakaar Community. In Purana it is mentioned that during Lord Shiva's marriage to Devi Parvati , he wished for a decorative headgear. God Biswakarma made the headpiece with gold. But Shiva did not like it. Instead , he made one human being who used a plant from the swamp to prepare the milky white attire for him. It is said , that human started the malakaar community who all from generations are meant to prepare shola ornaments for Gods and Goddesses and also for marriage.



Image No 44 &45: Pranab Dawn is an award-winning Shola artist preparing Durga in his workshop.

Pranab Dawn came from Arambagh of Hugli District. He got State award for his elegant craftsmanship. He participated in many national and international workshops. During the screening of PatherPanchali film at Globe Cinema hall ,CALCUTTA , he decorated the entire hall. Satyajit Ray , was very impressed with his work.

AsthaAdhikary family of Jadurberia , Haora is also traditionally preparing shola ornaments from generations. Archana Adhikary is also involved with this craft.



Beside the headgears of brides and bridegroom , c and other idols are also prepared at Uluberia Haor



Image No 46 &47: Workshops of Uluberia where artisans are involved in making ornaments





Image No 48 &49: Preparation of Shola ornaments at Uluberia



4.10 Horn Craft :It is another very old craft of Bengal which is facing huge competition from plastic industry. Deulgram of Bakshiarea of Bagnan,Haora District had once about 30 families involved in making combs .



Image No 50 &51: Preparation of combs from horn



4.11 The traditional hand weaving of Uluberia Subdivision : In this part of land , Tant (hand weaving) is a very old tradition. Though at present the tradition of hand weaving is suffering a huge completion from mechanised weaving industry , but still in some areas of Haorah district like in Gaja , Singti,Shibpur,Peyarapur,Rampur, Khempur there are few houses where it is practised. Once in these villages almost 3000 weaver houses were found.Gamcha (cottn towel) , mosquito net, dhot etc. In the gaja village of Haora , the weavers developed an organisation called Gaja Weavers Samity who all prepares now a traditional form of Dhoti specially worn during marriage ceremonies.



Image No52: Handloom weavers of Uluberia making sarees.



Image No 53 &54:Gamcha Making is done by many families' members





Image No 55 &56: Weavers Colony, Uluberia 1 Block.



4.12 Brishakastha – A traditional folk craft

In the districts of Haora , Hugli and 2 parganas there is a tradition of using “Brishakasthya” during the funeral practice. They are the pieces of highly decorated wood logs used for tying Bulls .It is a very old practise of offering Bulls during the shraddh occasion. The ritual is said to be as “Brishatswargya”

These Brishyakashthya are 6 to 7 ft tall . They do have Trishul at the top. It has 6 parts .

a. Base : The wooden logs are sharpened at the base to put it inside the ground

b.Middle Part : It is highly decorated with the human form structure. Generally it resembles to the person who has died. Depending on the gender of the deceased person this form is created.

c.on top of the human form , a temple structure is created where a bull is sculpted . Generally these bulls are sculpted as they are coming out of the temple.

d.On top of the bull temple , it is Shiva temple which is created with the Shiva idol inside. The structure resembles the Bengal Atchala temple form. In some cases , it is Jagannath , some cases Radha Krishna or Balaram or Subhadra.

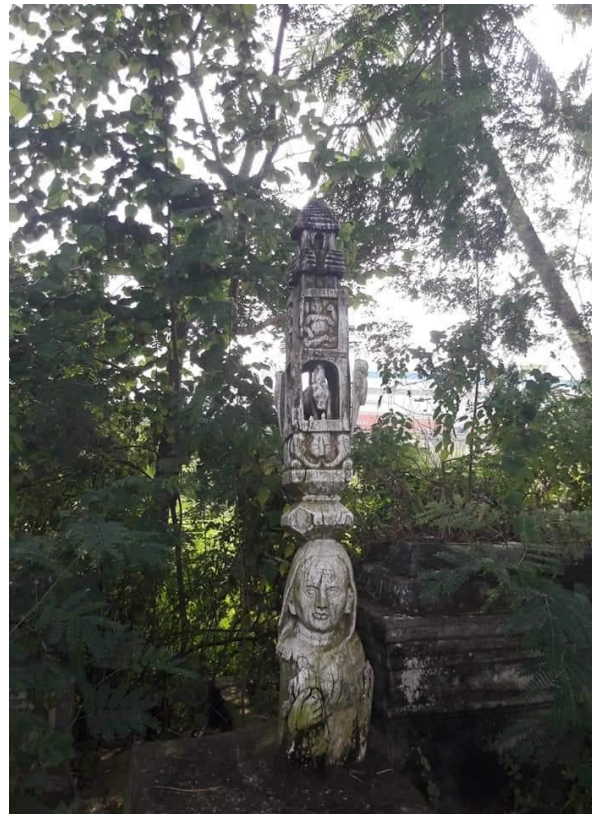
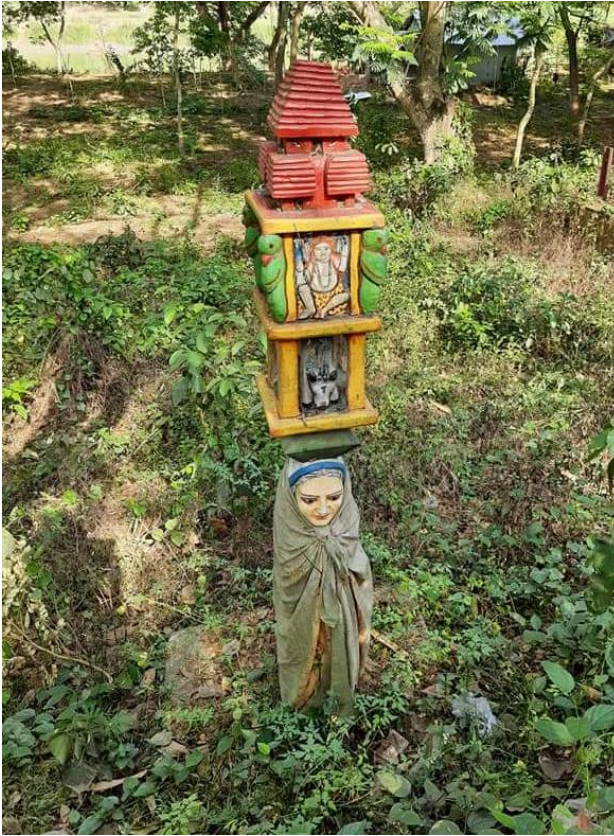
e. Next is created a ratha which is smaller in size.

f. Finally on top there is a trishul .

All these Brishyakasthya are sculpted with Tiger head or Elephant head or Radha Krishna idols etc. Big fans made out of palm leaves are prepared to ornate these logs.

In all the Brishakasthya , name age family details of the deceased person is mentioned.

Some rules for making Brishyakasthya – For Brahmins , Neem wood is only used for making Brishakasthya. The tree needs to be worshipped before cutting . Turmeric paste is applied before the sculpting work. After preparation the Sutradhar himself delivers the Brishakasthya in a cow driven cart. The deceased person’s family member will then decorate the log with shola headgears , vermillion , sandal and turmeric paste .After puja ceremony the logs are planted in the corner of the house courtyard. Beetle leaves and arica nuts are used by all the family members .Later on these logs are planted near the waterbodies or the rivers where all the villagers can have a look at them and remember the deceased person.



**Image No 57: Nowpara
Village of Amta**

**Image No
58: Madhubati, Rajapur,
Haora**

**Image No 59: Singharoy
family of
Udaynarayanpur**

**Image No
60: Narendrapurpotters'
village.**

4.13 Polo Ball Making: Deulpur is the only village of the Bengal where polo ball is made out of bamboo. In 1862, when the first polo club was created at Calcutta, Deulpur became important. In the early times, wooden balls were mostly used for polo games. Bipin Bihari Bag created the first polo ball out of bamboo, and after so many years, these bamboo balls are used in different parts of the world where polo is played. The roots of the bamboo trees were used for making the balls. Bipin Bihari Bag became a legendary name in making polo balls out of bamboo roots. The entire village of Deulpur became famous for making polo balls. Even a few years back, 200 families were involved in making polo balls. But now it is Subhas Bag of the Bag family who is all involved. Now they do not create balls out of bamboo roots but they create mallets or polo sticks out of bamboo. They sell their products through “Polo Baugh” organisation. They create 3 types of sticks – a. Horse Polo b. Cycle Polo c. Elephant Polo. The price varies from Rs 1000 to Rs 2000.



Image No 61 & 62: Polo sticks are getting made in Deulpur Village



4.14 Shuttle Cock making of Uluberia

At the time of Second World War , in many areas of Bengal ,British army started making camps. One of them was in Uluberia Hospital Ground, Haora . The officers for their recreation used to play badminton in the evening time. Gyan Basu was a local trader of Uluberia . He developed a new business of making shuttle cock . From the feathers of local duck and cork of the bottles the shuttle cock for the badminton game were prepared. At present , Uluberia shuttle cock industry is the only hand made supplier of shuttle cocks to whole of India.

Badminton players like Prakash Padukone to P.V Sindhu , all prefers to use hand made shuttle cocks of Uluberia. Baniban ,Jadurberia are the major centres where many factories were developed.About 20 years ago there were 250 factories where atleast 15 thousand artisans were involved. . Now it is only 10 to 15 facories where less than 500 workers are involved.



Image No63, 64 & 65: Shuttle cock making at uluberia



4.15 Mat Making of Udaynarayanpur

Madur or Mat making is a traditional craft industry of Bengal. Udaynarayanpur of Haora District was once a major madur making hub of Bengal. Mansukha, Khila, GarhBhabanipur, BhabanipurSonatala ,Kanput , Narayanvchak , Kumarchak and Singti are very popular Mat making centres. There are thousands of artisans who all are involved in mat making.

The Mutha Grass is cultivated and dried to prepare madur sticks. Then the sticks are binded to prepare mats. Men and women both are involved in mat making.



Image No 66 & 67: Mat making of Udaynarayanpur

4.16 Hogla Craft of Uluberia :One of the major cottage industry of Uluberia is Hogla Craft. Nona ,Karatberia , Nimdighi villages of Uluberia are large producers of Hogla craft. Many families are involved in this craft. Beside these villages , Sankrail , Kulgachia, Hatgacha , Palitabauri, Bir Shibpur,Nalpur also produces hogla mats.

The hogla is a riparian vegetation grows abundantly in marshy areas . Though it looks like normal grass , the height attains 2 to 5 meters. They are dried and then tied together to form mats. These mats are used for various purposes .From roofing of house to prepare boat shelters , all are done by hogla mats.



Image No 68 &69:Hogla Craft of Uluberia



4.17 Lock and Key making Craft of Haora: In the Jagatballavpur Block of Haora there are many families who all are involved in making Lock and Keys. Baragachia ,Hantal, Sadatpur , Mansinghapur , Patihal are the localities where lock and Key industries developed and spreaded extensively. The skilled workers of the locality used to produce super fine quality of locks and Keys. In 1950 onwards , they even competed with Aligarh Lock and keys. But in 1980 , the Central Lock Factory got shut down because of dwindling demands.

At present there are few workshops who all have managed to continue making the lock and keys following modern sophisticated instruments. BiswanathKar , is one of them who is the owner of the oldest workshop of the locality. According to him , the cluster requires quality assistance from MSME department . Otherwise , it is difficult to compete with modern machines.



Image No70: Lock and Key making workshop,Jagatballavpur

4.18 Dried Palm Leaves Craft : This is another naturally available raw material which is used in making various items . Perhaps the most important utility is the preparation of palm



Image No71: Palm Leaves Fan are getting supplied to the whole sale mrket

leaves fan. In the early days fan making was a very important craft of rural areas. But now with the dwindling demand the craft has also diminished. Still in some areas of Haora , there are clusters where palm leaves fan are made and decorated.

From one Palm Leave , one or two fans are prepared. From the winter months the preparation for making fans initiates. The leaves are cut and immersed in water for some time. Then they are dried and straightened . The leaves are then cut into strips . They are again tied with

sticks. Colours are put on the fans to decorate them . Red colour cloth is stitched at the edges. Differt motifs are used for making them more colourful .

Palm Leaves Sepoys : Another very interesting item made out of palm leaves are the Palm Leaves Sepoys (Toy) . Those who generally prepares fans they usually prepares these sepoys. 2 to 3 days are required for making 100 dolls . Once they were in heavy demands in every local fairs. Still now , in many fairs one get to see this beautiful craft. Though this ancient craft has a mention in the Mricchakatika of Sudraka , many believes that during Sepoy Mutiny these craft got rejuvenated.

The best part of these toys are they can move their limbs which makes them very attractive for the children. However , the craft is now in dying state.

Budhen Roy of Olabibitala ,Andul is engaged in this occupation from 14 generations. At present they are the only family who are involved in this craft. Because of pandemic , all the local fairs got stalled and they are facing huge crisis. His son has now become daily labour.



Image No 72 &73: Palm Leaves Sepoy of Haora.

4.19 Zardozi Embroidery Work :Estimates suggest that more than 5 lakh people’s livelihood depends on the local zari industry in Howrah’s Panchla, Amta I and II, Udaynarayanpur, Sankrail, Domjur, Bagnan and Shyampur blocks, which account for 2,289 gram panchayat, 438 panchayat samiti and 37 zilla parishad seats.(The Telegraph July 19, 2013). So it is an important source of employability in West Bengal. Keeping in mind government of West Bengal decided to set up a Zari hub in Sankrail, Howrah. The workers of Bengal brings silk sarees from Surat, Gujrat through middlemen and sell it to these middlemen for lacking of market. Gems and Jewellery industry also plays an important role in employment generation in India. Mainly in west Bengal it has a heritage. There is a lot of skilled worker in the field of Gems and Jewellery in West Bengal, especially in Domjur, Howrah. Lots of people are working in Mumbai, Gujrat even in Dubai as mechanic in Gems and jewellery. Keeping in mind the skill and competence the Government of West Bengal has been setting up a gems and jewellery park in Ankurhati, Howrah. The Gems and Jewellery sector plays a significant role in the Indian economy, contributing around 7 per cent of the country’s GDP and 15 per cent to India’s total merchandise exports. It also employs over 4.64 million workers and is expected to employ 8.23 million by 2022.



Image No 74: Bijali Patra and other women artisans prepares the sarees at their homes only.

Zardozi embroidery with gold zari, seed pearls, sequins and beads is mainly produced by Muslim craftsmen of Panchla with six basic designs – leaf, flower, bird, animal, geometric and filler. This ornamental and dramatic embellishment is being used to create exclusive garments and accessories by leading fashion houses worldwide. History has it that zarikarigars of these villages were commissioned by the Mug hal court to make makhmali dresses for the royalty. With time, the embroiderers started getting orders from across the globe, especially Muslim-majority countries



Image No 75 &&76: Zari work at Panchla, Haora



Image No 77 &78: The resident of Panchla in Howrah, a known hub of skilled Zardozi artisans, handed over to the PM a golden-framed 2 feet long and 1 feet wide portrait. It took Mollah seven long months to stitch this portrait, a time few Zari artisans can afford due to their poor financial circumstances. And more importantly, he captioned it ‘Sree Narendra Modi.’



4.20 Terracotta Work of Rautara, Jhikira & Amragiri Temples of Amta II Block

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.

A. Damodar Temple at Rautara: Rautara, a village in Amta II block of Howrah district about 57 kilometres from Kolkata is situated on the eastern side of Jhikira, another nearby village. The village of Rautara has a number of terracotta temples and other architecture of which **Damodar Temple** in Sarkarpara deserves special mention. The south-facing *barochala* (twelve roofed) temple has an adjoining *aatchala dolmancha*, a *nahabatkhana* and an octagonal *rasmancha*. This type of temple is pretty rare in Bengal temple architecture. Possibly this *barochala* has ratha projections. Situated on a slightly raised platform, this *aatchala* temple with porch has a triple arched entrance and has intricate terracotta works. The temple was founded by the Roy family, who were the then zamindars of that area in 1684 *Sakabda*, which when converted into Gregorian calendar dates back to 1762. Sukdev Karmi of Rautara constructed this temple. The temple is dedicated to Damodar Jiu (*SaalgramSila*) and worship is performed here on a daily basis. The terracotta panels depict pictures not only from social life but also from The Ramayan. The temple has undergone renovation.

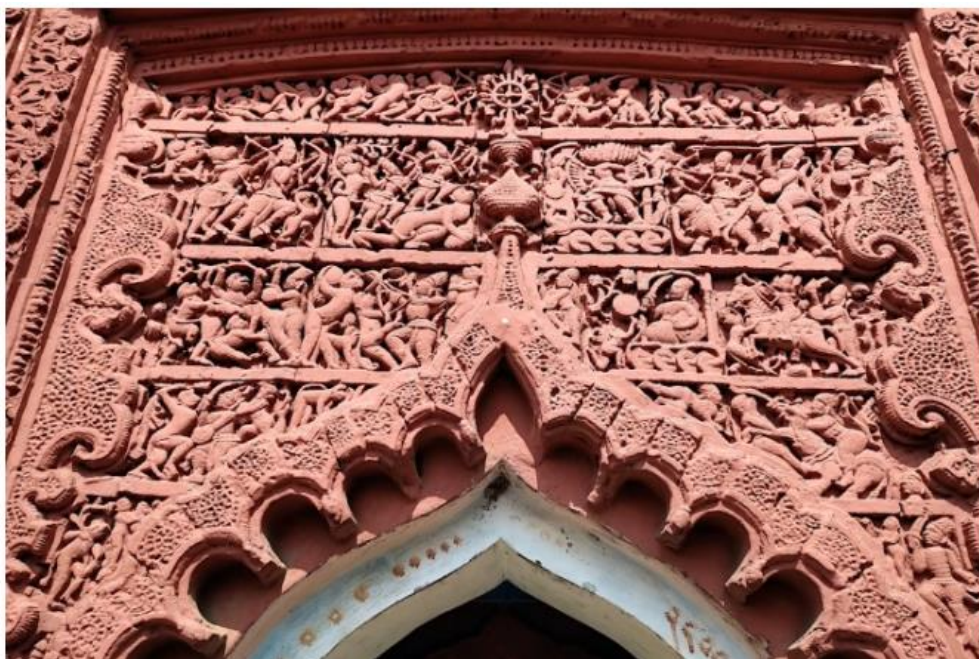


Image No79: The beautifully terracotta panel of Damodar Jiu Temple at Rautara, Haora



Image No 80 ,81 &82: One of the finest terracotta arts is found at Dadhimadhab Temple of Amragiri, Haora

B. Dadhimadhab Temple of Amragiri, Haora: There are a number of temples rich in terracotta in Amta II block of Howrah district of West Bengal namely in the villages of

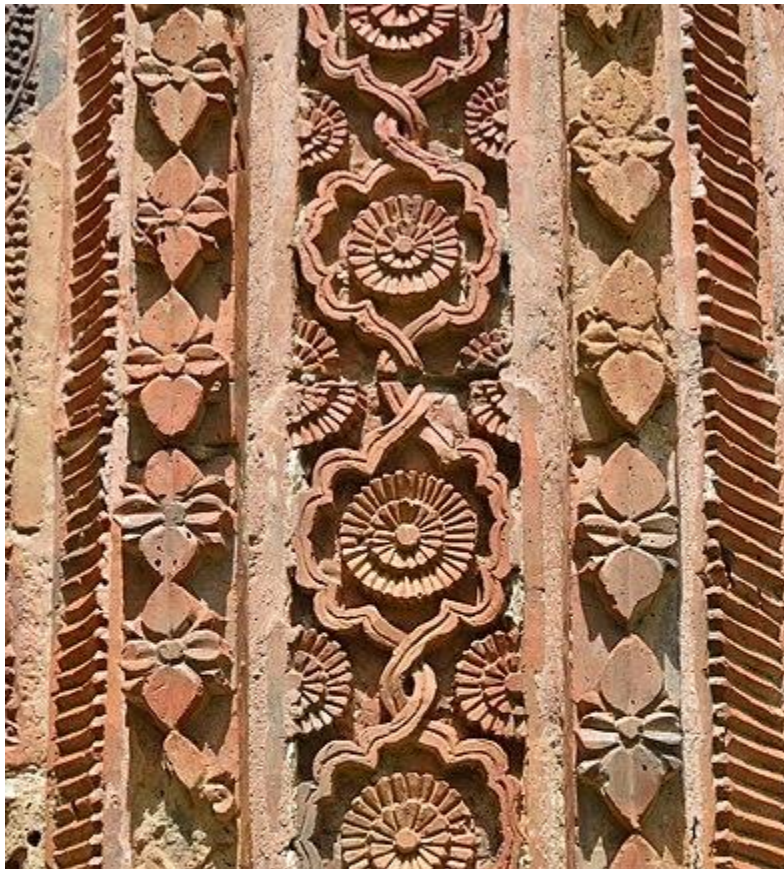


Image No83: Beautiful Panel work at the temple.

Jhikira, Rautara and Amragiri. Coming from Howrah, the first village is Amragiri on your right. A five minute walk from the main road will land you to **Dadhimadhav**

Temple which is a protected heritage monument under Government of West Bengal. A blue noticeboard in the temple courtyard will remind you. This is one of the most well-kept temples in theregion. The south-facing twenty-five feet high temple follows *aatchala* style with porch on triple entrance.

Built by the Roy family in 1686 *Sakabda* (*Baisakh* 1171 *Bangabda*, ie, April-May 1764 according to Gregorian calendar), the principal deity of the temple is Dadhimadhav *saalgramsila* which is worshipped daily. Like most of the temples of the region, it is placed on a slightly higher pedestal. The three panels has intricate terracotta works and all are intact. That apart there also exist some motifs and designs. The panels depict the exquisite craftsmanship of the then artisans who built this temple. The panels depict stories from The Ramayana – war scene of Rama and Ravana, Sita in *Ashokbon*, etc. It has also scenes from *Krishnalila*. The lower base of the temple has a number of scenes ranging from European ship and sailor on the one hand and hunting scenes on horseback and elephant back and even *babus* being carried on palanquin. These depict pictures from social life and the advent of the Europeans. There are also idols of Goddess Durga with her entire family.



Image No 84 &85: Different motifs of Palki & Boat sculpted on the walls of the temple



5. Fairs and Festivals in Haora

Like any other districts of West Bengal , Haora has a plethora of unique fairs and festivals centering around local deities . We have tried to document some of the major festivals and fairs. They are :

Some of the major festivals of Haora District in our study area :

5.1 Pir Mela : The influence of Pirs appears to have been fairly widespread in the district in the past. Many fairs and festivals are celebrated in different places of Haora in the memory of the departed Pirs. The fair at Astana (House) of Pir Gayesuddin in Gayespur village of Domjur is famous in the district. Another fair is organised at Amta Bandar in the memory of local Pir saheb for a day in January. The ManikPirer mela takes place in January at Manikpur and Brahminpara in Jagatballavpur. Sufrisahi Mela at Sudanandabati in Panchla is held in January and February. Pir Mela at Jangalbilas in Uluberia is organised in January. The astana of Pir Saheb of Kalyanpur in Amta is famous in the entire neighbourhood. Another astana of renowned Pir of Amragori in Amta is celebrated.

i. Jungle Pir Mela :

Location : Junglebilas is a village located under Uluberia subdivision where every year in the month of January , a huge fair takes place centering round the mosque of Pir sahib.

The neighbouring village of Jangalbilas is a place of Mohammedan pilgrimage centring round the mosque of Pir Saheb, a Muslim saint. Popular legends connect the Pir with an unnamed Raja of Burdwan, who after witnessing a miracle performed by the Pir, made free gift of the village to the latter. The mosque is a charchala brick structure, unusual for a mosque, with a height of about 20 feet. Two stone door-jambs flanking the closed entrance on the south display geometrical designs and lotus motifs which, on stylistic grounds, appear to belong to the 11th-13th centuries although the mosque itself could not have been built before the 16th century. The annual festival of the saint commences on the last day of the Bengali month of Poush (mid-January) and lasts for seven consecutive days. On the first two days, Hindus and Muslims alike gather on the bank of the adjacent tank and offer flowers and

simi into the tank in the name of the Pir. From the District Gazetteer of Haora written by L.S.S. O'Malley and M. Chakravarti and published in 1909 .

The Myth surrounding the Fair : A holy man once asked a boatman to ferry him across the river Rajpoa in what is now the Haora district of West Bengal. Since the holy man did not



Image No 86: The clay horses are used in Dargah

have any money, he promised to pay for the voyage by giving one of his goats, of which he had many. On reaching his destination, the holy man handed over a goat to the boatman who, instead of saying thanks, ran away as if to save his life. The goat had turned into a tiger. Evidently, the holy man had supernatural powers. Local legend has it that officials of the Maharajah of Burdwan, while on an inspection tour, found the holy man living in a temple. They wondered why a Muslim saint should occupy a Hindu mandir. He treated the question as a challenge and asked for a personal interview with the Maharajah. On meeting the holy man in his palace, the prince certainly did not run away but was greatly awed by the sight of goats turning into tigers. He also acceded readily to the man's request for being granted some land.

Whether the grant was around the present tomb of the holy man or not is not recorded anywhere. Although, Shri Hemendra Bandyopadhyay in his history Haora, called in Bengali *HaoraZellarItihas*, describes these episodes. The man came from Arabia. The current

caretaker of the tomb, Shaikh Maqbool very proudly told the author that the Pirbaba came from Arabia to preach Islam. His guess was that this happened some 250 years ago. Until his coming, there were no Muslims in the area. Today more than half the population of the village *Baniban*, which the author visited in July, 2001, is Muslim. Haora district also has a large Muslim presence some of whom must be due to the proselytizing of this Pirba whose name was Abbas-uddin Shah, although, he was popularly known as Jungle Pir Saheb, presumably because the area was then a dense forest.

Baba's miracles were repeatedly mentioned by the people of the mazaar. Superstition, as it were, was the theme song of the shrine. Every year on 14th January, over a lac (100,000) of people gather at a fair. It is known as the *Jungle BilashPirer Mela*. Many Hindus also come. Almost all Hindus of the village rever the Baba but are not allowed into the *mazaar* premises. A former member of the *Wakf* informed that the *mazaar* was build by no one. On the day of the *Mela*, quite a few women take a dip in the pond near the *mazaar* and then offer flowers



Image No87: In Bengal this kind of work is called *autchalah* which is known to be a typically Hindu temple design.

while bathing. If the petals glide back to the offerer, she would go to the caretakers, collect a betel leaf *or pann* from them and consume it along with the petals. The hope would be, to be able to have a baby. On the other hand, men offer flowers in the hope that the petals would glide across the pond. If they cross the

water, any wish of the offerer would be fulfilled. Such is the magnet of faith or superstition! Or the charisma of the Pirbaba. There is a tree in the neighbouring area whose leaves were dark green and nearly round or oval. The fruit was black. According to the elder, nowhere



Image No88: Different bamboo baskets are sold in the fair

else in Bengal was there such a species of tree. It had been planted by the babe and was still going strong!

On the night after he had ascended to heaven, all of a sudden the *mazaar* emerged miraculously. Obviously, it was a divine signal for his followers to bury him inside the edifice. Incidentally, the only room in the edifice is a relatively small one, and is not much bigger than say twice the area of the tombstone which is covered with a bright green and red *chador*. There is just about sufficient space to go around the tombstone. The height of the room is also low and proportionate to the

smallness of the floor. There are no windows and hardly any embellishments. Three of the walls have approximately 20cm x 30cm depressions for holding wick lamps. The fourth wall has the only door to the room.

There is no hint of a dome which one normally looks forward to seeing in Muslim architecture. The roof is not quite flat. It is sloped on all four sides. The slopes are gradual and slightly curving. In Bengal this kind of work is called *autchalah* which is known to be a typically Hindu temple design. Bandyopadhyay ends chapter on Baniban in his book with a gentle remark about the Hindu similarity.



Image No 89 &90: Different clay items are sold in the fair.





Image No91: Baskets are sold by local basket makers

ii. Singti ,Udaynarayanpur , Bhai Khan Pir Mela or Boro Pukurer Mela: Though Udaynarayanpur is not located within our study area , but this fare is one of the largest fare of Haora. Singti is a rural area under District Howrah of West Bengal, India. Here, in winter potatoes grow in abundant. On the first day of the Bengali month of Magh (mid-January) a big fair called ‘Bhai Khan Pirer Mela’ is held in Singti. This is the biggest fair of Howrah District. This is also referred as ‘Alur Damer Mela’ (Fair of potato curry) as ‘Alur Dam’ is the



Image No 92 &93: Singti Fair is famous for potato and crabs. Potato curries are prepared at the fair





Image No 94 &95: Green vegetables and nets are also sold in the fair



Image No 96&97: Along with potatoes, crabs are also sold here in the fare. Many crab sellers come here and sell their products.

5.2 Ram Puja of Ramrajatala : Ramrajatala is a neighbourhood in Howrah city of Howrah district in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is a part of the area covered by Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA). The name of the area comes from the presence of a temple dedicated to Lord Rama and three months long worship is undertaken by the people of the locality every year at the temple. This tradition of worship of Lord Rama has been continuing for about 3 centuries here



Image No98:Rampuja of Ramrajatala

History :Ayodhyaram Choudhury, the zamindar started Rama puja first time in this area. According to him, he got some divine instructions to worship Lord Rama. After that he started a huge Barowari Puja of Lord Rama. That Puja got a massive popularity in the passage of time and the locality was named after it **Ramrajatala**. But during that time, Saraswati Puja was very famous in that area and the villagers used to enjoy the same a lot from previous 300 years. So some villagers those were the fond of the Saraswati Puja opposed the Ram Puja. The two groups came to a conclusion after numerous discussions that Ram Puja would be

done and the Goddess of Wisdom Saraswati would be placed on the top of Lord Ram & Sita. From that day the customary started to cut the bamboo from the bamboo grove of Sasthitala and perform the very first Puja of those bamboos at Choudhury Para Shib Mandir on the day of Saraswati Puja. During the initial days the Puja the fair firstly held for three days. After that it continued for a fortnight and then up to a month. Now Ram Puja starts on Ramnavami in Chaitra-Baisakh month and continues up to the last Sunday of Shraban month. It is longest running fair in Bengali.

It became a custom to cut the bamboo from the bamboo grove of Sasthitala and perform the very first puja of bamboo at Choudhury para Shib Mandir on the day of Saraswati Puja. From the day of Saraswati puja, the preparation of Ram Puja started. Bamboos were cut to make the idol of Lord Rama on the same day. The bamboos were kept in the temple after navigating the entire area. One month is needed to make the idol from the time of Shivratri. This puja continues for few months and a large fair is held during the puja months. At the early stage, the puja and the fair were held for three days only. After that it continued for a fortnight and now it is celebrated for one month. Now Ram puja starts on Ramnavamitithi in Chaitra Baishakh month and continues up to the last Sunday of Shrabon month. The immersion of Lord Rama's idol is done on that last Sunday. This puja continues for four months. The fair is now the longest running fair in Bengali culture.

The temple is very old. The idol of Rama is 22 feet in height and 16 feet in width. There are 26 idols in the temple like Ram Sita, Laxman, Bharat, Satrughana, Shiva, Bramha, Saraswati and so on. This puja is very famous for the Ram Puja which is done almost all over India and continues throughout the year or the on the day of Ram Navami, but here worshipping is done once in a year and lasts for four months. Many varieties of Bhog or food items are offered.

The most interesting thing in this idol is that Rama has a moustache. It is also claimed that there is no political issue in this Puja.

A fair is held during the four month long puja. This is popular, particularly during the bisarjan (immersion ceremony) that is the last journey on the last Sunday in Shraavana. Rama



Image No99: Immersion of Ram at Ramrajatala

of the road to catch one last glimpse of their Rama and Sita. This mega event is marked with a huge fair that sits on either side of the road on that day. Along with Rama and Sita, the idol of Somi Chandi that is worshipped nearby, also for four months, goes for immersion in the same procession.

Vijaya is one day of the year when Ramrajatala in Howrah is chock-a-block as devotees throng the area to bid adieu to the deities. Lord Rama and Sita usually leave the temple premises in the afternoon after an elaborate puja and devotees offering their prayers for a last time. A long procession comprising bands, bahurupes and other attractions accompany the idol moving slowly along the main road. Devotees gather on both sides



Image No100: Immersion of Sitala along with Ram during the immersion

5.3 Charak & Gajan Festival :Throughout the agricultural communities of riverine Bengal , Charak and Gajan festivals are most popular. Charak Puja (also known as Cadak, and Nil Puja) is a Hindu folk festival in honour of the god Shiva. It's held in Indian state of West Bengal and southern Bangladesh on the last day (Songkranti) of the month of Chaitra (Choitro in the Bengali calendar), at midnight. People believe that by satisfying Shiva, the festival will bring prosperity by eliminating the sorrow and sufferings of the previous year. The preparation usually starts a month in advance. The arrangement team of the festival go from village to village to procure the necessary components like paddy, oil, sugar, salt, honey, money and other items needed for the ritual. On the midnight of the Songkranti, the worshippers are gathered together to worship Shiva, and after a puja, the prasad (items blessed by the deity) are distributed. The festival is to celebrate the union of Shiva and Parvati . The celebration of fertility Haora district is not an exception. There are many areas where Gajan is celebrated in high fervour.

i..Charak Festival ,Bynan , Haora



Image No 101: Charak Festival, Bynan, Haora



Image No102 &103: Piercing and performance by the Gajan Sannyasis





Image No 104: Piercing of tongue is a common ritual by the Sannyasis

ii. Narna ,Domjur , Haora :Every year in front of Panchananda Shiva temple there occurs huge fair related to Charak and Gajan. It is said that the temple is very old (about 500 years old) and has been established by the ancestors of present owner known as Dharanidhar Ghosh. There is an old peepal tree and waterbody surrounding which the festival takes place. Another common ritual of Charak is “Jhapan” where the Gajan Sannyasis jump from 22 ft high bamboo pole.



Image No 105 &106: Charak and Gajan Festival near Panchananda Temple, Domjur

iii. Argoria Village, Shyampur, Haora : Here the speciality is all the children performs the Charak rituals. Young kids of 5 years to 16 yeras participate in this Jhapan. Many people from adjoining areas come to see this miraculous act.



Image No 107: Children performs jhapan at Argoriavillage,Shyampur



Image No 108 &109: Fair occurs centering the Jhapan of the children

iv. Patihal, Haora: Here the traditional Charak festival also includes Nilabati's marriage. The celebration takes place in front of Baba Pipeswar Shiva Temple.



Image No 110 &111: Charak performance and Nilabati's marriage at Patihal

5.4 Ras Utsav of Belur Ras Bari : Belur Rashbari is owned by one of the richest families of Kolkata, whose show of wealth during Durgotsav was legendary. The old chronicles of Kolkata give evidence of how money spent on Durga Puja and other religious festivals by the Dawn family of Jorasanko was talk of the town for several years. The history of the family, written by Haradhan Dutta, records that more than 100 years ago, the height of their Durga idol was 12 feet, and a gang of 45 loaders were needed to carry the idol on their shoulders for immersion. This riverside property was owned by one Purna Chandra Dawn, son of the famous Shiv Krishna Dawn, after whom a road in north Kolkata is named. The property was



Image No 112: The idols were decorated during the Ras Festival

taken in the mid-19th century and soon a massive nine-pinnacle temple in typical Bengal school of architecture style was built in 1890. It is dedicated to Radharaman Jew, the family



Image No 113: Deity comes out of the temple to pay a visit to the visitors

deity of the Dawns, and is still worshipped in this temple. Though the temple is not embellished with any significant terracotta panel, its slim structure still adds beauty to the panorama. Just behind the main temple, six ‘aatchala’ Shiva temples stand as votive. These temples are all in the typical ‘aatchala’ style of

Bengal school, very commonly seen with

Navaratnatemples. The complex houses a circular Rasa Mancha, where several clay models of Radha and Krishna are displayed. This Rasa Mancha becomes a theatre of festival during ‘Pancham Dol’, a very special festival celebrated here on the fifth day of Dol Yatra. The complex attracts a huge local crowd on Janmashtami as well. Ras is still celebrated and the entire complex is lit up with multi coloured lights. The food and other stalls are all housed outside the temple complex. Over the years several members of the Daw family have left for Kolkata and other greener pastures, in different parts of the country and abroad. But the temple continued to function, but but it lacked its former glory. The years of utter neglect has taken its toll with several of the structures crumbling down.



Image No 114 &115: Belur Rasbari and the deities are carried out during Pancham Dol Yatra



Image No 116 &117: Fair occurs centering the festival of Pancham Dol where local sweets are sold. Performers are invited to perform songs in the temple complex



B. Mahiyari Kundu Choudhury 's RasUtsab



Image No 118 &119: Huge celebration occurs during Ras Utsav

C.Ras Utsab at Uluberia Kali Bari



Image No 120 &121: Ras Utsav at Uluberia.

D. GhoshparaRoybariRasUtsab, Haora :



Image No 122, 123 ,124 &125:DwariBarir Ras Utsab, Khila,Udaynarayanpur



5.5 Rathayatra at Baguibari, Dalalpukur, Shibpur :Priyonath Ghosh Bagui



established Baguibari about 150 years ago. There is a Radha Krishna Temple and a Raas Mancha in the premise. Rathayatra and Ras Utsav is celebrated here. A small fair is organised where local shola dolls, clay items are displayed and sold . It is quiet popular in the



Image No 126, 127&128: Rathayatra at Baguibari, Shibpur



Image No 129 ,130, 131&132: Shola dolls, Clay vegetables and fruits, different local sweets are sold at the Rathayatra Fair

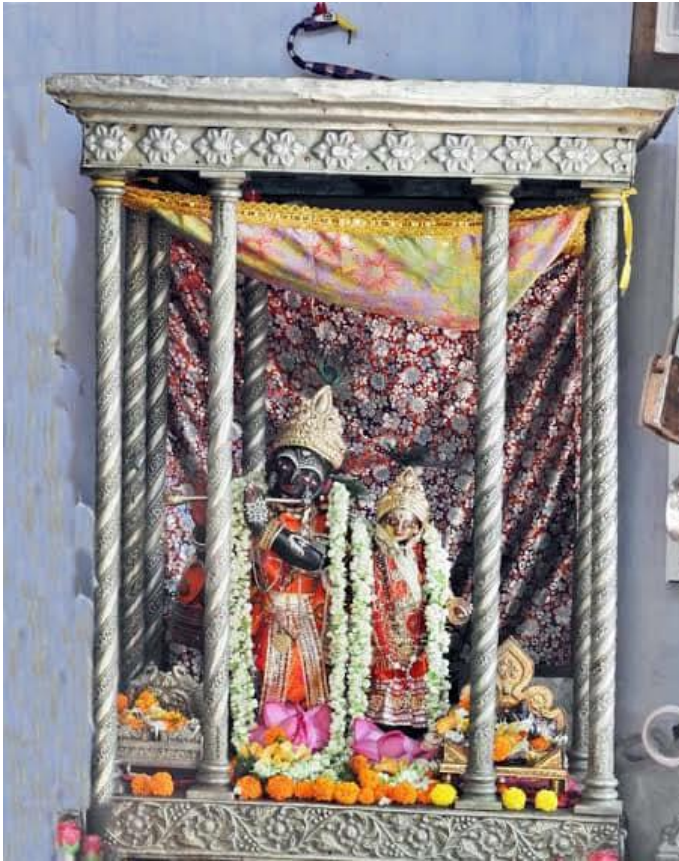


Image No 133, 134&135: During festivals, the deities are worshipped in the terrace area with the offerings.

5.6 Durga Puja: There are many traditional houses (Bonedi) at Haora where Durga Puja is getting celebrated from hundreds of years. Here are list of some of them :

i. Ram Ram Ghos Bari Durga Puja, Khosmara Village : The puja that we could see now is 229 years old but according to family members the puja is even much more older. Ramram



Image No 136: The traditional Durga Idol at Ghosh Family

Ghosh started off this puja when he was almost penniless and about to end his life. At that point he got order from Maa Durga to start the puja with 1001 gold coins which he suddenly

found in the store. Following orders he moved to Bardhaman Raja for some land . Still now the puja is celebrated in the same land. Following the rituals of the house ,Manasa devi and Durga Devi are worshipped together.

ii. Roy Bari & Ghosal Bari Durga Puja , Patihaal of Ballavpur : Both the Pujas are century old and takes place following old customs and rituals.

Roy Bari Puja started about 300 years before by mostly Bardhaman Raj family . Extravagant Puja used to start with Canon firing . Here the idol is 4 handed instead of 10 handed and the face resembles to the family deity of Bardhaman Raja – Singhabahini.



Image No137&138: Roy Family Durga Puja, Patihhaal



iii. 400 year old Narit Gazipur Durga puja of Amta II Block :



Image No 139 & 140: 400-year-old Narit Gazipur Durga puja of Amta II Block

iv. Abhaya Durga of Shibpur Pal Bari



Image No 141: Abhaya Durga of Shibpur Pal Bari

v. AmtaGazipur, Banerjee Family Puja: This puja is almost 387 years old and starts by worshipping Bel Tree during Janmashami Utsab



Image No 142: AmtaGazipur, Banerjee Family Puja

vi. Chattopadhyaya Family 430 years old Durga Puja of Bagnan



Image No 143 & 144: Chattopadhyaya Family 430 years old Durga Puja of Bagnan

vii. Bandopadhyaya Family Puja of Central Haora: It is also 350 yeras old Durga Puja started by Girish Chandra Bandopadhyaya



Image No 145 & 146: Bandopadhyaya Family Puja of Central Haora

viii. **RoygunakarBharatchandra Family’s Durga Puja** :This is really a very old Durga Puja Puja having very odd idol. Here Kartick and Ganesh are placed on top of Saraswati and lakshmi.



Image No 147 ,148&149: The idol, plaque and the house of BharatchandraRoygunakar

ixDurga puja of Rashpur,Amta II Block : According to local sources , the durga puja of Raspur is getting celebrated from 1545 AD .



Image No 150: Durga Puja of Raspur,Amta. One of the oldest puja of Haora.

x. Wooden Durga of Jhikira :Jhikira in Amta Block has many temples which all are of beautiful vernacular architecture. Amongst them there is 250 years old Nine pinnacle Temple where the wooden idol of Chandi is worshipped. The two major deities are Joychndi Mata and GarchandiMata .



Image No 151&152: Joy Chandi and Gar chandi idols made out of wood.

xi. Durga Puja of Belur Math: Swami Vivekananda started Durga puja at Ashram in the year 1901 . He wanted to pay homage to Maa Sarad through Durga Puja .Therefore initiated Kumari Puja at the Ramkrishna Mission Math where young girl is worshipped as Maa Durga. Then he worshipped Maa Sarada with 108 lotus. Same ritual is followed at Belur Math still now.

Image No 153, 154, 155, 156, 157 & 158: Durga Puja at Ramakrishna Mission







5.7Bhim Puja of Jagatballavpur: Though it is unusual but there is a custom of Bhim Puja in the Purba Medinipur and Haora districts of West Bengal. Colossal size of Bhim Idol is worshipped. Small fairs are also organised surrounding the Bhim Puja Pandal.



Image No 159&160: Huge Bhim Idols are worshipped at Jagatballavpur.

5.8Kali Puja

i. Thousand Handed Kali Idol of Shibpur : This old Kali temple is very popular in south India. The famous singer Subhalakshmi visited this temple and from then it became very popular amongst Tamil pilgrims. Even the food of the deity includes sambhar ,rasam , murukku and curd. However the idol is created by Kumortuli artist Priyonath Pal in 1870. Here the idol is greenish blue in colour and has tie up hair unlike other Kali idol.



Image No 161: Thousand Hand Kali of Shibpur

ii. Johura Kali Idol of Shibpur : Another very interesting Kali Idol is Johura Kali idol of Shibpur area which owes its origin from Maldah.



iii. Bhadra Kali and Bimala Kali of Pero Village of Kanpur , Haora



Image No 162: Johura Kali Idol of Shibpur

Image No 163: Bhadra Kali and Bimala Kali of Pero Village of Kanpur, Haora

iv. Shri ShriFalharini Kali of Bannerjeehat, Salkia



Image No 164: Shri ShriFalharini Kali of Bannerjeehat, Salkia

v. Uluberia Kali Idol and Kali temple



Image No 165 & 166: Uluberia Kali Idol and Kali temple

5.9 Sitala Puja : Sitalaa also called Shiitala, is a Hindu goddess widely worshiped in the Indian subcontinent, notably in North India. As an incarnation of Supreme Goddess Parvati, she cures poxes, sores, ghouls, pustules and diseases, and most directly linked with the disease smallpox acclaimed by Hindus. Goddess Sitala is worshiped on the eighth day after festival of colors (Holi), on the occasion of SitalaAsthami.

Sitala's main association in Bengal is with the various forms of pox. The origin of worship of Sitala in this region was thought to come from a popular story about a kingdom that was infected with the smallpox disease. Sitala went in disguised as a beautiful woman to see the king and advised him to worship her. The people of the kingdom worshipped her and were



Image No167: Huge idol of Shitala Devi is worshipped with grand festival.

relieved of the dreadful smallpox disease (Misra). In Northern India Sitala, is associated with pox but she is also seen as the protector of children (Wadley). It is claimed that in a previous life Sitala was married to a Muslim emperor and was very faithful and devoted to the Hindu gods and goddesses, who was deified as Sitala in reward (Misra). She is worshipped during Caitra which is in the months of March and April or Baisakh the months of April and May because these months are in the hot season when the outbreak of the disease is the most prevalent. The Mangalkavaya tradition is an archetype of the synthesis between the Vedic and the popular folk culture of India. Indigenous myths and legends inherited from Indo-Aryan cultures began to blend and crystallize around popular deities and semi-mythological figures in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Mangalkavaya were used to describe the greatness of particular Hindu deities known as “Nimnokoti” (roughly translating as lower) by historians, because they were absent or unimportant in classical Hindu literature such as the Vedas or Purans. These deities were based on indigenous to Bengal who had become assimilated in regional Hinduism. These deities are often depicted with unusually strong human qualities and they engage in direct interaction with humans. The Mangalkavyas were written to popularize the worship of a number of deities, mostly Shitala, Manasa and Chandi.

The physical attributes of Sitala are as follows.

1. Appeared as Brahmin women, in Red border white sari

The Goddess Sitala is the cool one. She always appeared as Brahmin women who dressed up with red border white sari. Her hair is long and open. The length of hair is too long and they touched her knees. She is fair and put big round ‘Sindur’ on her forehead. She is a married woman. The attitude looks and dress of goddess reflects her divine personality.

2. Ass as Vehicle

Mother goddess Sitala rides on an Ass. In Hindu mythology it is common that deities have various animals as their vehicles. It is also believed that the vehicle also represents the nature and spiritual power of the deity. The selection of an ass, as a vehicle is unique and surprising because the ass is referred as Gadha. Ass as a mammal is bracketed with the horse. It lacks all horse like qualities thus become a symbol of dullness and idiocy. In this context it neither represents sexuality nor disrespect. It represents destruction, devastation and complete infertility. If she is in her terrible form can completely devour vegetation and life. She rides on Ass which is a unique symbol of negative animosity.

3. The Broom

Goddess Sitala carries a huge broom in her hand. The broom is referred in Bengali “jhata or jharu”. This article is used to remove dirt and dust. The first job of Savara women is getting up early in the morning and sweeping the house with a broom. The use of broom after sunset is prohibited. The belief is that it can sweep out all prosperity if it used at night. Another belief is that if pregnant women cross a broom she runs the risk of miscarriage. The broom is made of straws tied tightly from one side, leaving the other side loose and open. It represents simplest transformation of nature into culture. Broom as an instrument of cleanliness helps in transformation of nature. Its form in itself has a variety of meanings. For instances, the tightly tied side of broom represents unity, order and cleanliness while the open and loose side with scattered positions of straws symbolizes disunity and disorder. It is never placed in the position in which loose and open side is upward because it is believed that it brings disunity, disorder and pollution. One important practice is the symbolic sweeping or dusting of the subject with the broom made of feathers or twigs of some plates. With this ritual, the patients mind and spirit are supposed to be cleansed and a balance is restored. In this particular context it represents both aspects cleaning and elimination.

4. The Pitcher

Pitcher in Bengali language is known as “gharo”. It is used to store water particularly in summers. It is used as a device to cool the water. The pitcher resembles the human body in many ways. Its hollowness is like human body which has air as breath or prana inside. Its association with water is very significant because water is a universal symbol of vegetation and life. Pitcher as its container symbolizes human body which contains life. The association of a pitcher with the cult of Sitala emphasis the fertility and life-giving or protecting aspect of the cult.

5. Winnowing Fan

Winnowing is a process of cleaning grain through the winnowing tray. It is called “kulo” in Bengali language. As an instrument it has acquired a unique cultural significance in Sitala worship. It is used in various rituals and ceremonies. It mediates between purity and impurity. The cult of Sitala is also associated with a particular type of impurity which causes smallpox. The disease in itself is processes which symbolize both the manifestation and outbreak of impurities and ultimately it ends in purification and rejuvenation. As a symbol, it represents the cleaning and curative power of the cult on one side and the mediating and luminal position of the cult on the other.

6. Huge Eyes

The huge eyes symbolize the essential nature of the cult. She is not the personification of goodness and beauty. She represents the negative and ugly side of famine. She looks with starved eyes towards her victims. Her eyes invoke dreads and awe which is transformed into respect and devotion. Through humanity and devotion she is propitiated particularly in the season of an outbreak of the smallpox.

7. The ewer

The ewer which is locally known as “jug” . It is a pot which is used to carry water or other drinks. These containers are communally used to contain liquids but the specific form of urn is used to contain ashes of cremated persons. Sitala keeps a pitcher and an ewer in her hands. Symbolically she may be life giving and life taking depending on her will. In the symbol of a vessel the pitcher and ewer both have qualities of protecting as well as of containing.

Throughout Haora, Sitala Devi is worshipped with great aplomb. Here is a list of main temples .

a. Boro Sitala a Maa of Salkia : Salkia is an old settlement along River Hugli where Sitala Devi is worshipped from ancient times. Here Seven sisters of Sitala devi is found to be worshipped in different locations . They are said to be as Boro Maa , Choto Maa etc. It is at a short distance away from Bandhaghat, Howrah. Boro Maa is the elder sister of all Sitala Maa. She looks like a queen. The temple is located in the middle of Haraganj Bazar and opposite of Salkia AC market and just beside Arabinda Mall. The biggest festival of Salkia is Sitala Mata **Snan Yatra** which usually happens in the holy Maghi Purnima where pilgrims from different places come up. A huge crowd gathers for this occasion. Throughout the year the temple catches pilgrims.



Image No168: Boro SitalaDevi



Image No 169&170: The Snanyatra is associated with huge procession during the Maghi Purnima





Image No 171: The Mejo Maa of Salkia, Haora



Image No 172: Flying Kites during puja is a tradition at Salkia. Tikiapara is the biggest kite making centre where large number of kites like petkatichandial and Charbati are available

8 THE TELEGRAPH HOWRAH FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

PUJA SPECIAL

Like a *chunni* in the sky

Red, green, blue, yellow, orange specks dot the blue firmament of Howrah. You can tell Viswakarma puja is just round the corner. Flying kites on Viswakarma puja is as part of the traditional ritual as *anjali* is to the puja. Kite flying is particularly rampant in central Howrah or to be more specific, in Howrah town. Several thousand kites of different hues cover the sky on this day while in other parts of the district like Andul, Dumjur, Amta or Bagnan kites are usually flown on Saraswati Puja or *Pous Sankranti*.

"It is difficult to ascertain the relation between kite and Lord Viswakarma for he is not really a god of kites," remarked Alok Mukherjee, a retired judge in Howrah. He added that it's a funny game and in his childhood almost all boys flew kites. "That was the common practice which is on the wane now," he laments.

Hemen Banerjee, a Howrah researcher and author of *Sa-likhar Tibritta* says he knew people who flew love letters to their beaus through kites from one rooftop to another.

Kites of different

Petkata Chandial and Charbati. Besides there are several other varieties bearing pictures of tiger, elephant, coins, glasses, pistols, the national flag and a sundry other things. There are two types of kites called *chalu*, which is the cheaper variety and Australian, which is dearer depending on the quality of paper used.

Kites are widely available on Belilious Road and Pilkhana where these are sold in huge quantities. However, there are shops in other parts of the district also. "Tikiapara is the biggest kite-making centre though the trend of kite flying is gradually diminishing," says Bholabhai of Bholia Kite Shop on Belilious Road. He sells four to five lakhs of kites in a season. Apart from the normal varieties, he also sells special kites like Adhwa or Pantoa which are flown in kite competitions and are brought from Lucknow or Uttar Pradesh.

Md Ismail of Janata kite shop says kites are normally available in seven varieties according to size. The smallest is called Sikitel while the larger ones are called Ektel, Adhtel, Sawatel, Dertel, Dutel and so on. Besides paper, plastic kites are also available in various

gy, one would say

Kite flying needs yarns which are very crucial to the game. Yarns of different varieties are sold. Normally branded yarns like Gun 30, Red Gun, Cotton 30, Chain 20, JPC, Chain 12, Vardhaman brands are widely used. These are available in 300 mt, 600 mt and 900 mt and the cost varies from Rs 18 to Rs 30. Yarns of Madura Coats and Mahavir Spinning Mills of Ludhiana are extremely popular.

Manjha, a mixture that is rubbed on to the yarns to make them strong, are available in different brands like Nahi Raja Khan, Soni Samrat, Wadi Raja Khan, Khalid Bhaika Manjha, Rishu 501, or Sikander. The cost also varies from Rs 35 to Rs 140 according to the length of the yarn. In Bholia Kite Shop, good quality Sikander *manjha* of 1000 mt is sold at Rs 150. Kites are available in different

kites are also available in Tikiapara or Pilkhana.

The *latai* is an integral part of kite flying. Wooden *latai* of various sizes like 3 inch, 4 inch, 5 inch and 6 inch are available. The cost varies from Rs 5 to Rs 23 in different shops. Like plastic kites, plastic *latais* have also come in vogue. "An STC product of a ready-made *manjha* with *latai* is very popular nowadays," says Kanai Ch. Goswami, a kite seller of Joyguru Bhandar.

Like all other games, kite flying too has its own terminology *Bholka dewa*, *duo dewa*, *hapta dhara*, *kan-nick*, *laat khawa*, *kor khatana*, *bho kaita* or *chhuni*. When a kite goes high above and looks like a spot on the sky it is called *chhuni*.

Then there is the *pench khela* or the technique of cutting the *manjha* of another kite. *Pench* depends on the type of *manjha*, hard or soft, and on

Circular Road. "In our times, we rushed after a kite with a long slender bamboo stick called *laga* and accidents were common as boys were oblivious to everything when they followed a falling kite," he said.

However, kites are selling in fewer numbers in Howrah. Kanai Goswami says he usually sold more than one lakh kites in a season but during the last couple of years the figure is gradually dwindling. Md Ismail of Janata kite shop echoes the same sentiments. Bapi says this year the continuing monsoon has affected the kites sales. Sk Irfan of Irfan Kite Centre says the increasing cost is also a problem. Ismail adds that computer and video games and the cell phone are increasingly preoccupying children and today very few of them actually know how to fly a kite.

A boy looks on at a kite shop in Howrah. Pictures by Sanjoy Chattopadhyaya



Image No 173&174: Kanai Goswami says that he sells almost 1 lakh kites during the season



b. NaritBaroyariShitala Puja



Image No 175& 176: Huge congregation takes place during the Shitala Puja at Narit



c. Sitala Temple of Baksara road, Betore



d. Mukherjee Family's Sitala Mata Puja of Sibpur , Haora





Image No 179&180:Sitala Puja at Mukherjee Family





Image No 181:Snanyatra of SitalaDevi, Mukherjee Family

e.Choto Maa Sitala,Salkia,Bandhaghat : During Maghi Purnima , huge gathering takes place during Snan Yatra .



Image No 182 & 183: Choto Maa Sitala, Salkia, Bandhaghat

Image No 184: Panchanan tala Road,Sitala Temple



Image No 185: Gazipur,Amta II Block, Haora



Image No 186: Haora BelgachiaSitala Mandir



Image No 187: Chakpara, Haora



f.SitalaDevi ,Halderpara,In the winding lanes of Halderpara, central Howrah, is a temple of the goddess of health. The goddess is the healer and protector of the people of Howrah. Devotees frequent the temple in the spring and summer months, when most children and also adults suffer from chicken pox, mumps or other seasonal diseases. The temple premises is chock-a-block on Sitala Ashtami in the Bengali month of Phalgun, the day of the annual utsav of the deity. More than 2,000 people gather through the day to offer puja to the goddess. Some pray for rapid recovery of their loved ones while others come to show gratitude to the deity for curing someone by offering something they had pledged. The Sitala temple is said to be 200 years old. Biswanath Pandit, a local purohit and an ayurvedic doctor, lived in this part of Howrah that was sparsely populated and was mostly jungle. There was an adjoining pond with his house and a cowshed. It is believed that Biswanath had found a kashtipathar (touchstone) figure of Sitala at the cowshed and had also dreamt of the goddess. He started worshipping the goddess in a mud hut near his house which was later made into a concrete structure.



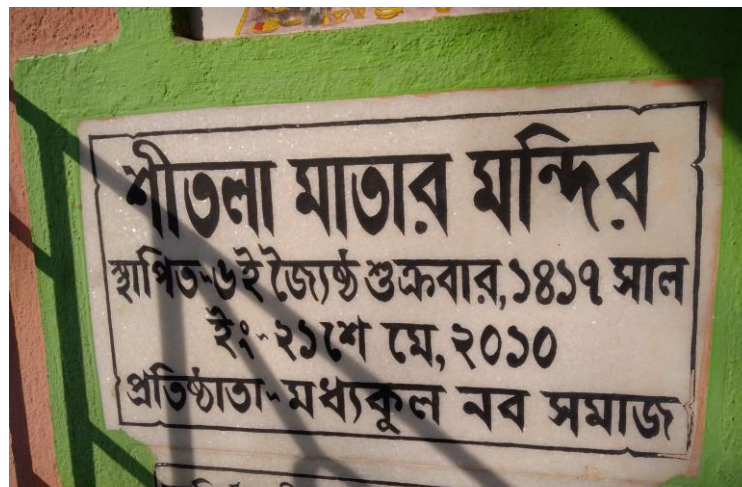
Image No 188:SitalaDevi,Halderpara

With a new temple, a cement idol of the goddess was also installed. Descendants of Biswanath took the responsibility of running the temple after him. However, it was as late as 2008 when Haradhan Pandit, Biswanath's grandson, decided to renovate the temple. The present temple came up with funds collected from devotees and also from the family. "When we made the new temple, we ensured that the old structures were not destroyed. The sanctum sanctorum was kept intact and marble slabs were placed on top of the old concrete structure," said Goutam Pandit, the present sevait of the temple.

Sitala is seen here in a green hue, with the characteristic broom in one hand and a vessel in another. On either side of the deity are a yellow-hued Hiravati and red-hued Raktavati. "They depict the forms of rash. The rash is usually red when it appears and later becomes white blisters," said Goutam. In front of Sitala are idols of demons Jarasur, Ghantakarna, goddess Manasha. The small kashthipathar idol can also be found in this temple. The temple is maintained by the family members themselves as there is no debuttor property. "We run all temple expenses ourselves and also with donations from devotees," said Goutam. "Every 12 years the idol is cleaned and painted again," said Goutam.

Sitala Ashtami is the annual puja of the deity when devotees gather at the temple for special puja and offerings. Five days prior to the puja, a traditional announcement is made in the neighbourhood where a drummer walks through announcing the day of the puja. Devotees bring offerings of their choice. "We usually do not ask for anything, but those who believe in it offer neem leaves, turmeric and a little oil to the deity, after their loved ones are cured of chicken pox," said Goutam. In the evening, people gather to sing songs of Sitala, called sayelargaan. Bhog is offered and distributed the next day. "We keep the bhog distribution for the next day to avoid chaos on the day of the puja,"

Image No 189 & 190: SitalaPuja, Madhyakul, Amta, Haora



5.10 Ghetu Puja : This is another very old ritual of Haora District . Ghetu Puja is being observed on Ghetu Sankranti in rural Bengal. It is a traditional festival of rural areas. In the morning and evening, kids come to every household with lantern, incense sticks and Ghetu flowers to sing the songs of Ghetu. They collect small amount of money from the household. It is the ritual of certain classes of rural people. Ghetu flowers are always bloom in the spring time mainly on the roadside and waste lands. It is a white flower with sweet scent and pink on the centre arranged in branched clusters. Hill Glory Bowed is the common name of this flower. It's botanical name is *Clerodendrum Infortunatum*. It belongs to the plant family Verbenaceae. This is native to our region. We all know it by the names Ghetu, Ghontakorno Bhat and Bhaita.



Image No 191: Ghetu Flower or *Clerodendrum Infortunatum* blooming during spring time



Image No 192,193, 194&195:Ghetu Puja is performed mostly by children.

5.11 Ranna Puja, Haora: Manasa Devi is a popular local deity of Haora and during her puja one of the major ritual is performing “Arandhan” or No cooking Day . This no cooking day is celebrated as Ranna Puja in Haora. As a part of the puja ritual , cooking is done at night of the previous day of the puja . Neighbours are invited for eating food at night . But on puja day , the kitchen burner is worshipped and no cooking is done. This puja takes place in the rainy season / bhadrawhen there is chance of snakes coming out of the holes.



Image No 196, 197, 198 & 199: Glimpses of Ranna Puja at Uluberia, Haora

5.12 Ganga Puja and Ganga Arati

a. **Dasahara , Ganga Puja , Belur** :Ganga Dussehra, also known as Gangavataran, is a Hindu festival celebrating the avatarana (descent) of the Ganges. It is believed by Hindus that the holy river Ganges descended from heaven to earth on this day.Ganga Dussehra takes place on Dashami (10th day) of the waxing moon (Shukla Paksha) of the Hindu calendar month Jyeshtha. The festival celebration lasts ten days, including the nine days preceding this holy day.

Ramakrishna Belur Math celebrates this day by worshipping Ganga near the Belur Math Ghat. Maharaj worships at the bank of the river .



Image No 200 & 201: Dasahara Ganga Puja at Ramakrishna Math

b. Ganga Dusahara as celebrated at Shibpur , Botanical Garden Ghat :



Image No 202: The full idol of Ganga Devi is worshipped during Ganga Dasahara Puja

c. Rajrajeswari Puja of Haora : This is an unique idol of Maa Durga where she is accompanied by Ganga and Yamuna . At the bottom there is Brahma , Bishnu and MaheswarIt is said that about this puja is about 250 years old.



Image No 203: Ganga and Jamuna devi are found as companion of Maa Durga

d. Old Ganga Puja of Ghoshpara , Haora : Dashahara Ganga Puja is celebrated in many parts of Haora District. The heavily congested part of Haora Municipality along the bank of Hugli it is celebrated in a bigger way. Jelepura or the Fishermen cluster of Haora Municipality mostly involved in Ganga Puja. This is a very old tradition which they are continuing.



Image No 204&205: Ganga Puja at Ghoshpara, Haora

e. Ganga Arati , Ramkrishnapur Ghat : Like Baranasi or Haridwar , Ganga arti is performed at Ramkrishnapur Ghat of Haora . Image 165 & 166.

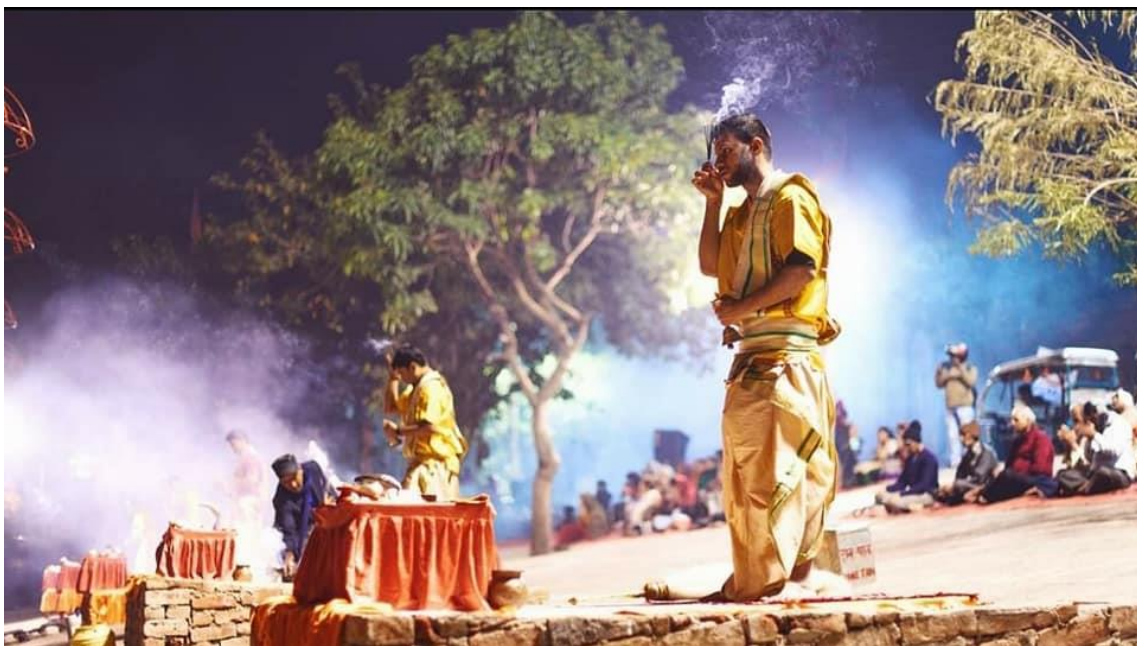


Image No 206 & 207: Ganga Arati, Ramkrishnapur Ghat

5.13 Janmasthan at BangiyaNimbark Ashram was established during the British period in the year 1933 on the day of vasantpanchami at West Bengal. It was built by VrijvidahiChatur Sampradaya Shri Mahant Santo Das Kathiababaji Maharaj deciple of VrijvidahiChatur Sampradaya Shri Mahant Tyagi Shri Ram Das KathiababajiMaharaj.It is one of the oldest ashram in Bengal of Nimbark Sampradaya. Address- 88/1 College Road, Howrah 711103, West Bengal.

On Janmashtami, devotees gathered in the evening to sing devotional songs and kirtans at the central Radha Krishna temple of the BangiyaNimbark Ashram.Preparations started two days in advance

when the wooden throne was painted. The deities are prepared in finery and the temple is decorated with flowers from Janmashtami morning. The prayers started at midnight and an elaborate arrangement of fruits, sweets, butter and sugar were prepared for the deity.



Image No 208:Shri Mahant Santo Das Kathiababaji Maharaj

The Nimbark Ashram is a familiar place for local people and to those who are devotees of this Vaishnavite order. Many like to come to this ashram with its huge open courtyard and with the Radha-Krishna temple in the middle.Radha Krishna is known as Radha Behariji here. Locals call it the Kathia Baba Ashram, since it was established by SantadasKathiaThe Radha Krishna temple was established in 1933 and local people believe that their wishes will be fulfilled here. Many also believe that miracles happen here.



Image No 209:Radha Behariji

Devotees and disciples of Swami SantadasKathia Baba wanted to start an ashram in Howrah, after the original one in Vrindavan. “When he visited Calcutta or Howrah, Santadas Maharaj would stay at his disciples’ homes in Howrah. It was then decided that an ashram would be built for him.It was initially set up at Shalimar’s Bharpara Road where Santadas Maharaj would often visit and stay. However, he later suggested that a bigger ashram be made with a temple so that other monks of the order could also stay,” said Joydeb Kumar Sarkar, the secretary of the ashram.Devotees

like Prafulla Kumar Gupta, Birendra Kumar Dey, Nrisingha Das Basu and others bought a three bigha 10 cottah plot on College Road and Krishnendu Chandra Majumdar, another devotee, made the plan for the ashram.

The idols of Radha and Krishna came from Jaipur in Rajasthan. The temple was consecrated on Basanta Panchami in 1932. Inside the temple, there are idols other than those of Radha-Krishna and Gopal. Hansa Bhagavan, an incarnation of Vishnu, is seated on a pedestal and Nimbark Bhagavan, the first guru of the Nimbark order, is seen seated below. Scenes from Krishna's life are painted on the walls inside the temple.

The day after Janmashtami is celebrated as Nandotsav. An elaborate afternoon meal is prepared for devotees and other visitors that day. Steamed rice, *sukto*, vegetables, and *payesh* and *taler bora* are offered to the deity before being distributed among the common people.

“The most popular festival in this ashram is Jhulan. Gopalji is brought out of the sanctum sanctorum and is placed on a swing. A mela is arranged on the premises for four days and everyone gets to have the khichri prepared here,” said GouravBhanja, a devotee.



Image No 210: The Ashram adjoining Ganga near Shibpur

6. Food and Drinks of Haora

6.1 Sweets of Haora

A. Pantua of Amta :is a local confection from the Indian subcontinent, notable in West



Image No 211: Pantua of Amta

Bengal, Eastern India and Bangladesh. It is a traditional Bengali sweet made of deep-fried balls of semolina, chhena, milk, ghee and sugar syrup. Pantuas range in colour from pale brown to nearly black depending on how long they are fried. Rose water, cardamom or other flavourings are sometimes added to the sweet.

Pantua is very similar to the cheese-based fried sweet ledikeni. The distinctive feature of ledikeni is its molten sugar syrup of lightly flavored cardamom powder. Amta's famous Pantua has gained fame in foreign lands beyond the borders of the country. Amta area of Howrah has gained a reputation in the whole country for making that Pantua. Not only the state or the country, but

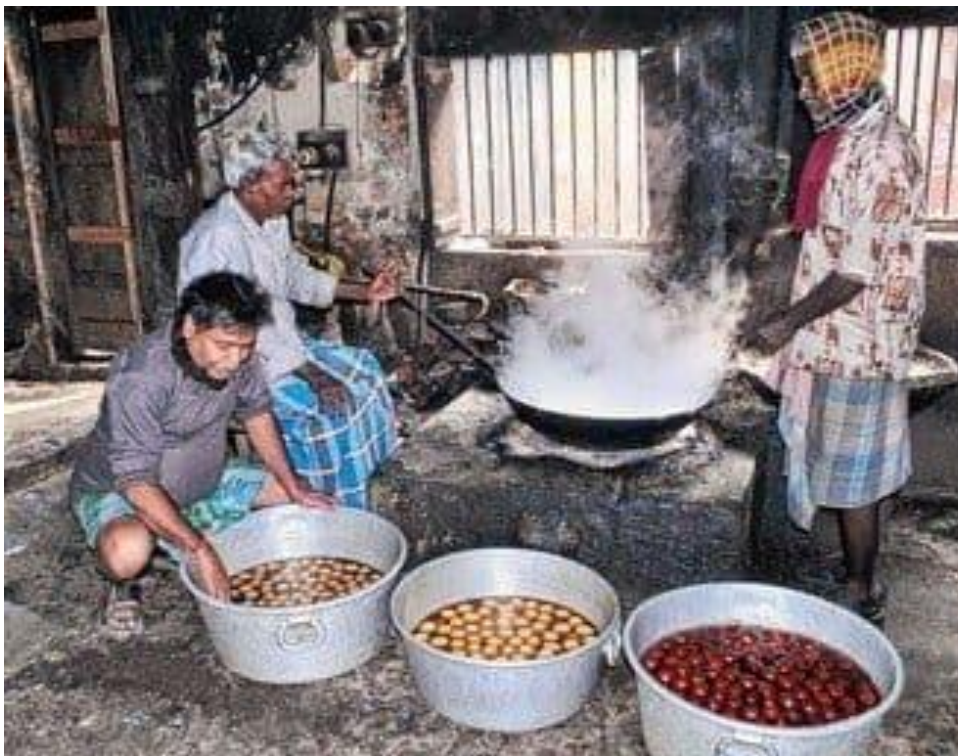


Image No 212: Pantua being prepared inside the kitchen

also the countries of the world like Australia, America, Zambia have been able to cross the borders of the Pantua country here. Pantua made in several sweet shops of Amta has have been making

this sweet for more than a hundred years. One of them is Pantuya of Charita, Pantuya of Shitala confectionery store. Amta's famous Pantua has been made for many years in about 30 small and big shops including several sweet shops in Raspur. Five to fifteen rupees, depending on the pocket, this little nectar is available at different prices. It is heard that Pantua or Pari could have been here even at the house of the country's first woman Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Narayan Chandra Charit, one of the partners of Govinda Chandra Charit & Brothers, a famous Pantua manufacturer here, said that they have been making Pantua for a long 142 years. There is no country in the world, including America, England, Australia, Russia, where they have not visited Pantua. Their Pantua has gained a lot of fame in those countries as well. Everything is changing according to the rules of time. However, the famous Pantua of Amta in Howrah will give ten goals in terms of taste to any Pantua made in any sweet shop with glass doors in modern times, according to the locals here.



Image No 213: Narayan Chandra Charit is the famous Pantua producer

B. Dwarik Nath Ghosh Grandsons : Dwarik Nath Ghosh and Grandsons at Shyambazar area is one of the oldest and popular sweet shop of North Kolkata. In the year 1885, this shop was established by Dwarik Ghosh of Jagatballavpur. Initially the shop was known as Dwariknath Ghosh. Later on his successors started 9 other shops. By 1940 there were 17 sweet shops. Even in London there was a branch of Dwarik Nath Ghosh.

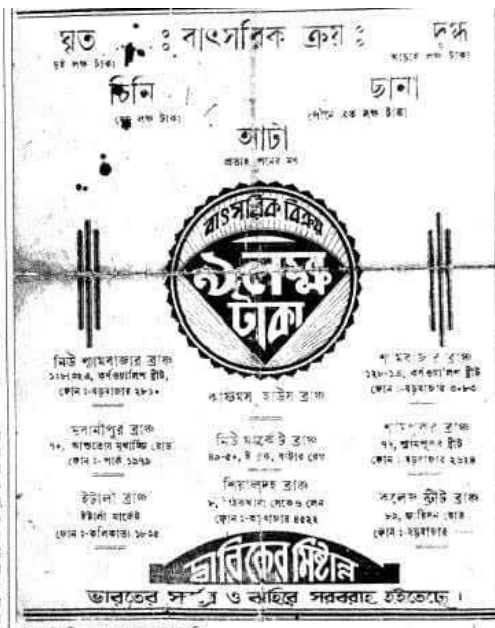
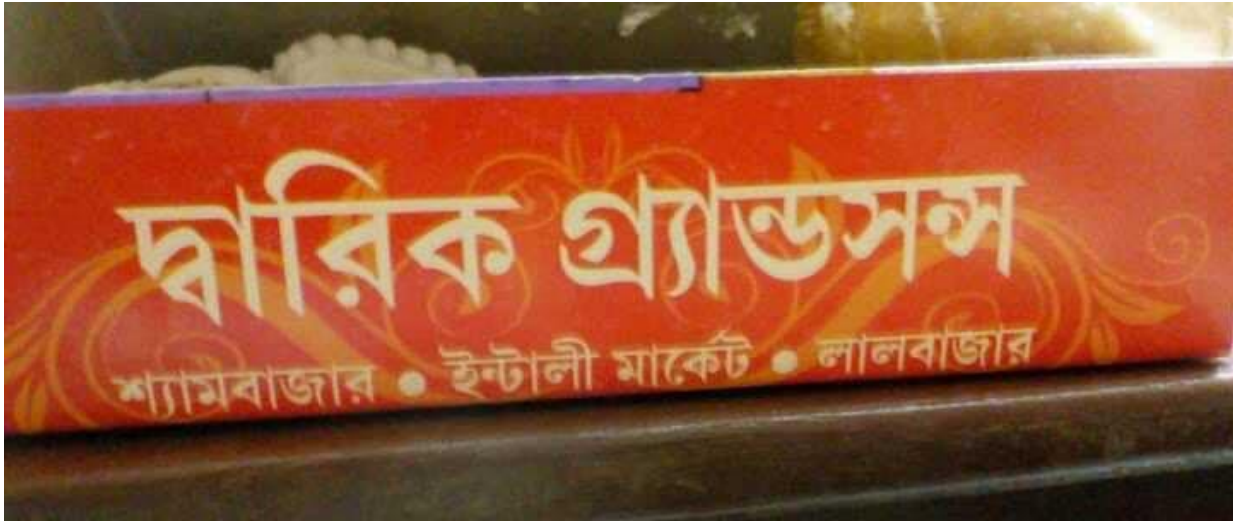


Image No214, 215& 216: Dwarik Grandsons sweets and their famous shop at Shyambazar. In 1938 the annual sale of the shop was 9 lakhs. They introduced ice cream Sharbat which has now become Milk Shake

C. BamachranMistanno Bhandar of Bagnan (1904)

:BamachranMistanno Bhandar at Bagnan is well known to everybody, not because of it's old but by its taste, quality and cleanliness. I can surely bet anyone who has tested tastebuds,



really enjoy its delicacy and feel satisfied. The shop is famous for many sweets including Makha Sandesh, Mihidana, Lyngcha etc. The shop exports sweets to Gujrat, Maharashtra and even Dubai ,Quatar.



Image No 217, 218&219:Bamacharan Mistanna Bhandar,Bagnan

6.2 Oil Fritters of Haora: Oil fritters are mostly common as finger foods in whole of Bengal . However Kolkata and Haora are specially famous for variety of fritters ranging from brinjal to potato , onion , pumpkin , duck eggs , fish and even mutton . Here are some of the popular shops of Haora.

a. Jharna Cabin, near Bangabasi Cinema Hall: This small outlet is specially famous for duck egg devil and fish fry.



Image No 220 & 221: duck egg devil and fish fry

b. Oil Fritters of Natobar, Mandirtala, Haora: His artistry made people laugh and cry, (because of the taste and the heat of chillies in abundance) eagerly and impatiently wait for the next episode (after one batch was sold he took exactly 15 minutes to fold the batter for the next). His artistic creations were golden in colour, very crisp from outside and melt-in-the-mouth from inside, heavenly in taste- Daalbora. How he made the daalboras so delicious is a question that no one could answer. I have eaten daalbora from other places but none could manage to come close to his creation. By profession, he was a coal supplier. Yes, it was that time when cooking gas was not common in all households, he was their messiah. Through-out the day he would supply coal to households, black with soot from carrying the sacks and a man completely dejected and unhappy with life. Well, that's what his facial expression told us. Image 182 & 183 : Pulse Fritters .



Image No 222 & 223: Pulse Fritters

c. DamuDadu's fritter shop, Shibpur, Haora

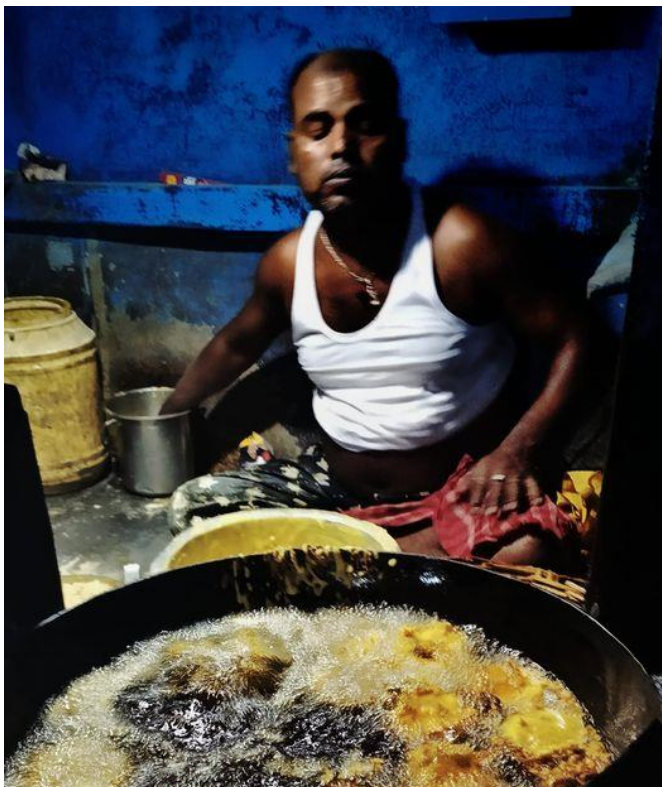


Image No 224&225: The big size Dal Fuluri(Pulsefritters) of Shibpur.



e. Petai Parota, Goranga Mistanna Bhandar: Though Petai Parota is famous in South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur but in Bauria , Panchla area it is popular . Here the Paratha (Parota) is prepared similarly by thrashing but served with Rosogolla instead of curry aorghugni . Image 187 , 188 & 189 : Gouranga Mistanna Bhandar , Heera Bazar , Bauria.



Image No 226, 227 & 228: Petai Parota, Goranga Mistanna Bhandar

6.4. Jaggery Candy / Batasha of Haora : Not much known about this Batasha but it is offered to Devi Saraswati of Panchanantala . 108 earthen plates with batasha and fruits form the daily bhog of Devi.



Image No 229 & 230: Big Batasha
Jaggery Candy of Haora

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