



Purba Medinipur

GNANAMI
GANGE

Documentation of Ganga from Gomukh to Gangasagar



Report submitted by:

Intangible Cultural Heritage Division

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Chapter 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.

1.1A. Key achievements under Namami Gange programme:

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

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

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

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

1.1B. 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.

1.1C. 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.

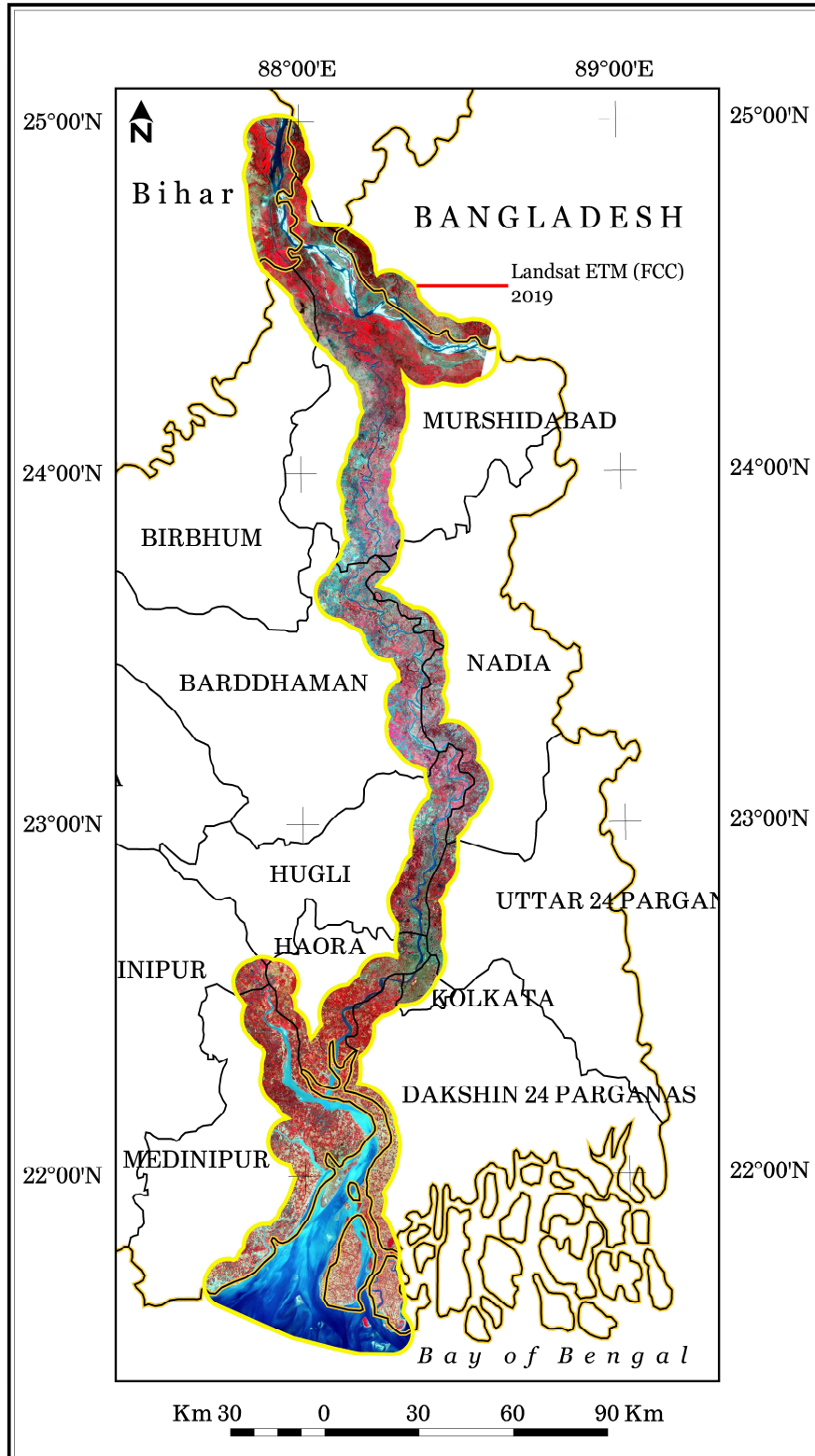
1.2. GANGA CULTURAL DOCUMENTATION

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 North 24 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.		

WEST BENGAL

Showing the area of study along Bhagirathi-Hugli River



Map 1 – Map of West Bengal showing the study area

The image cannot be displayed. Your computer may not have enough memory to open the image, or the image may have been corrupted. Restart your computer, and then open the file again. If the red x still appears, you may have to delete the image and then insert it again.

Map 2 - Map of West Bengal showing the overall location of the Study area.

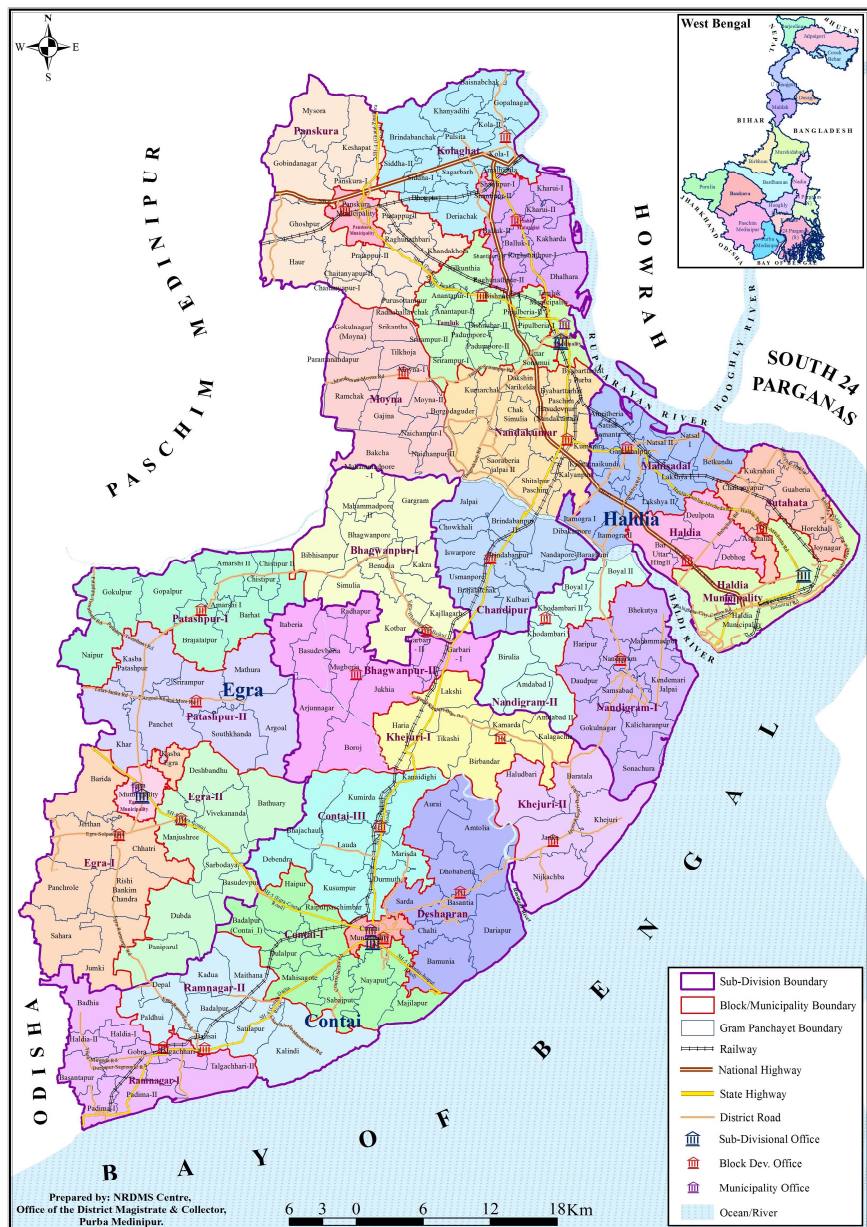
CHAPTER 2 : LOCATIONAL SETTING

2.1. Covering an area of **4736 sq.km**, Purba Medinipur (East Medinipur) is one of the southernmost districts of West Bengal, bounded by Hugli River and South 24 Parganas in east, Paschim Medinipur in west, Haora in north Odisha in South west and Bay of Bengal in South. The District is divided into 4 Sub-Divisions – Tamluk , Haldia , Egra & Contai which is further subdivided into 25 Blocks namely – Nandakumar, Moyna, Tamluk, Sahid Matangini, Panskura 1 & Panskura 2 , Chandipur, Mahisadal, Nandigram 1 & 2 ,Sutahata Haldia, Bhagawanpur–I,Egra–I, Egra–II, Pataspur–I , Pataspur–II. Kanthi–I, Deshpran, Kanthi–III, Khejuri–I, Khejuri–II, Ramnagar–I and Ramnagar–II & Bhagawanpur–II.

2.2. Our Study area includes - Mahisadal, Nandigram 1 ,Sutahata Haldia in Haldia Sub Division , Khejuri II in Contai Subdivision.

2.3. The district was formed on 1 January 2002 after the partition of erstwhile Medinipur District.

ADMINISTRATIVE MAP (PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT)

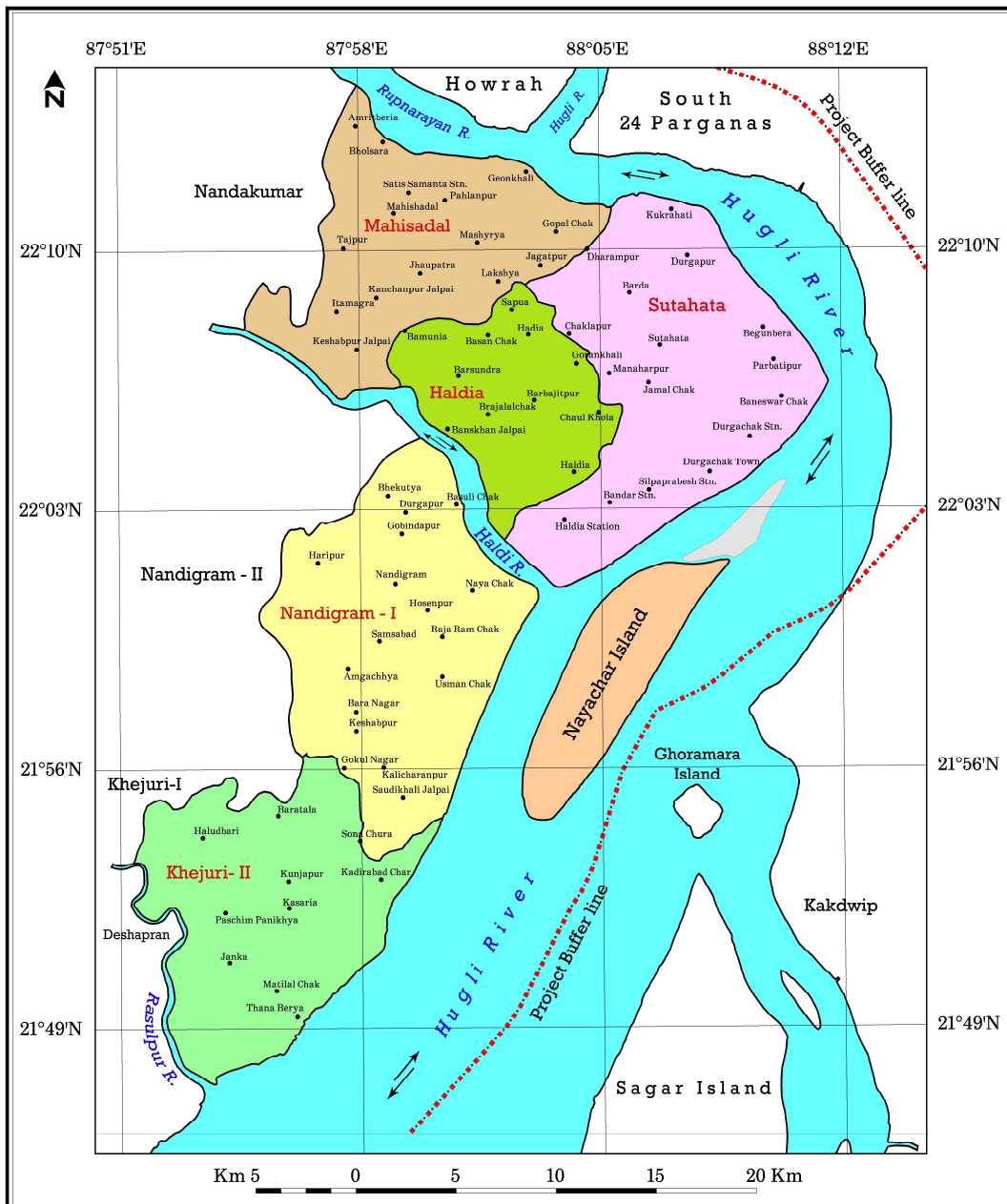


Map 3 : Administrative Map of Purba Medinipur

In our Study area , we will be covering the following blocks –

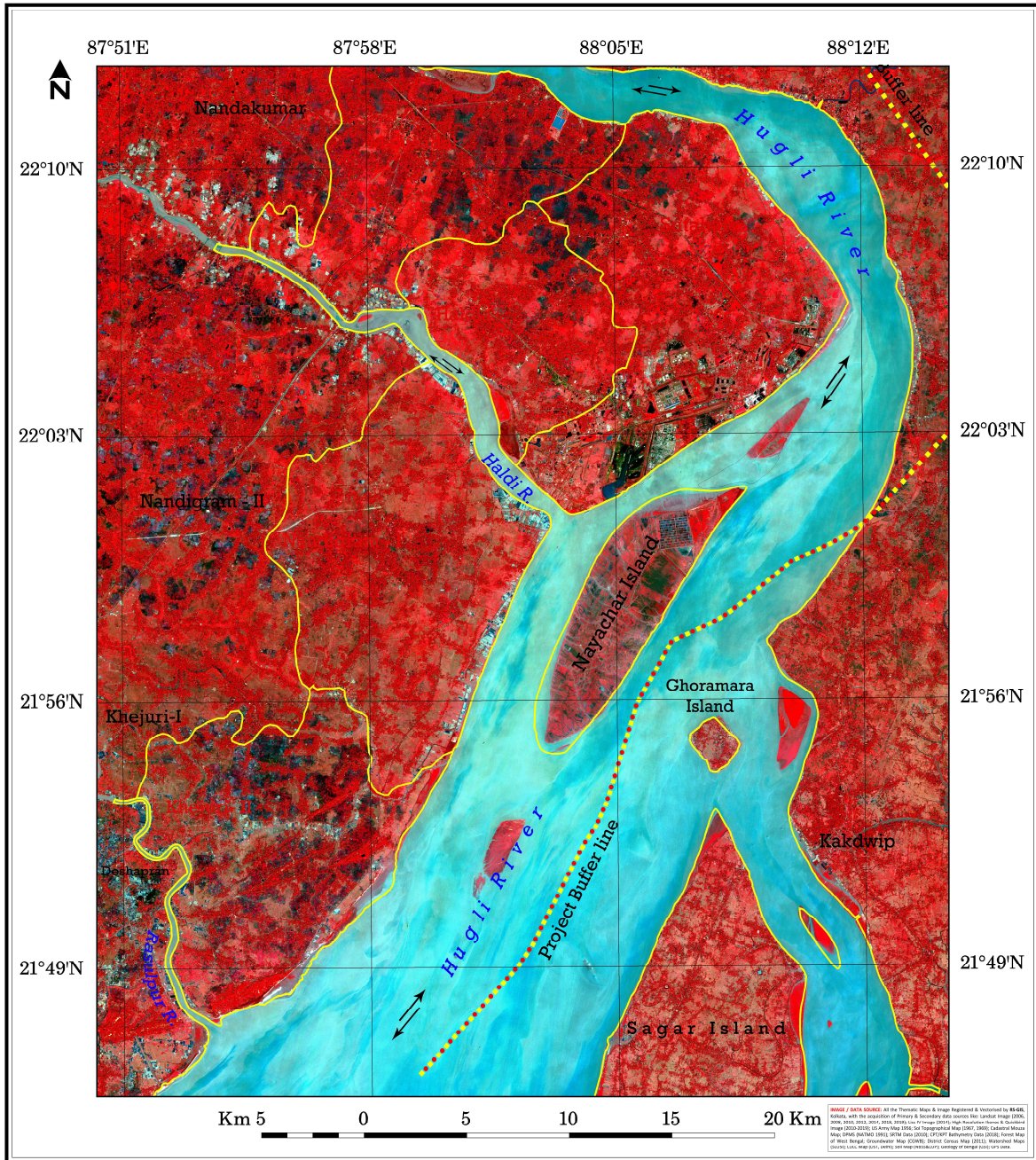
Sl	Name of the Blocks	Police Station	Area to be covered
1	Mahisadal	Mahisadal	92 Km, Littoral Tract
2	Sutahata	Sutahata , Durgachak	
3	Haldia	Haldia	
4.	Nandigram-1	Nandigram	
5.	Khejuri II	Talpatighat Coastal P.S /Khejuri P.S	

Administrative Map : Showing the Geographical area under Ganga Documentation Project, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal



Map 4 – Administrative Map of Purba Medinipur showing the following blocks

Satellite Image : False Colour Composite (15th February 2019)
under Ganga Documentation Project, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal



Map 5 – Satellite Image showing Purba Medinipur District

2.4. There are conflicting accounts of how the name Medinipur came to be. One account claims that Medinipur was named after a local deity "Medinimata" (literally "mother of the world", a Shakti incarnation). The history of Purba Medinipur district comprising part of erstwhile Medinipur district is mostly associated with the ancient port city of Tamralipta or Tamralipti. This port city is believed to be the exit point of the trade route for the South and South-East Asia during Mauryan era. It was located on the bank of Rupnarayan river and was connected by roads with the major ancient cities like Rajgriha, Shravasti, Pataliputra, Varanasi and Taxila (Takshashila). In the very beginning, Medinipur, now known as modern Tamluk, used to be known as Tamralipta whose location can be pinpointed to that tract in the east of the district which is slightly above sea-level and intersected by numerous waterways. This part was inhabited by tribes or communities of fishermen, boatmen and sailors. Medinipur's significance can be established from the fact that it used to be the Capital of an ancient kingdom and flourished as a sea-port. The stronghold of the Kaibarttas, fishing and boating caste, finds adequate mention in the Pillar Edict V of Emperor Asoka as Kevata and in the Vajrasenayi Samhita (Yajurveda) as Kevatta.

2.5. The place called Tamralipta has been found to be mentioned in numerous references like



Map 6- This elegant map is the first printed European map with Bengal as its title. It is taken from the miniature atlas "Tabularum Geographicarum Contractarum" by the Flemish cartographer Petrus Betrius. The earliest version of this map appears in 1598, in the atlas "Caert Thresoor" by Dutch cartographer Petrus Kaerius. The map is derived from The Itinerario by Jan Huyghen Van Linschoten.

the great epics, Jaina texts and various holy books. It enjoys a special pride of place due to its mention in the epic Mahabharata as Tamralipta (-lipti) or Damalipta with an entity of its own clearly distinct from the Northern, Eastern, Central Bengal and Suhma territories. The place has been referred differently in different occasions. In **Jaina Prajnapana** it is mentioned as the part of Vanga and in Dandi's **Dasakumaracharita** it is mentioned as the part of Suhma. The modern day Tamluk constituted the **Tamalites** of Ptolemy and used to be the capital of the Suhma territory. During Hiuen Tsang's visit, Tamluk was stretched for about 150 miles from Samatata and was about 233 miles in circuit. The land and water communication converged at that point of the land which was 'low and moist' forming a bay. In the present day, Tamluk is situated on the right bank of the river Rupnarayan about twelve miles from its junction with the Hugli river falling within the jurisdiction of Purba Medinipur district. The channels of communication were all-round with the main route lying between the Jungle Mahals and the sea-board, thus connecting Magadha and Suhma in the north and Kalinga in the south.



Plate 1– Ancient Tamluk Rajbari , only 10 km from our study area

the Deva Rakshita instead. The 7th century A.D. saw the district being conquered by the Bengal King Sasanka and subsequently by the Emperor Harshavardhana. The territories of both of these conquerors extended as far as Ganjam in the south. Twin tanks at Dantan called Sasangir Dighi commemorate the rule of Sasanka whereas Hiuen Tsiang (Yaun Chwang) visited the place during the reign of Emperor Harshavardhana.

2.8. The kingdom of Tamralipti had a distinct entity for several centuries but lost the same when it was eventually absorbed in the kingdom of Radha, i.e. Western Bengal. It is again presumed that the port of Tamralipti started declining since the time when Chodaganga Deva, who defeated the King of Mandar and annexed the whole of southern Radha including Medinipur. Then, the fate of Tamralipti dwindled converting into a mere frontier town of the Ganga Kings frequently subjected to attacks and devastation.

The beginning of the Muslim period saw Medinipur forming the frontier of the kingdom of Orissa (present Odisha). This rule which lasted for four and half centuries saw complete chaos and Medinipur was no exception. Being a frontier tract, Medinipur was the butt of



Map 8 : Mattheus van den Broucke was Director of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) in Bengal during 1658-1663. Van den Broucke authorized a survey of Bengal, which was carried out by Commander Johan van Leenen in 1666-1667.

exposure to constant raids and invasions during that period. The turmoil that the internal part of the country experienced during this period can be established from the brief accounts provided in the biographies of Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533), the great Vaisnavite scholar. The sad state of affairs can also be authenticated from the several Hindu temples which lay in ruins; pirates who gathered on the rivers and robbers of the land; villages were scarce and people feared the Yavanas. Cultivation and trade suffered as well bringing about complete ruin of Tamralipti i.e. Tamluk.

2.9. Under Afgan Rule - The fortune of Orissa again changed hands when in 1568 AD, Sulaiman Kararani, an Afghan King of Bengal, sent a force under his son, Bayazid to conquer Orissa along with Medinipur. Ultimately the whole of Orissa up to the Chilika Lake was conquered by the Afghans. But this did not change the fate of Medinipur. Medinipur suffered as ever under the Afghans and Sulaiman Kararani spent the last part of his life trying to suppress the surge of revolts in Orissa. His son, Daud Khan became involved in war with the stature of somebody as great as Emperor Akbar. The district became the battle field between Afghans and Mughals for as long as 30 years fighting for control over Orissa and Bengal. The fallout was the extreme suffering of people and a vivid account of such oppression has been corroborated by Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakrabarty (circa 1600) in his illustrious 'Chandimangal'. (Mughalmari).

The Afghan rule saw the district being compromised in two Sarkars, i.e. Jaleswar and Mandaran. The Mandaran comprised its north-eastern and eastern portions (Mahals, Chitwa, Mandalghat and Hijli). Sarkar Jaleswar comprised the rest of the district with 23 or 24 Mahals which were included partly or wholly, the land revenue amounting roughly to more than ten lakhs of rupees. Salt manufacturing seems to have started on the sea board but whether revenue was generated from that source or from timber and other forest produce is not known.

2.10. Under Mughal Rule - Under the Mughals, Medinipur continued to form part of Subah Orissa. A separate Governor was sent directly from the imperial court during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Emperor Shah Jahan's regime saw Shah Shuja, the second son of the Emperor being appointed the Governor of Bengal and Orissa was also being controlled by him. A resettlement of Bengal and Orissa was made at that point of time since the coast needed to be protected from Portuguese predators and Arakan pirates.

2.11. At the confluence of the river Bhagirathi-Hugli and the Bay of Bengal, Hijli Island emerged from the estuarine surroundings approximately within 1400-1500 A.D. Later the island was covered with natural mangroves. Gradually it became the abode of fishermen. Through many geomorphological, social, economic, political and historical phases it had come to the present state. This area was then occupied by some tribal communities of fishermen, boatmen and sailors. Since long past it had a great locational importance because it was situated between the great historical port Kolkata and Piplipattanam (A port near Subarnarekha river mouth). At the time of emergence of this land, it was intersected by Cowcolly River, a tidal creek, and the two islands namely Khejuri and Hijli were formed. After the decaying of Cowcolly River the said islands were merged and the total area is called Khejuri.

2.12. Khejuri was a famous port till 18th century. Till the first half of the 19th century it was known to the British as *Kedgerie*. The British established their control over the area in 1765 and by 1780 had established a port and factory there. A light-house was built in 1810 at Dariapur, a village about five miles south of Khejuri. It is near the mouth of the Rasulpur River. People from various parts of India come to visit this historical place. It's also here where Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel's Kapalkundala temple is situated. Sagar Light House is located 13 miles away across the river on Sagar Island. Kaukhali light-house was abandoned in 1925. Raja Rammohon Roy left for England from this port. The first Telegraph line (1851-52) of India was established here between Calcutta and Khejuri. 5 miles south from Kaokhali is Kasba Hijli village, it was Taj-Kha's capital. Job Charnak established his first camp here. you can see Hijli Nabab family's founder Taj-Kha Masnad-E-Als's Tomb (1555) here. The mosque here is very famous.

2.13. Advent of Portuguese , Dutch, French and English - The sheen of Tamruk as a sea-port had faded and the place became more of a slave market. Ralph Fitch described **Hijli** as the great trade centre wherein many ships out of India came and ‘lade from thence great store of rice and much cloth of cotton, wool and sugar and long pepper, great store of butter and other victuals. Time and again, it turned into the chief settlement of the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and in the latter half of the century, the English’.



Plate 2- The Dargah of Masnad-e-Aala or Hijli Sharif mazar is widely known in this part of Bengal for fulfilling the wishes of the needy. But few are aware of the history associated with this place that spans from 15th – 18th century.

There was an upsurge of violence during the 17th century and the district saw disturbances thrice. The first one was witnessed in 1622 when Prince Khurram (later Emperor Shah Jahan) revolted against his father Emperor Jahangir and marched northwards from the Deccan through Orissa and Medinipur becoming the master of Bengal for two years. But his advancement suffered hindrances when he was stopped by the imperial forces near Allahabad and he fled to the Deccan through Medinipur. Peace was disrupted when war broke out between the English and the Nawab. Job Charnock took possession of Hijli after abandoning Hugli. The third time peace was compromised in the district in 1696 AD when Shobha Singh, the Zamindar (Landlord) of Chitwa and Barda (two parganas in the Ghatal Sub-division) broke out in rebellion with Rahim Khan, the Chief of Afghans as ally. The loot and plunders by the Afghans went unabated until they were subjugated by Prince Azim-us-Shan, the newly

appointed Governor of Bengal, who killed Rahim Khan defeating the Afghans and thus restoring tranquility within the district.

Hijli Sharif History - After the ancient [Tamralipta](#) port became extinct as the sea shifted afar due to heavy silt deposition and the loss of navigability, the shores of Hijli came into existence. The advantageous geographical location attracted merchants to settle here that helped it prosper in many ways. However, according to a historical document of 1628 AD, the river region of Hijli flourished the most and created history during the reign of the royal dynasty of Masnad-e-Aala.

An ancient manuscript written in Persian by author Munshi Sheikh Hazrat Bismillah informs the lineage of this dynasty. This manuscript is presently preserved and maintained by the Khadims of Hijli mosque.

The dynasty reigned Hijli for about forty years since the beginning of the 17th century. Rehmat Bhunya (also known as Ikhtiyar Khan), the youngest son of Mansoor Bhunya who was a powerful and affluent landowner is considered to be the founder of the kingdom. Taj Khan Masnad-e-Aala was the first grandson of Rehmat Bhunya.

The kingdom of Hijli was taking a prosperous shape during the rule of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in Delhi. Before embracing sainthood and becoming a disciple of the spiritual master Hazrat Makhdum Sheikh Ul-Mashaekh-Shah Abul Haquddin Chishti, Taj Khan Masnad-e-Aala had elected his son Bahadur Khan as the next ruler of Hijli. Bahadur Khan shared a friendly relationship with the then Mughal governor of Bengal, [Prince Shah Shuja](#), the son of Emperor Shah Jahan. It was the result of this friendship that Hijli (despite being geographically located in Odisha) was included in the state of Bengal (the present West Bengal, India) by Shah Shuja.

The kingdom, however, doomed after the fall of Bahadur Khan during a war with the Mughal army sent by Aurangzeb. This war was the outcome of a rumour that Shah Shuja had taken refuge in Bahadur Khan's kingdom of Hijli to escape the subjugation of [Aurangzeb](#) (the other son of Shah Jahan and Shah Shuja's brother) who had ascended the throne in Delhi after Shah Jahan.

2.14. Under British Rule - The district of Medinipur had no boundary during the start of the British rule. The British changed the boundary of Medinipur several times during the period of 1760-1805 AD. The year 1772 saw East India Company constituting a Revenue Committee for facilitation of revenue-collection. The Hugli Collectorate incorporating Tamluk, Mahisadal and Hijli was one of the then 13 Collectorates. The Collectorates of Barddhaman and Medinipur were constituted in the year 1772-73 during which the Pargana of Jaleswar went to Medinipur. Hugli, Hijli, Mahisadal and Tamluk became parts of the Revenue Council in November 1773 AD. Barddhaman, Medinipur, Vishnupur, Pachet, Birbhum and Ramgarh were parts of the Barddhaman Committee. Bengal got divided into 28 districts in the year 1773 and the big districts were sometimes referred to as ‘provinces’. Even Medinipur was, at times, referred to as; ‘Medinipur Province’ in the Revenue Records. The districts of Hijli and Tamluk jointly started being called ‘Nimak Mahal’ in the year 1780 AD. The year 1787 AD saw the formation of 14 Collectorates. The two large Fiscal Divisions of Tamluk and Mahisadal, which had, till then, been the separate jurisdiction of Hugli were transferred to Medinipur on 10th February, 1790.

Till the year 1836, Hijli remained a separate Collectorate following which it was annexed to Medinipur barring Fiscal Divisions of Bhogra, Kumardachaur and Patashpur which had



Map 9 - James Renell's Map of Bengal Basin (1764) showing Hijli as Injellee

formerly been parts of Hijli. The Fiscal Divisions of Bhograi, Kumardachaur and Patashpur were transferred to Orissa district of Balasore. Bagri Pargana, as a whole, which had earlier been part of Bardhaman, was annexed to Medinipur. After Patashpur, Bhograi and Kamardachaur were separated from Orissa, they were annexed to Medinipur in the year 1803.

The year 1806 saw the annexation of Maratha Parganas to Hijli Salt Agency. Almost at the end of the 19th century, Medinipur incorporated Chandrakona Fiscal Division by severing it from Hugli.

2.15. Purba Medinipur saw many political movements during the British Raj. A parallel government named the **Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar** was formed during the Quit India Movement in Tamruk. In 2007, Purba Medinipur witnessed the Nandigram violence, an incident of police firing that killed 14 farmers.



Plate 3 – Hijli Canal opening to Rupnarayan River

CELEBRATED PERSONALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE STUDY AREA

3.1. James Legge writes that - *Following the course of the Ganges, and descending eastwards for eighteen yojanas, he found on the southern bank the great kingdom of Champa, with topes reared at the places where Buddha walked in meditation by his vihara, and where he and the three Buddhas, his predecessors, sat. There were monks residing at them all. Continuing his journey east for nearly fifty yojanas, he came to the country of Tamalipiti, (the capital of which is) a seaport. In the country there are twenty-two monasteries, at all of which there are monks residing. The Law of Buddha is also flourishing in it. Here Fa-hien stayed two years, writing out his Sutras,³ and drawing pictures of images.*

Tej Ram Sharma writes that “*The Chinese traveller Xuangxang (Hiuen Tsang) in 639 AD proceeded from Kamarupa southwards and after a journey of 1,200 or 1,300 li (6 li- 1 mile) reached the country of Samatata. According to him, this country was on the seaside and was low and moist and was more than 3,000 li in circuit. From Samatata, the pilgrim journeyed towards the West for over 900 li and reached Tanmolihti, or Tamralipta, the modern Tamluk in the Midnapur district, Bengal*”.

Alexander Cunningham writes that “*The kingdom of Tan-mo-li-ti, or Tamralipti, is described as 1400 or 1500 li, about 250 miles, in circuit. It was situated on the seashore, and the surface of the country was low and wet.*

The capital was in a bay, and was accessible both by land and water. Tamralipti is the Sanskrit name of Tamluk, which is situated on a broad reach or bay of the Rupnarayan river, 12 miles above its junction with the Hughli. The district probably comprised the small but fertile tract of country lying to the westward of the Hughli river, from Bardwan and Kalna on the north to the banks of the Kosai river on the south. From Tamalitti, the Pali form of the name, came the classical Tamalites”



Plate 4 : Xuangxang (Hiuen Tsang) in 639 AD

3.2. Midnapore (Undivided) is famous for its contribution in the history of Indian freedom movement since it has produced a seemingly endless list of martyrs. During the British Raj the town became a centre of revolutionary activities starting from the Santal Revolt (1766-1767) and the Chuar Revolt (1799). The Zilla School, now known as Midnapur Collegiate School was the birthplace of many extremist activities. Teachers like Hemchandra Kanungo inspired and guided the pupils to participate in the Indian Freedom Movement. Three British District Magistrates were assassinated in succession by the revolutionaries Bimal Dasgupta , Jyothi Jibon Ghosh, Pradoot Bhattacharya , Prabhakangsu Pal,Mrigan Dutta,Anath Bandhu Panja, Ramkrishna Roy, Braja Kishor Chakraborty,Nirmal Jibon Ghosh. Khudiram Bose and Satyendranath Basu were some of the young men that liad down their lives for the freedom of India. Kazi Nazrul Islam attended political meetings in Midnapore in the 20s. Even Raja Narendra Lal Khan, ruler of Narajole, who donated his palace on the outskirts of town, for the establishment of Midnapore's first college for women, had been implicated, (although it turned out to be false) for planting a bomb.

Khudiram Bose was born in the Habibpur in 1889 and studied at Midnapore Collegiate School up to the eight standards. He was first caught by a policeman for distributing seditious leaflets in Midnapore in 1906. He was an anarchist at heart and protested against the moderate policies of Surendranath Banerjea. Khudiram was sentenced to death for a failed attempt to kill Magistrate



Plate 5 – Khudiram Bose

Kingsford. Satyendranath was executed on the 21st November 1908. Noted freedom-fighter and Bengal Province Congress Committee President, Birendranath Sasmal practiced at the Midnapore High Court for a few years.

Rishi Rajnarayan Basu, one-time tutor of Rabindranath Tagore Asia's first Nobel Prize winner, was headmaster of the Zila School in 1850. He founded a girls' school, a night school

for workers, and a public library. The Rajnarayan Basu Pathagar (library) is still in existence near Golkuar Chowk.

Not only Hindu activists but Muslim statesman originated or spent time in Midnapore. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy founder of the Awami League, a prominent political party in Bangladesh, and the 5th Prime Minister of Pakistan hailed from a prominent family of Midnapore.

Satish Chandra Samanta (15 December 1900 – 4 June 1983) was an Indian independence movement activist and a member of the Lok Sabha from 1952–77. At the age of 15 he was influenced by his guru, Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati and adopted the life of Brahmacharya and took up a life of serving the people.

He quit Bengal Engineering College (then an affiliate of the University of Calcutta) in his second year of study in order to fight for freedom of India from the clutches of the British. He started serving through, the activities organised by the local branch of the Indian National Congress. Later, he became the president of Tamluk Congress Committee and remained an active congress

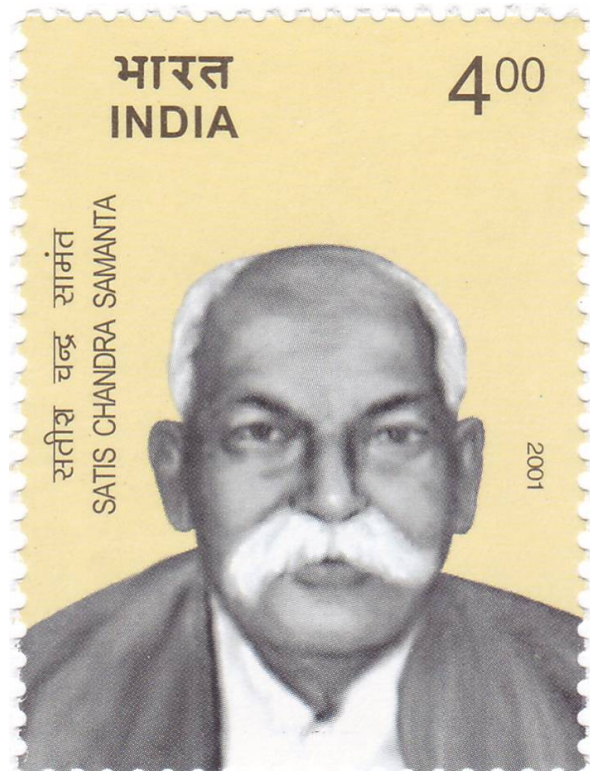


Plate 6 : Satish Samanta

member for decades. He was known for his leadership qualities and other constructive work. His leadership qualities could be observed during the formation of a parallel government named Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar (Tamrlipta National Government) in Tamluk during the Quit India Movement. This body was formed on 17 December 1942 and Samanta, looked after its functioning until his arrest in June 1943. It lasted till September 1944. It undertook cyclone relief work, gave grants to schools and organized an armed Vidyut Vahini

In addition to his political work, he helped the people by participating in activities related to improving civic health. He organised and led activities like cleaning roads and choked-up ponds to prevent malaria, nursing cholera patients, organising free medical camps, training

volunteers and spreading education and literacy in backward areas. After Independence, Satish Chandra Samanta remained as a Member of Parliament for more than three decades. He was elected to the 1st Lok Sabha from Tamluk constituency in 1952 and re-elected to the Lok Sabha from the same constituency in 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1971.

Matangini Hazra -Matangini Hazra (17 November 1870 – 29 September 1942) was an Indian revolutionary who participated in the Indian independence movement until she was shot dead by the British Indian police in front of the Tamluk Police Station (of erstwhile Midnapore District) on 29 September 1942. She was affectionately known as Gandhi buri, Bengali for old lady Gandhi. Not much is known of her early life apart from that she was born in the small village of Hogla, near Tamluk in 1869, and that because she was the daughter of a poor peasant, she did not receive a formal education. She was married early and became widowed at the age of eighteen without bearing any offspring

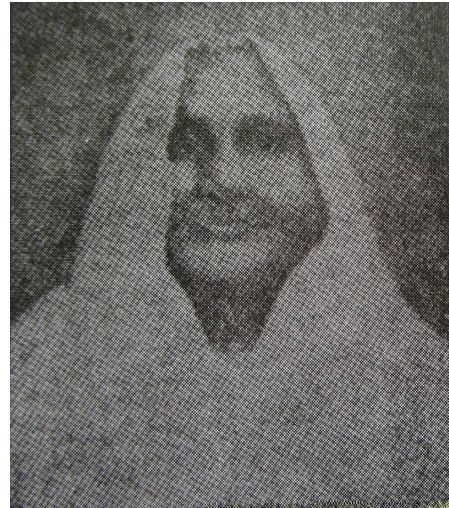


Plate 7 & 8 : Matangini Hazra

In 1905, she became actively interested in the Indian independence movement as a Gandhian. A notable feature of the freedom struggle in Midnapore was the participation of women. In 1932, she took part in the Civil Disobedience movement and was arrested for breaking the Salt Act. She was promptly released, but protested for the abolition of the tax. Arrested again, she was incarcerated for six months at Baharampur. After being released, she became an active member of the Indian National Congress and took to spinning her own Khadi. In 1933, she attended the sub-divisional Congress conference at Serampore and was injured in the ensuing baton charge by the police. The parallel Tamluk government incited open rebellion by praising her "martyrdom for her country" and was able to function for two more years, until it was disbanded in 1944, at Gandhi's request.



five rupee postage stamp with Matangini Hazra's likeness.

India earned Independence in 1947 and numerous schools, colonies, and streets were named after Hazra. The first statue of a woman put up in Kolkata, in independent India, was Hazra's in 1977. A statue now stands at the spot where she was killed in Tamluk. In 2002, as part of a series of postage stamps commemorating sixty years of the Quit India Movement and the formation of the Tamluk National Government, the Department of Posts of India issued a

Birendranath Sasmal (26 October 1881 - 24 November 1934) was a lawyer and political leader. He was known as *Deshpran* because of his work for the country and for his efforts in the Swadeshi movement. Birendranath Sasmal was born in Contai, in undivided Midnapore district. His father was the Zamindar Biswambhar Sasmal and mother's Anandamoyee. He passed the Entrance Examination in 1900 and got admission into Ripon College of Calcutta for higher education. After finishing his college he went to England to study law. He returned to India after becoming a barrister. For political reasons, the region was proposed to be divided into two by British Raj and Biren Sasmal started protesting against it. He toured the region and organised protest movements. The proposal for partition was

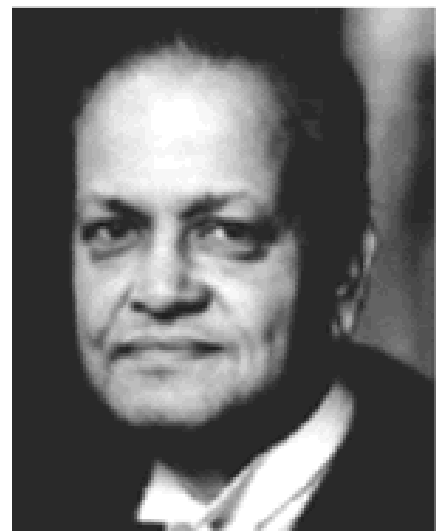


Plate 9 : Birendranath Sasmal

withdrawn. He started practising law at Calcutta High Court in 1904. In 1913 leaving Calcutta High Court, Birendranath practiced in Midnapore District Court for a few years but later he again joined the High Court. In the High Court, he defended the accused in the Chittagong Armed Robbery case. He was jailed for nine-month by British Raj for calling a general strike during the visit of King George V to British India. During his stay at Presidency Jail he wrote his autobiography named *Sroter Trina*. Birendranath's was also involved in the movement. His followers took active part in organizing people. Satyagrahis came to Narghat and Pichhhaboni to break Salt Law by peaceful means. The Satyagraha assumed the form of a mass movement in the area. In 1933, Birendranath was elected to Calcutta Corporation. At the request of Pandit Madan Mohan Malavia, he contested in Central Legislative Assembly election from a two–district seat of Burdwan division and won it but he had died of a heart attack, aged 53, before the result was announced.

A road in South Kolkata (Deshparan Sasmal Road) is named after him.

Iswar Chandra Pramanik : The political activities of Kshudiram, the first martyr of our country, centered mainly, though not exclusively, in the thanas of undivided

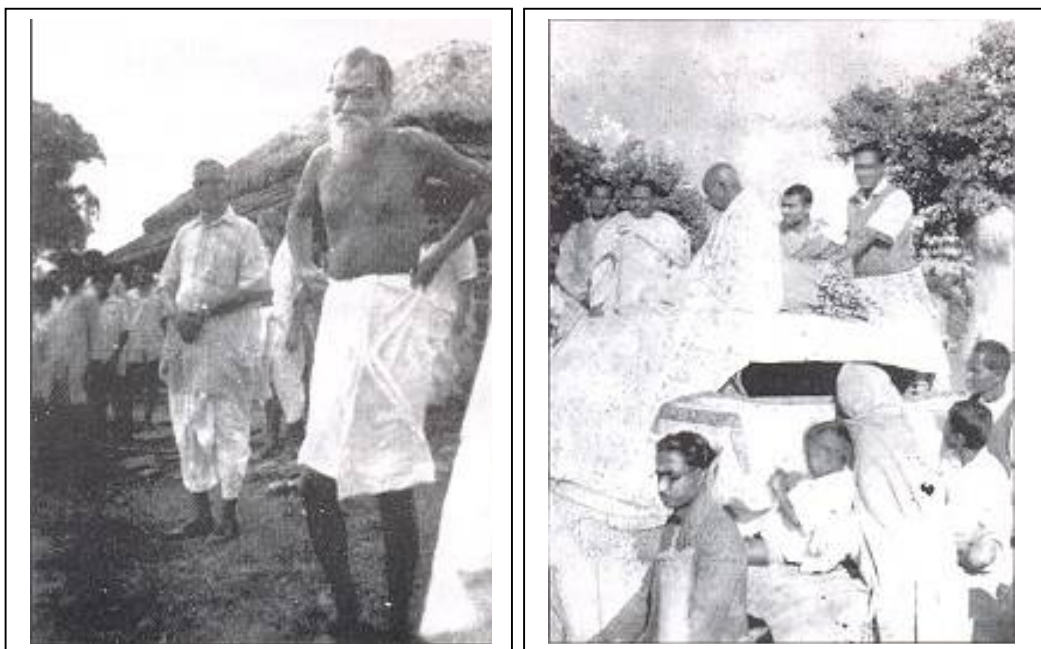


Plate 10 – a. At Bhudan Padayatra, Iswar Chandra Pramanik with Vinoba Bhave in front of Narayangarh High School. Ib Mahatma Gandhi with Iswar Chandra Pramanik, Swatish Chandra Jana and Pitabas Das at a Spinners' Meet at Khejuri on 03/01/1946

Bhagwanpur, Pataspur and Khejuri of Midnapur district. The great revolutionary opened training camps for the local youths and taught them how to wield lathis, to keep physical fitness and propagate nationalist ideas. Many of the young boys courted arrest for their

participation in the boycott of foreign goods at Thakurnagar Dol Mela and suffered imprisonment in 1908. Four years after, Iswar Chandra born. In 1921 Deshapran Birendra Nath Sasmal kindled the fire of patriotism and self-sacrifice in the hearts of the people of Contai, in conformity with the Gandhian ideas of Non –co-operation Movement and compelled the British Government to withdraw Union Boards from Midnapore. Iswar chandra was then only nine years old. But he was tremendously inspired by the surging wave of patriotism. Even from his father's and mother's lines he inherited the patriotic spirit.

He was seen among others in the in the flag hoisting ceremony at Haria Bazar. At the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. During Salt Satyagraha he was found busy collecting food-stuff and carrying it to the volunteers' campus at Contai. He was trusted with the task of secretly circulating copies of Ranaveri, a swadesi bulletin. During No-Tax Movement (1932) he was marked out for a leader of the Haria Union at the local level. He published, jointly with Upendranath Pradhan, a bulletin entitled Satyer Sarathi and free himself headlong into the anti-untouchability campaign. He played a leading role according warm welcome as much to Rastrapati Subhas Chandra at Jaranagar during the latter's Midnapore tour in 1938 as to Gandhi at Krishnagar in 1946.

Iswar Chandra retired from active politics after independence but he dedicated himself to the task of re-construction of the country and the service of the people after the ideals of Gandhi, Subhas and Viniba. Besides his role as a teacher, he drew up social welfare programmes like Khadi and Swadeshi prapaganda, Sarvodaya Movement and removal of untouchability. He brought out a good number of books and pamphlets namely, Biswa-Guru, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahapurush, Pachhe Bhule Jaai (1st and 2nd), Sabadhinayak bhimacharanm, Swamiji & gandhiji etc. What deserve special mention in this connection are the Atom Chakra invented by him, and the models of social and family life as planned by Gandhiji, and cottage industry products which found placed in the exhibition during the Kalyani Congress Session in 1954.

THE UNFORGETTABLE SUHRAWARDYS OF PURBA MEDINIPUR -

The Suhrawardys were of Arab descent having originated from a place called Suhraward in Iraq, from where the family takes its name. Their common ancestor was one Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardy (1145-1235) a famous Sufi saint, who embraced martyrdom by

incurring the wrath of the Caliph, on a matter of principle. The family was known since medieval times for their piety, learning and forthrightness. A descendant of the martyred Shahabuddin migrated to India. He sojourned in Delhi during the Khilji Sultanate and finally settled in Multan now in Pakistan. A branch of the family ultimately came down and settled in Midnapore, West Bengal. The Suhrawardiyya and Chisthi are the two oldest and most revered Muslim order of saints in our subcontinent. However, Shah Aminuddin Suhrawardy is reckoned to be the last Pir of the Suhrawardiyya order, after which the family involved itself with law, education, public service and learning. But the 'saintly halo' around the name of the Suhrawardys persisted in the public imagination for long years, well into the modern age.

The eminent Ubaidullah Al Obaidi Suhrawardy (1832-1885), was a learned scholar, educationist, translator and writer. He was born in Midnapore, West Bengal, British India, once the heartland of the Suhrawardys in Bengal. He was proficient in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English. He passed the Final Central Examinations in 1857, from the prestigious Aliya Madrasah in Kolkata. He was appointed as the first superintendent of Dhaka Madrasah in 1874, and remained there till his death. The British Raj bestowed on him the title of 'Bahrul Ulm' (Sea of knowledge) in recognition for his great contribution to knowledge, education and society. He was the father of Sir Abdullah Al Mamun and daughter Khujesta Akhtar Banu. Ubaidullah died in Dhaka and lies buried beside the Lalbagh Fort in old Dhaka.

Lieutenant-Colonel Hassan

Suhrawardy CStJ, FRCS (17 November 1884 – 18 September 1946) was a Bengali surgeon, military officer in the British Indian Army, politician, and a public official. He was the former Chairman of the executive committee of the East London Mosque. Knighted in 1932, he renounced his British honours a month before his death. Hassan Suhrawardy was born in Dhaka, the son of Ubaidullah Al Ubaidi Suhrawardy, an educationist and scion of the prominent Suhrawardy



family of Midnapore (now in Indian West Bengal). At a very young age, he was married to Sahibzadi Shahbanu Begum in a match arranged by the family. Plate 11 ; Lieutenant-Colonel Hassan Suhrawardy

They had a harmonious marriage and were the parents of two children, a son Hassan Masud Suhrawardy (1903–1963) and a daughter, Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah. Hassan's daughter Shaista was married to Mohammed Ikramullah, a Pakistani diplomat and brother of Chief Justice Mohammad Hidayatullah, sometime Vice-President of India. Through Shaista Begum, Hassan Suhrawardy is the grandfather of Salma Sobhan, Naz Ikramullah and Princess Sarvath of Jordan.

Hassan Suhrawardy was also the maternal uncle of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, sometime Prime Minister of undivided Pakistan. Hassan's sister Khujastha Akhtar Banu was married to her cousin Justice Sir Zahid Suhrawardy, an early Indian judge of the Calcutta High Court, and they were the parents of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was born to Justice Sir Zahid Suhrawardy and Khujesta Akhtar Banu in Midnapur, Bengal (now West Bengal), India, on 8 September 1892. He received his early education from his mother and his uncle, Sir Abdullah al-Mamun (who had studied at Oxford University and been a founder-member of the Pan Islamic Society in London), before he entered the Calcutta Aliya Madrasah and graduated with honours in science from St. Xavier's College. He obtained an MA degree in Arabic Calcutta University in 1913 before leaving for England later that year.

In England he enrolled at Oxford University, where he graduated in science with honours and received his BCL degree. His elder (and only) brother, Hasan Shahid Suhrawardy, graduated from Oxford as well, and both were involved with the Oxford Majlis. Huseyn was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in 1918 and returned to Calcutta in 1920 where he started practising as a barrister. Soon after returning to India, Suhrawardy married Begum Naiz Fatima, the daughter of Sir Abdur Rahim, who was a judge of the Calcutta High Court, a member of the Governor's Executive Council and president of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Begum Naiz died in 1922. They had one son, Shahab Suhrawardy, who died in London in 1940 while pursuing his studies at Oxford, and one daughter, Akhter Jahan Suhrawardy, who married Shah Ahmed Sulaiman, the son of Sir Mohammad Sulaiman.

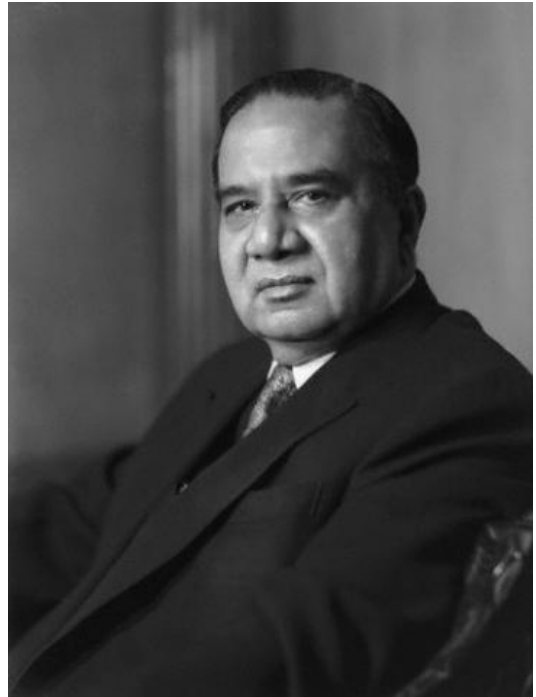


Plate 12 : Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy

He joined the Swaraj Party, under the leadership of C. R. Das, in 1923 and became Deputy Mayor of Calcutta in 1924. After the death of Das, Suhrawardy turned to separatist policies and eventually joined the All India Muslim League. In 1946, Suhrawardy headed the Muslim League government, as Prime Minister, in Bengal. On 16 August 1946, mobs of Muslims attacked Hindus in their demand for a Pakistan. Suhrawardy is often held responsible for not intervening. In 1956, Iskander Mirza made Suhrawardy Prime Minister after Chaudhry Muhammad Ali had resigned. However, due to the political turmoil of Pakistan at that time, he resigned on 17 October 1957. After being disqualified from politics by Muhammad Ayub Khan, Suhrawardy relocated to Lebanon where he died in 1963.

Suryakant Tripathi (21 February 1896 – 15 October 1961), known by his [pen name Nirala](#), was an Indian poet, novelist, essayist and story-writer. He also drew many sketches. Tripathi was born on 21 February 1896 in Midnapore in Bengal. His family had roots in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh. He participated in literary circles such as the Kavi Sammelan. Though a student of Bengali, Nirala took a keen interest in Sanskrit from the very beginning.

Nirala's life, barring short periods, was one long sequence of misfortunes and tragedies. His father, Pandit Ramsahaya Tripathi, was a government servant and was a tyrannical person. His mother died when he was very young. Nirala was educated in the Bengali medium at Mahishadal, Purba Medinipur. However, after passing the matriculation exam, he continued his education at home by reading Sanskrit and English literature. Subsequently, he shifted to Lucknow and thence to village Gadhakola of Unnao district, to which his father originally belonged. Growing up, he gained inspiration from personalities like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, and Rabindranath Tagore

After his marriage at a young age, Nirala learned Hindi at the insistence of his wife, Manohara Devi. Soon, he started writing poems in Hindi, instead of Bengali. After a bad childhood, Nirala had a few good years with his wife. But this phase was short-lived as his wife died when he was 20, and later his daughter (who was a widow) also expired. He also went through financial troubles during this time. During that phase, he worked for many publishers, worked as a proof-reader and also edited publications including Matvala and Samanvaya. Many of Nirala's poems have been translated by the late scholar, David Rubin, which are available in the collections, *A Season on the Earth: Selected Poems of Nirala* (Columbia University Press, 1977), *The Return of Sarasvati: Four Hindi Poets* (Oxford University Press, 1993), and *Of Love and War: A Chayavad Anthology* (Oxford University Press, 2005). *Nirala : Aatmhanta Astha* was a critical analysis of his works written by Doodhnath Singh.



Plate 13 : Suryakant Tripathi

Sushil Kumar Dhara (2 March 1911 – 28 January 2011) was a revolutionary in British India and a political leader after Indian independence in 1947.

Dhara was born on 2 March 1911 in Tikarampur (near Tamluk) in Mahisadal in the present Purba Medinipur district into a Hindu family. He was involved in political activities from his school days. He completed his education from Vidyasagar College in 1937. Later, in 1940, he participated in the Satyagraha movement of Gandhi. In August 1942 he played the lead role in launching an anti-British movement in undivided Midnapore. The movement helped to free Tamralipta from British rule and a free government was formed in this region on 17 December 1942. Vidyut Bahini, of the parallel Government of Tamluk was also commanded by him. As a member of Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar, which is better known as Tamralipta National Government, formed during the 1942 August Movement, Dhara held the portfolios of War and Home. During the period of British governance, Dhara spent 12 years and 4 months in prison.

After independence of India, Dhara won several elections, which included the Mahishadal seat of West Bengal Assembly in 1962, 1967 and 1969. In 1962, he was the winner of the Assembly poll as a Congress candidate. He also created the Bangla Congress in 1966. In 1967, Prafulla Sen was defeated at Arambagh by another Gandhian Ajoy Mukherjee, who became chief minister of West Bengal after Prafulla Chandra Sen. Architect of Ajoy Mukherjee's victory at Arambagh was Narayan Ch Ghosh the then student's leader there. Dhara had inspired students of Arambagh unfolding his image as commander of Vidyut Bahini. In 1967, he had won the poll as a candidate of Bangla Congress. He also served the state government as Industry and Commerce Minister. He had published a book titled *Ken ei banya* written by Narayan Ch Ghosh for circulation in the lower Damodar basin. Reading noted book people there were very much agitated and took effective role against Congress. Later, Ajoy Mukherjee with some of his closest colleagues, such as Pranob Mukherjee, joined Indian National Congress leaving Dhara - his long term associates. Ajoy Mukherjee had pushed Pranab Mukherjee to be State Minister in the Indian Cabinet. In 1977, from the Tamluk constituency, Dhara was elected to the Lok Sabha as a candidate of the Janata Party.

Dhara stepped back from politics in the 1980s and involved himself in social work. He died on 28 January 2011, at the age of 100, owing to prolonged sickness.

Satyendra Nath Bosu (aka. Satyendranath Bose or Satyen Bose; 30 July 1882 – 21 November 1908) was an Indian nationalist of the Anushilan Samiti. Bosu, while held in Alipore Jail hospital as an under-trial in the Alipore Bomb Case, shot dead with the help Kanailal Dutta the Crown witness Narendranath Goswami, leading to the collapse of the case against prime accused Aurobindo. Bosu gave himself up on the jail premises, and was subsequently put on trial, along with Dutta, found guilty and executed by hanging on 21 November 1908 for the murder of Goswami



Plate 14 : Satyendra Nath Bosu

CHAPTER 4 - ARTS AND CRAFTS IN PURBA MEDINIPUR

1. Terracotta Craft :

a. Sashti' Putul or 'Tepa' or Pressed Putul/ Doll (*The living archaeological evidence of ancient Indian civilization*) – Tepa Putul is one kind of traditional Bangladeshi terracotta sculpture mostly used as a toy doll or show piece in all over Bangladesh and few parts of India. In Bengali language, 'Tepa' means pressing and 'Putul' means Doll. So the name, Tepa Putul indicates that it is very ancient and has a simple making process where the dolls are made by simply pressing the raw clay using fingers. (Fakir, 1985 & Talukdarin, 2001). According to Jahanggir (1982) & Fakir (1985) , the tradition of Tepa Putul is more than 6000 years old. The Indian people made and used Tepa Putul for various purposes since the ancient Indus' Valley Civilization or probably since prehistoric era. If we look back to the ancient Indus' Valley Civilization, the way they used to make their terracotta sculpture at that time, still Tepa Putul is made following the same style and techniques. Therefore sometimes it is considered as a living archaeological evidence of ancient Indian civilization. But this prehistoric form of art is not only important for its archaeological values rather the significances of Tepa Putul is hidden in its unique artistic quality which conveys the very original test of Indian aesthetics from prehistoric time to postmodern era. Therefore, in early 20th century, lots of the Bengali fine artists took Tepa Putul as their visual inspiration and at the same time Tepa Putul was used widely in rural areas as a form of toy.

In Bengal it is one of the most traditional forms of dolls available in various parts particularly in Purba Medinipur. The process of making these hand-pressed dolls is primitive yet simple. These are made by pressing the raw clay using fingers, dried in the sun and burnt. The bride and the groom, the mother and child are some of the most popular among them. The buns and tilaks on the foreheads make the female dolls look interesting. The eyes are made by making holes on the faces with the help of sticks. The incomplete hands on both sides of the body make these dolls stand out. Tepa putul is made by potters and Patua artists across Bengal along with the female members of their families.

In our study area this kind of hand- crafted dolls are found in **Nandigram, Kumarmari, Nanakar Chowk** and Gobindapur village, in areas where the potter and ‘potua’ (or scroll-makers) communities live. The women from the respective communities fashion these dolls by pressing them into shape with their fingers. The heads of the dolls are flat, rectangular and the noses are erect. The hands are like stubs. After they are made the dolls are fired in ovens using dry leaves and hay and these are not painted.

The most famous of these dolls are the depictions of a mother with a number of children on her lap. Being symbolic of the goddess Sashti, these dolls are hence known as Sashti Putul. The villagers refer to them colloquially as ‘koleypo, kachheypo’ i.e. laps and folds with children. However as these dolls are pressed into shape when making them, they are more commonly known as ‘tepa putul’. The dolls are sold in the weekly markets and at local fairs.



Plate 15 – Sashti Putul / Terracotta Dolls

"Jo Putul" (special handicraft dolls of West Bengal India, Village Nayagram, Midnapore, a village reputed for its scroll-painters (Patuas) - It is another type of Shasti Putul mostly found in the Nayagram of Purba Medinipur. Mostly women chitrakars create these dolls .The essence of the dolls are its simplicity. Rejina and Ayesha Chitrakar are very famous “jo-doll “ makers. The dolls depict simple livelihood of women carrying her child with a basket on her head ,parrots , elephants , dogs, horse, birds etc are the major themes of the **“jo-putul”** . The clay toys are first sun dried in the sun and low fired in the oven. In some areas the toys are paired with lacquer. These toys are smaller and have simpler method of finger pressing process. It is an age old process of village life. Plate 15 A : Jo Putul at Handicrafts Fare.





Plate 15 B & C : Fatima Chitrakar at Handicraft Fare selling different items along with Jo putul

b. Earthenware vessels

In **Balarampur village**, 4 families are still involved in this craft. With the clay collected from the bank of the river, the potters make pots, pitchers and various vessels for storing water and cattle- feed, including rings for local toilets.

c. Terracotta Pots - Village – Khejuri – About 25 families mainly of Bera title are engaged in making terracotta pots, pitchers, lamps, sweet curd pots (*bhars*), lakshmi shora and vessels (Red and Black). They make number of pots specially meant for particular pujas, rituals and also for domestic purposes. The fresh clay is collected from the river banks and then cleaned out by the women folks. Different pots and vessels are made in Chaak (Wheel). Mostly men are involved in making these pots. 2 types of natural colours are used -Black and Red. During Baisakh Month (Bengali Calendar), Amavasya (Full Moon) and Purnima (New Moon) the burning process is not done.



Plate 16 – Special type of Lakshmi Ghat (Pot) is prepared in Khejuri for puja purpose



Plate 17 – Baburam Bera , age 45 making pots in Khejuri Village , Block – Khejuri, 22.8537 °N 86.6863 °E. Plate 18 - The other artisans are Bhanu Bera ,age 55, Ashok Bera , Asish Bera ,Prabhat



d.Sonachura Saupara Village of Nandigram Block - 21. 9010⁰N , 87. 9653⁰E , About 15 families are involved in making terracotta earthen wares. The most common items are cooking pot (round bottom *Hanri*) , pitchers, pots for worshipping, marriage ceremony pots , tea cups etc. Clay is collected from the pond and river banks and then the pebbles , coarse materials are nicely taken out to prepare the items. Electric and manual wheels are used for making vessels. Women and men, both are involved in making these earthen items. The prepared items are sold in local markets like Nandigram, Chandipur, Tengua, Ashadtala etc . However, according to Panchanan Bera , age 73 of Saupara Village, the number of families associated with this craft are slowly moving out of this profession because of dwindling market. The other artists who gave us information are Himangshu Bera(65) , Kajal Bera (50) Sita Bera(28), Sudhangshu Bera, Sujata Bera (45).



Plate 19 : Sonachura Saupara potters displaying their potteries. Kajal Bera , Sita Bera and others



Plate 20 & 21 : Sonachura Saupara potters displaying their potteries. Panchanan Bera and others

e. Other Pottery Centers are also found in Gokulnagar , Nandigram etc. Here the artists are Bhaskar Das, Narayan Das, Sukumar Das, Menoka Das, Sabitri Das , Mamoni Das, Moumita Das, Nabakumar Das, Gouranga Das . They all are engaged in making pots of different kinds and lamps.

f. Terracota Tulsi Platform – Tulsi plant (Holy Basil) is treated as Mahalaxmi and always have a special place in Hindu religion. This tree is put on little high platform than any other plants and need to make an alter. The Mistress of the house put a Dep (Lamp) for her respect and at morning and evening offer water, flowers and sweets. In Mahisadal there are few families where terracotta Tulsi Platform is prepared.



Plate 22 – Tulsi Mancha preparation going on

2. Bamboo Craft in Khejuri – Adjoining river Hugli (from Old Post Office area in Khejuri Block) about 500 families are involved in Bamboo Craft in different villages like Bali Bustee , Ghutiapara, Mondal para , Maiti Para , Battala Chak .More than 100 muslim families are also involved in Basket making. These baskets are used in Beetle Vine Plantation, Fishing , Cow Dung Collection, Mud Collection, Vegetable Plates, Hats , Paddy Thrashing etc. Bamboos are collected from Medinagar, Bhagabanpur, Patashpur, Egra etc. Even from South 24 Parganas and Howrah these bamboos are brought and used for bamboo basket making . The items are sold in local markets or else in Kakdwip, Baruipur , Uluberia etc.



Plate 23 – Artist - Purnima Panchadhyai (Age38) is involved in making bamboo basket.



Plate 24 : Artist – Arun Manna (40 years) bamboo craft in Kejuri.

C. Shola' craft - 'Shola' is an aquatic plant that is widely found in Bengal. It grows in ponds, canals, rivers etc. It is a reed and has an outer skin. Earlier use of this reed was only for use on the fishing hook. Later Katyani Devi (Malakar) started making decorative items. It was traditionally used as for religious functions but today it is also used as decoration and in the construction of structures for various rituals. In Asadtala village in Nandigram Block, 'shola' ware is crafted by a few families. After the 'shola' is collected from the pond or river it is dried in the sun and sliced as needed; when the top layer or the skin, is peeled off, the white portion beneath is revealed. Fine strips are cut from the thick layers of 'shola' with a blade and it is made into various artistic shapes. These creative designs are cut and pasted onto paper for various purposes such as-

- Headgear worn by the bride and groom in Bengali weddings
- 'Chandmala' or decorative garlands
- Flowers
- Attire for the goddess at pujas
- Ornaments for different gods and goddesses

The ornaments are also embellished with beads and sequins which are purchased from the local market. Other than these, in olden days the 'shola' or pith was also used in the making of the canvas for folk paintings. Organic products were used as paint e.g. red mud, the red herbal paste applied on the feet etc. The Malakar community is associated with this craft. **Ashok Malakar** is a well- known craftsman from here. It is observed that women too participate in the making of 'shola' crafts especially in the creation of floral-shaped ornaments.

In the Ajanbari Village of Khejuri , Dinabandhu Mali and Pratima Mali prepares different decorative items with shola. They are hereditary artisans and are involved in this craft for 3 generations. His father Bhudev Mali along with some other shola artists used to prepare Shitala , Chandi figures with Shola. Dinabandhu and his wife Pratima prepares shola flowers. Chandmala , Crowns etc for Puja and decorative purpose. The major ingredients required are Shola , Coloured marble papers, jute sticks and adhesive (natural adhesive). According to Dinabandhu Mali , the major problems of Shola craft is the collection of raw materials. They had to employ labours to collect shola from the Pratappur Dighi (Lake) in Patashpur or Mukundapur area in Kanthi. The labours take 400 Rs per shift for collection of shola from the waterbodies. They sell their commodities in the local markets of Boga , Alipur Bazar,

Bhimeswari, Kaukhali and Khejuri Godown area. The other artisans involved in the Shola Craft are Panchanan Mali , Gurupada Pantha of Bidyapith.



Plate 25 & 26 : Shola Craft done from Shola.



Plate 27- Malakar Dinabandhu Mali with his creations in Ajanbari Village

D. Boat Making - The history of boat-building technology in ancient Bengal dates back to the third millennium B.C., as far back as the Harappan times! The traditional boat-builders of Odisha (then part of Bengal) are called Bindhani, Barhais and Biswakarmas. In fish-loving Bengal, boats were primarily used for fishing. Since the land is full of rivers, channels, streams and swamps, boats were also an easy means of transportation and communication. The extensive use of boats for the purpose of trade and commerce is not unknown and so is their use in inland and overseas navigation. In different districts of Bengal, boats are of various types and shapes. In Purba Medinipur, Geonkhali region the local boats are known as *Paukhia* and *Khorokisti* while in Karanjali they are known as *Khorosalti*.

Boat-builders and fisher folk live along the basin of the Ganga and the Hugli in Nandigram and Khejuri Block. Boat-building as an occupation is closely linked to fishing as a livelihood. Those involved in the mechanics of boat-building belong to this region. In Jalpai village in Ward no. III, Pin 721656, fishing boats are made. The wood of the ‘sal’, ‘babla’ or acacia, “Shirish”, “Potash” and eucalyptus trees are used for making fishing boats. Saw, axe, chisel and other iron tools are used for the carving of the boat. Today electronic tools facilitate the work. Two well-known boat builders from the region are Raipad Burman and Mahadeb Burman. To make a single boat they, along with a group of helpers, take approximately one to one and a half months’ time. Average cost of the regular boat is about 60,000 to 70,000 . Generally the local fisherman buy these boats and attach machines to these boats.

Some of the other boat builders are –

- i. Rajesh Pradhan , Panchuria Village , Post Office m- Lakkhanchak , Khejuri
- ii. Shaikh Noimuddin , Nonapata Village , Post Office - Gopichak , Khejuri
- iii. Rahim Sheikh , Nonapota Village , Post Office - Gopichak , Khejuri
- iv. Hadim Shaikh , Nonapota Village , Post Office - Gopichak , Khejuri
- v. Shaikh Jamshed , Nonapota Village , Post Office - Gopichak , Khejuri
- vi. Shaikh Ali Nonapota Village , Post Office - Gopichak , Khejuri
- vii. Shaikh Mujaffar , Village, Gorhaat , Post Office –Ketka Debichak, Khejuri
- viii. Subhas Mondal , Village , Wasilichak , Post office –Lakkhanchak, Khejuri



Plate 28– Boat Maker Aswini Giri,
Nandigram Block, Purba Medinipur

E. Patachitra

Patachitra, an ancient folk art of Bengal, is appreciated by art lovers all over the world for its effortless style of drawings, colours, lines and space usage. The word Pata derived from the Sanskrit word Patta means cloth. The painters are called Patuas. Patuas do not just paint, they also sing as they unfurl the painting scroll to show it to the audience. These songs are known as Pater Gaan. The songs are of wide variety ranging from traditional mythological tales and tribal rituals to stories based on modern Indian history and contemporary issues like protecting forests and preventing spread of HIV/AIDS. Patuas generally use natural colours, which they procure from various trees, leaves, flowers and clays. Patachitra has been mentioned in Puranas, Epics, Ancient Literatures and Historical Descriptions. The style of painting is similar to the cave paintings of Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Ajanta. 'Patuas' and 'Chitrakars' have been referred to in literary works dating back to more than 2500 years. Some researchers opine that 'Patashilpa' was originally an art form of the Santhals (tribal community). It was popular among Hindu tribes like Santhals, Hos, Munda, Juangs and Kherias who painted 'Patachitras' depicting the birth of their first ancestors Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Burhi; how they had seven sons and seven daughters and how these seven brothers were married to their sisters. With the growing influence of Buddhism, the Patuas embraced the faith. Buddhist kings and monks made extensive use of scroll paintings to preach Buddhism and during this time Patachitra probably spread to Bali, Java, Sri-Lanka, Malaysia and Tibet. With Muslim invasions, Islam spread and the Chitrakars became followers of Islam.

In Purba Medinipur there are about 238 Patachitra artists. Chandipur is the largest cluster however Patachitra is primary livelihood of only little more than one-third of the total population of artists.

In Nandigram and Nankarchowk villages we find the erstwhile establishment of the 'potuas' or folk-painters. They have now migrated to Chandipur to rear ducks. The eminent anthropologist Prabodh Bhowmik belongs to this village. He had collected the 'pata' with the story of Manohar Phanshurey (or Hangman), depicted on it.



Plate 29: Golap Chitrakar is from Nankarchak village under Chandipur block of Purba Medinipur district. Winner of a State level Award, he is a well-known exponent of Patachitra art form for more than four decades now.



Plate 30 : Subho Chitrakar is a resident of Chandipur village in Purba Medinipur district. He is 46 years old and is engaged in this craft for the last 30 years. Apart from Patachitra he is applying his artistic skill on t-shirts and sarees. Subho has participated in fairs Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata and Mumbai. He is a State Award recipient. Subho hitrakar has also won the Lalit Kala Academy Award (Delhi) in 2003.



Plate 31 : Subho Chitrakar with his scroll painting in front of Mrs. Ruby Pal Chowdhury , Ex-President Crafts Council Of India





Plate 31 : Sayera is one of the young Patachitra artists of Chandipur. She has learnt the craft from her sisters-in-law after her marriage. Sayera has participated in fairs in Kolkata and Siliguri.



Plate 32 : Noordin Chitrakar also known as Khokon Chitrakar is a resident of Chandipur village in Purba Medinipur district. He has been practising this art for the last 27 years. Noordin has learnt Patachitra from his parents, Noor Jahan and Golap Chitrakar. He has participated in fairs in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow and in a fair in London in 2015.Noordin has won both the District and State Level award.

Plate 33: The scroll painting or Patachitra depicting the " Behula Lakhinder" story , Chandipur



F. Grass Craft

Jun Grass - In Kalicharanpur Village of Nandigram Ranajit Patra and his family members are involved in making different craft items out of **Jun Grass** . These grasses are available in the local river banks, wetland areas. The grasses are collected and then dried. Then they are cut into sizes and stitched together to form mats. The mats are used for making Baskets of different types.



Plate 29 – Nikhil Manna , prepares baskets out of Jun Grass.



June grass is a perennial, cool season, tufting true grass. It can reach $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 feet in height (15 to 61 cm.) and has narrow flat leaves. The seeds are in dense spikes which are pale green to light purple. The grass is so adaptable it can thrive in its preferred lightly sandy soils but also heavily compacted soil. The plant is broadly tolerant of cold, heat, and drought but it does prefer deep to moderately fine textured soil. Not only does the plant provide forage for wild and domestic animals, but the seeds feed small mammals and birds, and provides cover and nesting material.



Plate 30 : Jun Grass

Hogla is another very versatile raw-material used for making different utility as well as decorative products . In the villages adjoining Rupnarayan and Hugli River of Mahisadal Block there are many families involved in making Hogla Mats. However , this is a seasonal activity done in the winter months. There happens to be huge market of Hogla Mats for making temporary shelters in Gangasagar Mela. All the farmers get involved in making Hogla Mats during this time. The raw materials are brought from local river banks and also from Howrah District. The dried Hogla are cut in similar sizes and then stitched together. Both men and women are involved in making the Hogla Mats for the preparation of temporary shelters .



Plate 31 - Adjoining Rupnarayan River in Mahisadal Block , almost all the villagers get seasonally engaged in making mats out of Hogla reeds. There is a huge requirement of these items in Gangasagar Mela.



Plate 32 & 33 – All the family members get involved in making Hogla Reeds cutting and stitching



Sabang Grass Mat (Madur)- The traditional madur mat was a permanent fixture in a Bengali household till a few years ago. The word ‘madur’ is a generic term for floor mats in Bengal prepared from the natural reed Sabang Grass.

The mats are woven from reeds or madurkathi (mat sticks, *Cyperus Tegetum* or *Cyperus Pangorei*), of a rhizome plant found abundantly in the alluvial tracks of East and West Medinipur districts. The climate and land in the two districts are suitable for the reeds that grow between April and July as well as between September and November. Old-timers said that the origin of madur craft in West Bengal dates back to the Muslim period when *masland* (also known as *mataranchi*) mats of superfine quality with fine cotton were produced under royal patronage.

Though Sabang Block of Paschim Medinipur is the hub of this craft , around 4,500 artisans are also involved in it at Narayangarh, Bhagwanpur, Potashpur, Ramnagar, Contai and Moyna administrative blocks of Purba Medinipur. Over 70% of the artisans are women. Contai and Ramnagar are the closest blocks to our study area where Madur is prepared from grasses are dried , cut and stitched to prepare various items. Traditionally the artisans used to



Plate 32 :
Stitching of
"Madur"
from
Madurkathi

make only mats but now according to Gouri Bala Das of Contai, table mats, carry bags, hats and spectacle cases in various attractive colours are prepared. “Though looms are used for making diverse items, artisans still use a bamboo frame to make ordinary and even masland

mats where the sticks are made finer. The popular designs on the masland mats are flowers and honey combs,” said Das.

“The price of an ordinary mat made of jute ropes and thick madur sticks are usually around Rs 150, while a masland mat can be priced as high as around Rs 1.5 lakh and weigh just 200-250 grams,” Das added.

Special Report – Mat Making of Purba and Paschim Medinipur

The process of fine weaving – The process begins with the preparation of basic raw material which is commonly termed as pre-loom weaving. The painstaking work starts from the steps when the soft reeds and cotton (some cases jute thread) are arranged on a bamboo frame loom as weft and wrap respectively. For weaving of *Masland* mats at least 2 persons are required. One person places the reeds from left to right by placing one thread on top and another one down. The other person does the same thing from right to left. At the finishing line the threads are turned and the process is continued. The popular design on Masland mats are of flowers, honey comb (Mouchaak) , Rhomboidal (barfi), cascading (jharna)etc

Weaving is also done with the help of installed looms locally called as CharDhap (4 steps) looms . This loom is operated by a single person. A length of a mat is produced which is then tailored according to the size of the product.

Process of dyeing *Madurkathi* - The craftsmen have a practice of dyeing the *Madur* sticks with natural and vegetable dyes. However, they nowadays use *azo* - free dyes to add different colors to the weave. The process involves cutting the sticks , making appropriate bunches , mixing colours in proportion and adding to boiling water, soaking the sticks in the boiling water with the dye and then drying them in sun.

Maslanda or Matranchi is an exclusive & expensive high ranged handmade variety of Madur made with intricate artistic skills by about 50 artisans living in Sabang block, Paschim Medinipur.



Plate 33 : Hand - made
Matranchi

G. DATE PALM LEAVES CRAFT - The leaves of date palm trees are dried and then used in several applications such as making ropes, baskets, and mats . In Rangibasan Village of Mahisadal Block , about 30 Muslim families are engaged in making the mats ,ropes and other products.



Plate 34 – Najima Bibi involved in making Date Palm leaves craft

H. HORN CRAFT OF BAISHNABCHAK : The craftsmen of West Bengal has gained the admiration of the nation with their fine works of artistry but their main piece of artefact was the making of horn and bone crafts. The horn craft of West Bengal portrays the traditional affluence of the past reign. It is known that from the ancient ages of the Indian civilisation, **horn combs** were shining black and had translucent shades of grey. These pieces of art adorned the tresses of women in those times. Back in the day, in West Bengal, the artisans of a village called **Baishnabchak in Purba Medinipur** did a flourishing business in horn combs. Combs made out of horn were trusted to be excellent for the hair and scalp. But soon after, the horn combs began to lose ground in the market because of its appearance and the availability of cheaper plastic combs. To overcome the crisis, the State Government introduced different measures for diversification and today, the craftsmen are engaged in the production of a wide range of horn products like walking sticks, pen stands,

Plate 34a.
Horn art



napkin rings, spoons, knobs and handles etc. Bengal horn is still a fascinating craft, the villages of Baishnabchak and Joleghanshyanof, Gupiganj, Baruipur, Malda and some other areas around Kolkata are engaged in horn handicraft. There are over 400 skilled artisans from



Plate 34b. Horn Combs

in and around these places, who are still the bearer of this ancient tradition. The chief centres of horn comb used to be in erstwhile undivided Bengal, the roots of it go back to Dacca and Bakhargunj, also known as Barisal in Bangladesh. These handicrafts of horn and bone are most commonly made from animals like the buffalo, camel, elephant and cow. In West Bengal, buffalo horn is the most common one, where the horn is heated, flattened and then cut and shaped or carved accordingly. In some states, like Uttar

Pradesh and Rajasthan, the use of camel bone is very common in the inlay while making jewellery. Horn bone crafts in West Bengal include making exotic pieces like bullock carts, trail of elephants, patterns carved on the complete tusk, engraved jewellery boxes,

chariots with horses and many more with immense dexterity. The craftsmen are skilled in creating holy figures and deities like Goddess Lakshmi, Goddess Durga and Lord Ganesh out of horn bones. Some places of West Bengal were greatly admired as the artisans used to create gorgeous ivory panels which were part of the beds, ‘simhasans’ or the royal chairs, palanquins, thrones. Moreover, artisans of Medinipur still make combs from horns which are meticulously embellished in varied shapes and fashions.

The horn bone crafts stand unique because of the fusion of different motifs while still upholding the past traditions of Bengal with a tinge of contemporary touch. The present market scenario of these object show that the artisans have the potentiality to adapt to understand the demand of the mass and modify accordingly.



Plate 34d : A beautiful piece of Horn Comb . Horn art is a peerless art form, from West Bengal which depicts the beauty of black.. It is regarded as a blend of Hindu and Islamic



Plate 34e : The fascinating horn crafts of Baishnabchak includes combs, penholder, door knobs , decorative plaques ,jewellery , toys etc

I. SALT MAKING – In Bengal , during pre-British to British period , the salt manufacturing areas were popularly known as Jalpai lands. They used to supply fuel and facilities for manufacturing of salt. They had forest lands from which the people or salt manufacturers , popularly known as Malangis used to collect fuel. In addition with the method of evaporation of saline water under the sun shine –the collected salt was “pungah” or brined salt, there is another method of evaporation using burning woods placing under salt pots. The term Jalpai is derived from Jalan Pai , which means a source of fuel in Bengali. The Jalpai or saltlands were exposed to estuary and sea and also to the tidal prone rivers and creeks. Thus the saline water used to enter into the Khalaris or saltpans.

Purba Medinipur Coastal lowlands were an important salt manufacturing area from the Muslim to British rule. There is still some areas where salt is prepared by using indigenous method like Shyampur Jalpai , Khejuri Block, Kendamari Jalpai in Nandigram 1, Banbasuberia , Khejuri Block etc. Angur Bala Bera (65 years) and Gautam Bera (40 years) are involved in making Salt in Banbasuberia. But nowadays these saltpan areas are getting converted to aquaculture farms as commercial brackish water fishing has more economic importance.



Plate 35 – Khejuri Coastal area , meant for making salts

CHAPTER 5 : PERFORMING ART

A. Mangalgeeti - In Bengal, various musical compositions were in practice from the time immemorial. But we can have historical evidences of compositions from the period of 10th - 11th century. There were mainly two types of musical forms like folk and classico-folk. One of the most important musical forms, 'Charyagiti' were sung based on classical ragas and talas and had a resemblance of 'Prabandha giti'. It is believed that, the great Bengali scholar Haraprasad Shastri contained the text of said songs elaborately in Sanskrit. In this regard, we can enter into the 12th century A.D. when the '**Gitagovinda Padaganas**' or '**Astapadis**' were composed by Thakur Joydev. This may be called the origin of 'Kirtan'. The songs of the '**Gitagovinda**' are the 'Prabandha' types of gitis and it is a good combination of Prakrit and Sanskrit language. From the reference of '**Srichaitanya Charitamrit**' we found that Mahaprabhu used to listen to the songs of Chandidas and Vidyapati, which indicates that some elementary form of Padavali were in practice before the life and time of Mahaprabhu. Besides this, another musical form '**Mangalagitis**' were in practice and all the themes were taken from different 'Mangalkavyas'. During this period, each and every 'Mangalkavyas' was of great value and were composed by various authors based on simple poetry to glorify a particular God or Goddess. This type of songs were known as 'Mangal gaan'. In our study area, there are many areas where this Mangal Gaan is practised. They are documented below.

a. Haldia Purba Medinipur – Latitude / Longitude. 22.0674135, 88.1338478

Troupe Name – Maa Shitala Jatra Samaj.

Village – Durga Chak C.P.T Market, G Block, Haldia, Purba Medinipur.

Main Performing Artist – Ahalya Karan (Age – 50). This troupe has 25 to 26 members. They usually sing verses from Chandi Mangal, Shitala Mangal, Manasa Mangal, Sasthi Mangal. Each troupe consists of Singers, Mikeman, Lightman etc. Each performance has a honorarium of Rs 15000/- only. They get the performance invitation from Purba and Paschim Medinipur, Haora, Kolkata and 24 Parganas. The instruments used for the performance are – Harmonium, Chamor, Jhump, Jhumka, T-Khol, Kartal.

The other members are – Uttam Bera (38years) , Village – Basulia, Swapan Jana (45 years) , Anamika Das (35 years) , Manju Das (22 years) , Chakraborty Gayen (D Shibrampur), Ashok Chatterjee (Akubpur), Gurupada Maiti (Village-Kaktia), Shankar Jana (Ramchandrapur)



Plate 36– The artists of Maa Shitala Jatra Samaj Troupe and the masks they use during performance

b.Nandigram , Village-Kalicharanpur,Latitude-21.9339 N / 87.9776 E**Troupe Name-Gouranga Geetinatya Sangstha.**

Main Performing Artist: Sutrishna Patra (45age). Troupe Manager – Ranajit Patra and Narayan Chandra Mithya. They mostly perform Sheetalamangal, Manasamangal, Chandimangal, SasthiMangal, Lakshmi Worshipping Songs,

Musical Instruments – Harmonium , Tabla,Tikra,Jhampa,Bati,Jhumka etc Hanuman and Ass Headgears and Masks

are used. After each performance the troupe receives Rs 6000/- to Rs 8000/-. Each artist receives hardly Rs 400/- per performance.

The other group members are – Laksmi Manna , Kalicharanpur, Shankar Bar, Kalicharanpur, Tapas Manna, Kalicharanpur, Gurucharan Patra, Narayan Middy, Soudkhali Village, Puspa Manna, 7 no. Jalpai etc.



Plate 37 :
Sutrishna Patra
, Main
performer
Gouranga
Geetinatya
Sangstha

c. Nandigram , Village-SoudKhali ManasaBazaar,Latitude-21.9192 N / 87.9947 E**Troupe Name - Sri Krishna Giti Natya Sangstha.**

Main Performing Artist: **Pratima Hazra** (32 age). Troupe Manager – Purnendu Hazra..

They mostly perform Sheetalamangal,

Manasamangal, Chandimangal, SasthiMangal, Lakshmi

Worshipping Songs, SatyaPeer songs (Alia's Forest exile)

,Satya Narayan Worshipping songs. They also perform

Krishna-Yatra which includes the – *Nimai Sannyas* (ascetic



Plate 38 : Pratima Hazra , Main artist
, Sri Krishna Giti Natya Sangstha

life of Nimai -Chaitnya Mahaprabhu , *Sitar Bonobas* (Sita's Forest Exile) and *Beimaan Badsha* (Unscrupulous King) opera.

There are 16 members in the troupe . About 12 members are involved in MangalGaan and all of them are involved in Krishna Yatra. The Musical Instruments used for the performance are Harmonium, different types of drums like Naal, Dugi Tabla, and percussion instruments. While performing Sasthimangal they use masks of donkey and monkey. The troupe gets invitation for performing in other blocks like Khejuri, districts like Burdwan and even states like Jharkhand and Odisha . For every performance they receive Rs 8000/- to Rs 10,000/- as their honorarium.

The other members of the troupes are – Rita Mondal, Durga Das,Puja Das, Champa Mondal etc.

d.Khejuri Village , Khejuri Block , Latitude – 21.9767⁰N, Longitude -87.8011⁰ E.

Main performing artist – Chayarani Bhuiyan (36 age) They mostly perform songs from Sheetala Mangal, Manasa Mangal, Chandi Mangal and Sasthi Mangal. In the local Kejuri Chandi Temple , every year during Durga Puja Chandi Mangal songs are performed by the troupe.They are also famous for performing “Mashal Jhanka” . The Musical Instruments used for the performance are Harmonium, different types of drums like Naal, Dugi Tabla, and percussion instruments. While performing Sasthimangal they use masks of donkey and monkey. The troupe gets invitation for performing in Kharagpur, Sagar, Paschim Medinipur , etc. For every performance they receive Rs 7000/- to Rs 20,000/- as their honorarium. The season starts from Janmasthanami . The other members of the troupe are Ajit Bera (Age , 60), Angshuman Pramanik (Age 70), Tapan Mandal , Pratap Mondal (Age 59), Reena Das, Rinku Karan.

b. Beni Putul or Glove Puppetry – ‘Glove puppetry’ is a very popular form of puppet show in India, famous in the states of West Bengal, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Kerela. In this type of puppet-show, puppets are usually worn on the hands of the puppeteers like gloves and the performance is shown to the audience with the accompaniment of narrative songs. The performance may be solo or in a group. The narrative songs are usually accompanied with traditional folk music played by *dholak* or *damru*. The songs vary based on the regional differences and keeps on changing on occasions. Sometimes these are composed by the puppeteer and sung in imitation of the tune of popular Hindi or Bengali songs. Apart from the mythical stories of Radha-Krishna and other figures, most of their narratives are related to the daily lives and events of the common human beings like- social awareness for pulse polio, environmental pollution, dowry system, female infanticide or child marriage or promoting women empowerment and education among the masses. In West Bengal this glove puppetry is popularly known as *Beni Putul* or *Bener Putul*. *Beni* or *Binuni* refers to the ‘Plait’ which women make on their heads by grouping the three-part interlaced hair into a single rounded group. Like plait, glove puppets are also divided into three parts-head, usually made of wood or paper, two arms made of wood and a long skirt made of cloth and after the performance is over, the puppet is folded into a round shaped plait-like object. That is why it is called **Beni putul**. But it is also called **Bener Putul**. If we take this terminology, it refers to the nomadic people of ‘Bede’ or ‘Bedia’ community who performed the puppet show professionally for commercial purposes and thus this performance is named as ‘Bener putul’ which means “Dolls of the commercial people”.

Padmatamli, a village near Mugberia in Purba Medinipur district, is popularly known as ‘Bene Putuler Gram’ (‘the village of glove puppetry’). Puppeteers such as Rampada Ghorai, Basanta Kumar Ghorai, Sarad Ghorai, Paresh Ghorai, Ramkrishna Ghorai,



Plate 39 – Sri Basanta Ghorai, with Glove puppets in Padmatamli Village. Source - Mir Mahammad Ali, Ravenshaw University Mir Ahammad Ali, Vidyasagar University

Arobinda Ghorai, Srimanta Ghorai, Parasurum Ghorai, Amal Ghorai, Suchitra Ghorai, Pratik Ghorai, and others still practise this art.

These artists, as their surnames suggest, belong to the Hari caste, a Dalit caste who live in the Harijan Palli. Once, there had been 70–80 families engaged in this performing art, but now this has decreased to less than ten. One major reason is poverty. As they belong to a lower caste, they do not own any land. At one point, a large number of artists were either palanquin bearers or simply nomads. They earned their livelihood by begging for alms while performing puppetry shows from door to door. They used to live from hand to mouth. The stigma of being a ‘beggar’ and the insults levied on them by the upper castes for engaging in such an ‘ignoble profession’ (puppetry) forced them to switch rapidly to other professions like carpentry, grocery vending, daily labour, etc. The master puppeteer of the village, Mr Basanta Kumar Ghorai, runs a small grocery shop by the main road. Chinmoy Das describes their predicament in his thought-provoking essay, ‘Puppetry’: The present situation of the puppeteers is very pathetic. Originally they belonged to the scheduled caste and the profession of their forefathers was that of a palanquin bearer. Now the performance of glove puppetry has descended to the level of begging. There is no social respect for these artists. Electronic media and other forms of popular entertainment are attracting the masses and as a result the puppeteers and their puppetry are in severe endangerment. Large numbers of performers have switched over to some other professions like rickshaw driving, band-party, land-workers and small businesses. Very few have land, either for farming or for dwelling. It’s a matter of surprise that amidst all these crises, they are still carrying on their rich artistic and cultural heritage!

CHAPTER 5 – FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN PURBA MEDINIPUR

Our study area includes the blocks of Mahisadal, Sutaahata, Nandigram, Khejuri and Haldia which all have their individual lists of local festivals and fairs. Block wise we have tried to list down some of the more popular celebrations.

I. Mahisadal Ratha Yatra -

The territory under Mahishadal Police Station in East Mednipur district, is an important area on the banks of the river Ganga. It is here that the Rupnarayan, a major tributary of the Ganga in West Bengal, meets the river Hooghly. Tamluk or the erstwhile Tamralipta, which is the seat of the ancient culture and civilisation of Bengal, is also situated on the banks of the river Rupnarayan. The towns situated on this river basin, thus bear witness to the rich heritage and tradition of the state. Evidence of its antiquity can be found in Mahishadal, a town situated on the western banks of the Hooghly.

There are various versions about the etymology of the name “Mahishadal”. In ancient times, the districts of Geonkhali, Mahishadal etc. were like islands dotting the river and these to a large extent looked like a herd of buffaloes or “mahish”. Another version states that this was the grazing ground of wild buffaloes hence its name. Around the middle of the 19th Century, H. V. Bayley, the District Collector of Mednipur district, in his accounts makes a reference to the wild buffaloes and describes the wanton destruction wrought by them. At this time the Collectorate was engaged in demarcating the territory for setting up of salt mines. Indigenous methods of salt mining were carried out at that time in places like Contai, Hijli, Tamluk and Mahishadal. Yet again, others believe that the place derives its name from its original settlers, the Mahishya tribe.

Regardless of its antiquity, the fame and cultural traditions of its zamindars or landlords, make Mahishadal an important historical town and remnants of its past glory are still in evidence. Fairs and festivals, rituals and belief-systems are all integrally woven into many aspects of the life of the local rulers. It would appear that a certain individual named Janardan Upadhyay, a Brahmin from Uttar Pradesh, was the erstwhile founder of the royal

house of Mahishadal. From its establishment at the end of the 16th Century, the fortunes of the rulers of Mahishadal have undergone many fluctuations.

Plate 40– Mahishadal Ratha Yatra



Janardan was succeeded by Duryodhan, Ramsharan, Rajaram, Suklal and Anandalal, who functioned under the suzerainty of Hyder Ali. After the death of Anandalal, his widow, Janaki assumed charge of the zamindari. In 1804, after the death of Rani Janaki, there was much dispute regarding her adopted son being declared as her heir. Later, an individual with the title of Garg became the ruler of Mahishadal.

During the rule of Rani Janaki, along with the famous Gopaljiu temple, the Ramjiu temple was also constructed. Even today, within the boundaries of the palace one can still see the ruins of Phulbag Palace, Gopaljiu temple, Jagannath temple, the royal lake etc. In Phulbag palace one can find the old library, Durbar Hall, hall for display of hunting trophies, armoury etc. all of which indicate the past glory of this region. Plate 41 : *The Purohits and the deity of Mahisadal Rath Yatra*



deity of Mahisadal Rath Yatra

Tall structures associated with religious festivals, the framework of the ‘Rath’ or wooden chariot built for Rathyatra, the fairs held during Rath and ‘Charak’ and various folk festivals are still popular here and the following give an idea of the folk traditions of this large region:

The 75 feet high rath of Mahisadal is said to be highest wooden rath (chariot) in the world. Mahisadal Rath Yatra was started by Rani Janaki Devi in 1776 the chariot has undergone several changes

but its main structure have remained the same for the last 240 years. Originally a 17 pinnacled structure it was reduced to 13 pinnacle in 1860 with the lower four pinnacle being replaced with wooden statues of men holding flags. The five storied wooden chariot towers to a height of 75 feet and measures 28 feet X 28 feet at the base. The walls of the chariot are brightly painted and decorated with statues. The gigantic chariot runs on 36 wheels.

The Mahishadal Rath Yatra starts at about 3 pm but it is advisable to reach the place early as vehicular traffic closes a couple of hours before the rath yatra starts.

Reaching early provides one with the opportunity of exploring the Mahishadal Rath Yatra Mela (Fair) where wares of all sorts are sold in makeshift stalls. The inauguration is marked by gun shoot and the gun shoots continues throughout the entire rath yatra.

The rath is pulled by four thick ropes, out of which one is reserved for women. The rath is pulled through muddy & slushy ground in a wild rampage and it seems a miracle that the event goes on without a stampede. The chariot puller follow the instruction of a volunteer who stands high up on the chariot with a red and green flags raising them one at a time instructing to stop and pull respectively.

Young bare bodied men, play in the mud to celebrate the event. They also throw mud at each other and play an active role in chariot pulling.

The entire event is monitored by volunteers of local clubs and Bharat Sevashram Sangha along with NCC cadets.

II . Bheem Puja of Khejuri : There is a close association of Bheema with that of Medinipur . According to the epic “Mahabharata” – “Bhim” used to be the most strongest person and one of the brother of reknowned “Pandav’s”, who won the war with “Duryodhan” – the most important person of the 100 brother and one sister “Kaurav Family”. At the end Bhim killed Durjodhan. The village people celebrate this auspicious event as a festival now from their core of heart. They think that their beloved “Bhim” will save them from all the evils and enemies and they used to attend this fair to offer a “puja”. Now-a-days this simple “puja” turned to an eventful festival for the entertainment lovers of East Midnapore villagers. Lot of this type models decorate the event arena which can be an added attraction for the fair visitors. Each model symbolises the facts of “Mahabharata” and also some contemporary issues of modern life. Soft gamble related to Playing Cards, Number games add colour to the

said “Bhim Mela”. These games are very much popular to the local people. Over at Bengal, festivals are one of the major entertainment tools for the farmers, fishermen, potters, shop owners, suppliers and the daily waged labour groups. Not only them but also to the housewives these fairs are the most important event after their daily life schedule. So still now “Jatra Pala”, “Kobir Lorai”, “Kathokata”, “Kirton – Sonkirton”, “Mela”, “Parbon”, “Sonkranti” plays an important role to supply direct oxygen to the local hard-lifers of rural Bengal. With the “Puja Rituals” you can also experience the “Bom Gaach” – a bomb tree, which is fired as an offering to “Bhim God”. In this corner of rural Bengal this is one of the important factors of all puja festivals where “Manasik”s are done with these amazing bomb tree offerings.



Plate 42 – 25ft tall Bhim Image is worshipped in Kulberia Village of Tamluk. Surrounding it a huge mela is organized.

7. ‘Pata’ Mela at Bhimeswari Temple and Kapalkundala Puja by Nabakumar

In the time of the Mughal dominion in Bengal, **Bhim Sen Mahapatra**, Taj Khan’s Dewan, established the Bhimeswari Shiva Mandir at Mehadinagar. However this temple no longer exists. The entire temple was submerged in the river around 1970- 80. The Shiv Linga though, was preserved in a neighboring village. A new temple was later erected at the spot

where the old temple was situated. The worship of the Ganga and the fair or ‘mela’ that was instituted in the temple precincts about 500 years ago continue to flourish. Hundreds of people throng to the fairgrounds during Pous Sankranti. Local people call this fair the ‘Patamela’. Many devotees also visit the ‘mela’ for the Nabakumar Kapalkundala Puja. Along with indigenous artefacts, plastic and other items of daily use are sold here. The Dom community in Khejuri sell bamboo baskets, sieves, fishing implements etc. Other than these Conch and other shell items, are also available.

Bhimeswari Pata Mela in Khejuri



Plate 43 – Many items of daily uses are sold in this Patamela .

Plate 44 - The worship of the Goddess Ganga that was instituted in the temple precincts about 500 years ago continue to flourish.





Plate 45 – A wide variety of articles are sold in the mela



3. Sau and his beautiful daughter

Hari Sau used to come from Kulapara in Patashpur to Hijli to sell oil. One day he was unable to sell any and grew anxious as to what he would give his daughter to eat. His wife was dead and his daughter was his sole responsibility. He remembered the tales he had heard of Taj Khan, the local ruler's, generosity and decided to go to him and tell him of his troubles. The kindly Taj Khan was moved by his plight and bought all his oil. When HariSau narrated the incident to his daughter, she wanted to meet their benefactor. She was exquisitely beautiful and when Taj Khan saw her he was enamoured of her beauty and proposed to marry her. HariSau was reluctant to give his consent to this marriage as he feared that he would be declared an outcast by the Hindus for giving his daughter's hand in marriage to a man belonging to a different religion. Taj Khan assured him that that would not happen. However when HariSau returned home after the wedding, his worst fears came true and he was ostracised by his relatives, neighbours and the entire community. Everyone shunned him and no one would even accept a glass of water from him.

When Taj Khan heard of his predicament, he advised HariSau to prepare a lavish feast and invite all the villagers to partake of it. But no one turned up. Taj Khan then arrived at Sau's house with a tiger- some accounts say that he came in the guise of a tiger- and fearing for their lives the villagers all gathered to eat at HariSau's house. From that moment no one ever alluded to HariSau's betrayal of his faith and creed.

After his death Taj Khan's tomb was venerated by both Hindus and Muslims. On the 1st Saturday of Chaitra, a cultural programme is organised to commemorate the Pir and because of the large crowds that attend, it is repeated again on the last Saturday of the month. Hindus and Muslims from near and far gather there, on what has come to be regarded as auspicious days. People from both communities offer prayers, make a wish and stalls are also set up adding to the festive atmosphere. In other words, the place is transformed into a melting pot of diverse cultures and faiths.

e. Hijli Masnat- i- Alla

Hijli is named after the plant known in the local dialect as 'hijol'. Even before the supremacy of the ruler of Utkal, Hijli was ruled by the Hindus. Hari Das, Mukunda Das are names that feature in the annals of the rulers. Sujamutha was the 21st King of the reigning dynasty. In 1568 the Pathans seized Orissa and occupied Hijli. They ruled for a few centuries after that when Dawood Khan was succeeded by his son, Masnad-i - Alla.

The Portuguese traveller Scout narrates that on 16th January, 1664, keeping the river Jaleswar on his left he was going towards the confluence of the river Ganges and the Bay of Bengal, when he came upon a mud fort in the middle of a forest grove. In his accounts the traveller mentioned that this fort was possibly the ruined citadel of Masnad- i- Alla. Later, the sailors who came from across the world and sailed down the Ganges or the river Bhagirathi to reach the sea would use the mosque to provide direction, as they would a lighthouse, when navigating. Maslandi, the Pir of Hijli is a historical figure and noted for his generosity as a ruler and is revered both by the Hindus and the Muslims. In front of the mosque is a shop where one can find a picture of this holy shrine along with that of a tiger, both in the same picture frame. Thus the legend of Taj Khan and HariSau is still prevalent today.



Plate 46 : Hijli Masnat- i- Alla

f. Festival at the Chandi Temple in Khejuri & its position in folk-lore

There is an ancient Chandi Temple in Khejuri where daily 'puja' is performed. The goddess Chandi is referred to as **Jai Chandi** in this temple. Special prayers are offered here for 4 days, during Durga Puja. The reciting of Sri SriChandi accompanies the rituals. Songs from the ChandiMangal are sung throughout the period by a 9 member troupe of local artistes. There is a rendition of special 'MashaalJhanka' songs on Navami.

There are 2 large lakes in front of the temple, which is situated to the north of the Halim Shah lake. The other is a large lotus pond or 'Padma Pukur' which was once connected to the river Ganges.

It is believed that this temple was established by Dhanapati Saudagar. The deity in the temple is much older than the temple however. After offering prayers at this temple, the famed merchant set sail from Khejuri with 7 boats of merchandise, to trade in distant lands.

In front of the temple there is a very old 'kadam' tree and people believe that a thick gold chain used to be tied around its trunk. When ships approached, this chain was used to tow them to Halim Shah and Padmapukur. The ships would anchor there for a while before resuming their long voyage.

Khejuri is the most ancient among the villages within a 1 Km radius of the Ganges delta and is 7 Kms away from Nandigram. It is inhabited by people from different communities. 5 Kms away stands the Bhimeswari temple in Mehdinagar and in the vicinity are the Chandikeswar Temple, HijliMasnad- i- Alla, Sikander's 'Asha Bari', the Post & Telegraph Office in Khejuri, Neelkuthi, the British cemetery, ruins of the Kaikhali lighthouse, ToofanGazi, Neelkumari and Suneswari Devi temples.

g. Masnad- i- Alla and Sikandar’s ‘Asha Bari’

‘Asha Bari’ is actually part of a ship’s anchor which is kept in the northern part of Masnad- i- Alla, under a tree. The local people believe that this belonged to Taj Khan’s brother, Sikandar. He was very strong and could yield the metal anchor with ease. There is a superstition connected with the ‘Asha Bari’ that is prevalent even today; it is said that those who can lift this heavy implement and circumambulate the tree can hope to attain salvation or ‘moksha’. This is indicated in the name Asha Bari- ‘asha’ denoting ‘hope’ or ‘desire’ and ‘bari’ in the local dialect refers to a heavy tool or stick.



Plate 47 & 48 : To attain Moksha , one has to lift the ship’s anchor and circumnavigate the tree



8. Toofan Gazi

At the end of the 16th Century, the path that led Narasingha to attain victory over Kalinga lay along the Bhagirathi and the Hooghly rivers as well as the Kaikhali river in Khejuri. Legend has it that the warrior Toofan Gazi who was reputed to be swifter than the wind remained in Medakhali on his way back from his victorious mission. It may be inferred that as he was wounded in the battle, he decided to rest at Medakhali, which at that time was situated on the banks of the Ganges. He died there and was laid to rest in Medakhali. People come to pay homage at his tomb and place a pair of votive horses there. This, along with ‘shinni’ is offered by those who want to make a wish.

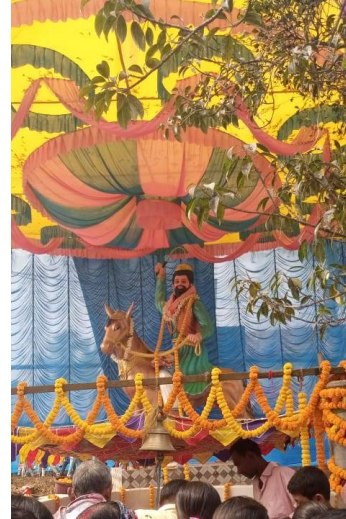


Plate 49 : Toofan Gazi

Toofan Gazi's tomb is marked only by a wooden bench or platform and no mosque or mausoleum was built in his honour. All around one is met with the sight of innumerable pairs



Plate 50 : The Idols of Toofan Gazi

of votive horses. A unique custom is that of offering sculptures of warriors astride horses and doing Puja at the tomb or platform. This is considered to be a fitting tribute to ToofanGazi. The priests who perform the Puja belong to the fishing community.



Plate 51 : Different bamboo items are sold in the fair



Plate 52 : The idol is bought from the fair for performing Puja

9. Ganga Puja at Khejuri

While there are references to the worship of the Ganga having taken place 500 years ago at Bhimeswari in Mehdinagar, this Puja was initiated in Khejuri only 250 years ago by the local fishing community. For several reasons, that Puja was discontinued many years ago till KaliprasadSen, an employee of the Revenue department, reintroduced it 180 years ago at Mehdinagar village. His son Lakshminarayan Sen, began this worship at their ancestral home in Panchuria. His son yet again stopped the Puja about 100 years ago. But one of his subjects, Chandranarayan, once again revived this tradition at



Plate 53 : Ganga Temple at Khejuri



Plate 54: Ganga Devi idol

Panchuria. The Puja has continued till present times. It is carried out in 3 districts of Khejuri-Mehdinagar, Wasimchowk and Thanabera by 3 fishing communities. Commencing on MaghiPurnima, this Puja and the mela, continue for 5 days. Cultural programmes like ‘Kabigaan’ and ‘Jatra’ are held every day.

10. Neelkumari

When the East India Company assumed charge of east Midnapore in 1765, Khejuri lost its cultural significance in the region. Once when the zamindar of BhupatiChowk, belonging to the Bera family, was clearing the forest on the western part of Khejuri, he discovered the folk

goddess Neelkumari, along with her sisters, Shwetakumari and Ghritakumari. He established a temple dedicated to them under a ‘Gabh’ tree. The finding of the deity is attributed to the appearing of the Goddess before the zamindar, in a dream.

Neelkumari is worshipped with a bowl of ‘payesh’ or rice pudding and she is invoked as the Goddess Chandi. Sri SriChandi is recited during the 4- day Puja that commences on DolPurnima and a ‘mela’ is also organised at that time.



During MaghiPurnima there is an even bigger festival when the Goddess is worshipped for 15 days and the customary ‘mela’ or fair set up for the people who gather there.



Plate 56 – Neelkumari Devi Temple

k. Customs and traditions of the fishing community

Traditionally the fishermen belong primarily to the ‘Dhibor’, ‘Jele’ or ‘Kaiborto’ communities. Various sources inform us that as the Kaibortos had no priests to perform any Puja, the king tied a sacred thread around the neck of an earthenware vessel, thereby giving rise to a priestly class. From the time of BallalSen, attempts have been made to change the mind- set of the people towards the Jele and Kaiborto sects. Many of their customs are integral to their livelihood as is evident in the customs followed by the women.

The fishermen only set sail after a sanctifying ritual of their fishing boats. A new sari is tied to the prow and the eyes of the Goddess are drawn on the plank. Vermilion paste or ‘sindoor’ is applied to the prow which is next washed with coconut water. It is believed that this will keep the ‘head’ of the boat cool! This renders the prow sacred and no one is allowed to step on it.



When the fishermen go to Kotal to catch fish, the women of the household stop combing their hair, applying ‘sindoor’ and even oil. Once the boats return safely to harbour, the women go back to their usual customs.

The fisherfolk are engaged in performing various Pujas- Vishwakarma, Manasa(to safeguard against sea snakes), Sitala and Lakshmi Puja. The Ganga Puja appropriately remains their main festival.

On Dol Purnima, Gwala Puja is performed. For this a deity is fashioned from mud and dressed in a white garment which has been dyed in turmeric. After this the Puja is performed with flowers, fruits, 'sindoor', sweetmeats etc.

Plate – Fishermen Community of Durgachak , Purba Medinipur still uses traditional boats.



I. Local Festivals in Nandigram Block - In Bamun Ara village, there is a folk deity named **Kalu Rai** which is 175 years old. A fair has been held here since the year 1137 of the Bengali calendar. In Ahmedabadabad village the ‘Makar snan’ or ritual bathing and ‘Makar’ festival held on Poush Shankranti are very popular. In Khodambari, the ‘raas yatra’ of Balaram is held in the month of Magh.

In Hanubhuan village in the temple of Basulimata, the Goddess is worshipped ceremoniously.

At the start of the Bengali calendar year of 1200, in Amgachhia village, Charak or Neel puja, and a fair were instituted and this practice is still being followed.

On the auspicious occasion of Pous Sankranti, on the banks of the river in Basulichowk, thousands of people gather to take a dip in the river. A huge fair is organised as well. Basulidebi is very popular in Nandigram and there are a number of temples dedicated to the Goddess in this region.

1. Basuli Tongar or Tungar Basuli of Basuli Chowk
2. Basuli of Gangra or the forest Basuli
3. Basuli of Champainagar or ‘Khuri’ Basuli
4. Basuli of No. 7 Jalpai or Chowk Basuli

Among these Basuli of Basuli Chowk is the most famous. Before the boats carrying goods or ferrying passengers set sail, the sailors and passengers do not forget to invoke the blessings of the Goddess Basuli. When a certain individual named Brojo Gopal Choudhury constructed a fortress at Fort Chakraberia, he built a temple to Devi Basuli over there.

During the rule of the Nawabs, when the forces of Mahisadal attacked the fortress, the queen hid in the jungle with the idol to protect the Goddess. When the Nawab’s army destroyed the temple, the queen placed the Devi on a high mound or at an elevation and consequently this place of worship came to be known as Devi Tungar or Tungar Devi. Scholars are of the view that the poet Shibram Ghosh composed his ‘Ekadoshi Panchali’ seated in the temple there, which had been constructed to place Goddess.

In No. 7 Jalpai village, adjacent to the canal which is an off- shoot of the river, a fair has been organised since ancient times. This fair is held on the occasion of Madhu Krishna Trayodoshi, in the month of Phalgun, every year. Earlier it used to be referred to as ‘Pata

Mela'. This fair spreads harmony among Hindus and Muslims. People from both the communities gather together for a holy dip in the river.

Plate 57 : Basuli Mata Temple ,
Nandigram



In the 16th Century, the zamindar of Gum Garh Pargana was the popular Nandigopal Chaudhury. He was instrumental in setting up the village which was named Nandigram after him.



Plate 58: Fair Ground , Basuli Mata
Mandir



Plate 59 – Basuli Mata Mandir attracts huge devotees from near and far away localities



Plate 60 : Basuli Mata Idol

In Medinipur district, almost the entire south- eastern coastal region has been created by the sea or the bay. Even from basic research findings we can conclude that these peninsula regions were formed in the middle of the 13th and 14th Centuries. By the 15th Century the islands had fused with the mainland and become habitable for humans. After this various towns developed in this region and they required to be given names.

On the eve of Poush Shankranti, **Bonai Puja** is performed by the farmers in their farms.

After the grain is gleaned, the yard is cleaned and purified with cow dung. A bamboo or wooden stick is planted on the ground in the middle of the farm. After this fine rice is made into a paste and a floral decoration is created in the yard with the rice paste; the water used for the paste is sprinkled all over and the remainder is used to draw lines of 4- finger width from the yard to the house and extended to the spot where a mynah is spotted. Soil from the fields along with a sheaf of grain is kept near the stick and some of that mud is mixed with water and that, along with vermilion paste, is applied by the farmer to various parts of his hut such as the threshold; it is also applied to the plough and to other farming implements. All the tools used by the farmer, including the broom, are placed near the stick planted on the ground and the grain is also poured into a cane basket which has been purified with cow dung and dried. The entire process has to be completed before sundown and after completing all the rituals, the farmer has to wait at a designated spot where the lines described earlier have been etched, for the arrival of the birds. A minimum of two people need to be present. One will be carrying a metal or stone plate on which are placed flowers, incense, fine rice, the 'durba' grass etc. used during worship while the other will be holding a conch shell. When the flocks of birds return to their nests at dusk, one will bow to them with the plate of offerings while his companion will blow the conch shell. This indicates the farmers' dependence on nature for his livelihood. At every step the farmer expresses his gratitude to nature and also propitiates her through the various rituals, many of which are still extant.

Some information about the folk practices connected with farming which is still followed by the people of Nandigram, especially those living on the banks of the river, are provided below-

'Mot Kora'

On the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya in the month of 'Jeshtho' i.e. June- July, the grain is reaped. Wearing washed and clean clothes, the paddy is collected from the store, put into a

clean basket and carried on the head by the farmer to the north- eastern corner of the field and sown there. During the entire procedure the farmer is expected to remain silent. Today too the paddy is planted for cultivation on Akshay Tiritiya day.

‘Neel Sankranti’ and ‘Neel Puja’

For several years the ritual of planting of the ‘nol’ plant in the fields during Sankranti in the month of Ashwin, is being followed. Before it is planted, it is first tied and then worshipped. The puja takes place on the evening before Sankranti. This is a day of activity. On this day the people go to the jungle to collect the ‘nol’ plant. Other than this ginger, knoll- khol, the leaves of the ‘bual’ tree, raw turmeric etc. -five such ingredients that are needed- are collected. These are broken into small pieces and either a new garment is cut up to make small bundles or each of these ingredients is tied with string and attached to the trunk of the ‘nol’ tree. After this a lamp is lit (?) and the plant is worshipped with an offering of fruits and flowers. Everyone receives ‘bhog’ or ‘prasad’ at the end of the puja. The head of the household wakes up at dawn and on every field he plants one or two- one at either end- ‘nol’ trees. He then recites a rhyme which roughly translates as-

“Ol, Bol, Shiva’s Bol,
May abundant crops grow!”

It is also pertinent to state here that the ‘nol’ is planted due to its properties as an insect repellent. In Jangalmahal, the branch of a certain tree is planted on the ground for the same purpose at the time when the paddy flowers bloom; a prayer is said to ensure that the insects do not destroy these flowers so that they may become large and ripen. At the same time Shiva is also worshipped as ‘Nol’. People believe that Shiva is the archetypal farmer.

‘Shukorhela’

In the month of Kartik, on Shukla Chaturdashi, wearing clean clothes and carrying a scythe that has been freshly washed, a sheaf of grain, along with the paddy plant, is cut and brought to the house. The plant has to be wrapped in leaves attached to its stem. When the farmer goes to get the grain and when he returns, the conch shell is blown. The sheaves have to be carried on the head of the farmer and the person who carries the stalk of grain has to hold it in front of him. The sheaves have to be kept on the thatched roof of the hut.

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‘Kshet Puja’ or Puja of the paddy fields

Once the crop has been harvested a bundle of paddy plants are placed on the north- eastern corner of the field. When the knot of paddy plants have all been uprooted and brought to the house of the farmer, the bundle that has been preserved in the corner of the paddy field is plaited and worshipped with flowers and fruits; it is next dug up from the soil with a scythe and brought home, where it is placed on the pile of harvested paddy. This is again worshipped during the next ‘Bonai’ puja.

The birth anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 28th and Christmas :

Mirpur, in Bengal’s East Midnapore district, is unlike any other village in the state. Many of its residents are of Portuguese descent. The village has 140 Christian families, 90 of them Catholic, the rest Protestant. So in the two weeks before Christmas, Mirpur bustles with activity. Preparations are on in full swing to usher in the Yuletide spirit. The two cathedrals in the village – the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of North India – are being dressed up for December 25. Residents tell us that Mirpur has another equally important annual festival – the birth anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary – on September 8.

Sitting on the steps of the Catholic Church, 13-year-old Bittu Nunez says: “We do celebrate Durga Puja and Kali Puja with our friends, but it is only for December 25 and sometimes for September 8 that we get new clothes.” The residents of Mirpur do not look any different from the residents of neighbouring villages like the Muslim-dominated Shuklanpur and the Hindu-majority Bethkundu. And they speak the same language. Yet Thomas Tesra (13) and Nuno (52) are proud to grandly refer to themselves as ‘members of the Portuguese community’. Legend has it that in the 17th century, a handful of Portuguese soldiers had arrived here to fight the borgees (a nomadic tribe of plunderers) and never went back. So, could Bittu, Augustine and Simon actually be descendents of those brave Portuguese warriors? We ask village elder Anthony Rotha. “Yes, we are Portuguese,” he asserts without batting an eyelid. “But now we are all servants of Lord Jesus.” His surname, he informs us, is a distortion of the Portuguese family name, Rocha, which literally means ‘rock’. Both Anthony and his wife are bed-ridden, but he's all too willing to share with us his community’s chequered history. “I know only what my ancestors told me,” he says.

The story, clearly apocryphal, goes thus: many centuries ago, the ferocious borgees used to terrorise the villages in the region. The bandits would arrive on ships in bands of 50 to 100 and ransack the villages. The people were at their wit's end. It was either local ruler Queen Janaki or the King of Mahishadal – Anthony isn't quite sure – who requested the Portuguese government to send some soldiers to fight the Borgees. Portugal sent 15 men – basically convicts serving life terms – to protect the villages. The local Queen gave the mercenaries 100 bigha (about 35 acres) of land and the weapons that they needed for the fight. Astonishingly, this ragtag army sent the borgees packing. Having done their job, the Portuguese soldiers unleashed their own reign of terror. They forcibly married local girls and made Mirpur their home. “I love Lord Christ, so I don't flinch from speaking the truth,” says Anthony. “I accept that my ancestors did resort to acts of tyranny... That's a fact.” As we part, he requests us to go and have a look at the space that he has booked in the nearby cemetery for tombs for himself and his



Plate 61 : Old Portuguese Settlement

wife. We cannot turn down what is clearly the final request of an infirm, dying man! At the Roman Catholic Church, we speak to Father Michael Adesar. He tells us that after the Portuguese mercenaries settled down in Mirpur, a bishop followed and spread the faith. Many happily embraced Christianity. But the prime debate is still alive, hovering around the dual identity of the 'Portuguese Bengalis'. On one hand, they are known as children of dangerous pirates, and on the other hand, they claim to be a group of freedom fighters and saviours of the society. However, today, most things have changed. Neither the royal gift of 100 bigha of tax-free land remains, nor does the Portuguese flavour. Anthony, mind you, can still utter a Portuguese word or two, though he does make heavy weather of it.

These days, the Hindus of the village join their Christian brothers to celebrate Christmas. Inter-community marriages are also common and perhaps love is all that matters to most to them anyway! Previously, Mirpur was exclusively a Christian village. But later on, especially because of this tradition of intermarriage between different communities, the doors are now open for all comers. But the bitter truth is, while the Hindus from the vicinity are allowed to

venerate the Christian palli of Mirpur, Muslims don't. But given the enigmatic and mysterious beginnings of this quaint little Indian village, Mirpur, to this day, remains unique! The bloodline may well trace itself through oral tradition to a group of Portuguese convicts, and yet the soul, Christian or otherwise, remains unmistakably Bengali.



Plate 62: An old Portuguese Church at Mirpur

CHAPTER 7: FOOD AND DRINK

The food habits of the villages of our study area in Purba Medinipur comprising of Khejuri, Nandigram, Sutahata, Haldia and Mahisadal Blocks are of no exception than any other southern coastal districts of West Bengal with primary importance given on fish and rice. However, there are many amazing dishes and cooking styles which have evolved from this place. Some of the notable ones are "**Maacher Tel Jhal**" and "**Maacher Tok**", a spicy and tangy dish prepared by using dried mangoes or raw mangoes or tamarind with the fish which is cooked in the East Midnapore. Another famous and very unique dish is the "**Posto Bati**" which is very different from the "**Posto Bata**" or posto paste (opium seeds) which everyone else in Bengal knows about.



Plate 63 – A typical Purba Medinipur Meal with Gohona Bori , Maacher Tok ,Poshto Bati etc served in Bell metal plate along with lemon and salt.



Plate 64– Puti Maacher Tok (small fish sour curry) prepared with tamarind , mustard seeds and seasonal vegetables .



Plate 65 – Parshe Fish tok (sour curry) is a very popular dish in the coastal belt of Purba Medinipur

Gur Amla – Another very common cuisine of Purba Medinipur is “Gur Amla” which is prepared by jaggery, raw mango powder and Ash Gourd . For tempering “**paanch phoron**” (5 spices like Cumin, Brown Mustard, Fenugreek, Nigella and Fennel.) is used along with dry red chillies. Rice paste is used for thickening the gravy made up of sugarcane jaggery and Ash Gourd. Generous amount of raw mango powder is used to give a tangy flavor.

Gohona Bari/Naksha Bari - Gohona Bori is a dried dal dumpling. It is popular in Bengali cuisine. It is a well known food item in Purba Medinipur. It is also known as Naksha Bori. It is made with black lentil, Poppy seed and various spices. The woman of the house made the dish. In 2016, IIT Kharagpur applied to get the geographical Indication for Gohona Bori.

It is an age-old dish of Bengal. Before the arrival of the British in India, poppy seed was not used in Gohona Bori. After the Battle of Palashi, the British discovered a market of illegal opium in China. British forced the farmers of the Rarh region of Bengal to cultivate poppy and extorting large amounts of opium from them into China. Poppy seeds were dropped after the opiate was extracted. In the past, poppy seeds became the cooking material of Bankura, Birbhum, Bardhaman and Midnapore districts. Thus the poppy seeds are used in Gohona Bori in Midnapore.

In 1930, Seba Maiti, a student of Shantiniketan presented Gohona Bori to Rabindranath Tagore which was made by her mother, Hirnmayi Debi, and grandmother, Sheratakumari Debi. Tagore was so attracted to Bori that he wrote them a letter seeking permission to preserve the photographs of Gohona Bori at the Art Building of Shantiniketan.[4] As a result, Gohona Bori gained popularity as a sign of art. Abanindranath Tagore considered it to be an art. So he considered the thought of baking it or eating it was considered an act of destruction. He noted a similarity with historical artwork and arranged an exhibition. Nandalal Bose described it as a jewel of the Bengali mother's jewelry box. He expressed his desire to publish a book on it.



Plate 66- Rabindranath Tagore wrote a letter seeking permission to preserve Goyna's photographs at the Art Building of Shantiniketan (Photo: picuri.com)

Gohona Bori were exhibited in the 59th session of Indian National Congress held in Kalyani in 1954. In 1990, the West Bengal government took part in a food festival organized by the women of Tamluk's Gohona Bori maker. They prepared Gohona Bori in front of thousands of curious men in Kolkata. In 1995 a Gohona Bori marketing group was established in Tamluk



The making of ‘gohona bori’ is slightly different. A plate layered with poppy seeds is used to arrange the bori’. “One, it prevents the bori from sticking to the plate and two, the thin layer of poppy seeds sticking to the bori gives the latter an extra crunch,” said Mandal. Some substitute poppy seeds with sesame. The design starts from the centre and moves outwards. Technology has made its inroads in this once totally manual process. The paste may be made



Plate 67- A plate layered with poppy seeds is used to arrange the bori’.

in a household mixer and poured into a piping bag. In the rural areas, where piping bags are not common, the top of a toothpaste tube is snipped off, cleaned and used as a nozzle attached to a piece of cloth folded in the shape of a cone. Sometimes, a clean stick or a knitting needle is used to make the lines sharp and clear.



Plate 68– Naksha Bari / Gohona Bari is sundried

Kaanji Pani – A very popular drink of Purba Medinipur was Kanji Paani which is losing its significance now. During the summer season there is a very common practice of eating “panta bhaat” or fermented rice. It is a rice-based dish prepared by soaking rice, generally leftover, in water overnight. Traditionally served in the morning with salt, onion, chili and Bengali style mashed potatoes or "Aloo sheddho". Now the water of this fermented rice is kept aside and collected for 4/5 days in a clay or glass pot. This sour water is then mixed with salt and used as a Drink by most of the coastal rural households of Purba Medinipur. It is very nutritious and beneficial during summer season. Even pointed gourd is cooked with this water to prepare a special sour curry called “**Lau er Kanji Tok**” .

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