



MURSHIDABAD

NAMAMI GANGE

Documentation of Ganga from Gomukh to Gangasagar



Report submitted by:

Intangible Cultural Heritage Division

Documentation of Ganga From Gomukh to Gangasagar

Murshidabad District

Intangible Cultural Heritage

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National Mission for Clean Ganga

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1. INTRODUCTION:

A. Background of the Project

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

The key achievements under Namami Gange programme are:

- a. **Creating Sewerage Treatment Capacity:** 63 sewerage management projects under implementation in the States of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. 12 new sewerage management Projects Launched in these states. Work is under construction for creating sewerage capacity of 1187.33(MLD). Hybrid Annuity PPP Model based two projects has been initiated for Jagjeetpur, Haridwar and Ramanna, Varanasi.
- b. **Creating River-Front Development:** 28 River Front Development projects and 33 entry level projects for construction, modernization and renovation of 182 ghats and 118 crematoria have been initiated.
- c. **River Surface Cleaning:** River surface cleaning for collection of floating solid waste from the surface of the ghats and river and its disposal are afoot and pushed into service at 11 locations.
- d. **Bio-Diversity Conservation:** Several Bio-Diversity conservation projects are namely: Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation, Fish and Fishery Conservation in Ganga River, Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Education Programme has been initiated. 5 Bio-Diversity center's at Dehradun, Narora, Allahabad, Varanasi and Barrackpore has been developed for restoration of identified priority species.
- e. **Afforestation:** Forestry interventions for Ganga through Wildlife Institute of India; Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute and Centre for Environment Education has been initiated. Forestry interventions for Ganga have been executed as per the Detailed Project Report prepared by Forest Research Institute, Dehradun for a period of 5 years (2016-2021) at project cost of Rs.2300 Crores. Work has been commenced in 7 districts of Uttarakhand for medicinal plants.
- f. **Public Awareness:** A series of activities such as events, workshops, seminars and conferences and numerous IEC activities were organized to make a strong pitch for public outreach and community participation in the programme. Various

awareness activities through rallies, campaigns, exhibitions, *shram-daan*, cleanliness drives, competitions, plantation drives and development and distribution of resource materials were organized and for wider publicity the mass mediums such as TV/Radio, print media advertisements, advertorials, featured articles and advertorials were published. Gange Theme song was released widely and played on digital media to enhance the visibility of the programme. NMCG ensured presence at Social Media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.

- g. **Industrial Effluent Monitoring:** The number of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) in April, 2019 is 1072. Regulation and enforcement through regular and surprise inspections of GPIs is carried out for compliance verification against stipulated environmental norms. The GPIs are also inspected on annual basis for compliance verification of the pollution norms and process modification, wherever required through third party technical institutes. First round of inspection of GPIs by the third-party technical institutes has been carried out in 2017. Second round of inspection of GPIs has been completed in 2018. Out of 961 GPIs inspected in 2018, 636 are complying, 110 are non-complying and 215 are self-closed. Action has been taken against 110 non-complying GPIs and is issued closure directions under Section 5 of the E (P) Act. Online Continuous Effluent Monitoring Stations (OCEMS) connectivity established to CPCB server in 885 out of 1072 GPIs.
- h. **Ganga Gram:** Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS) identified 1674 Gram Panchayats situated on the bank of River Ganga in 5 State (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal). Rs. 578 Crores has been released to Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS) for construction of toilets in 1674 Gram Panchayats of 5 Ganga Basin States. Out of the targeted 15,27,105 units, MoDWS has completed construction of 8,53,397 toilets. Consortium of 7 IITs has been engaged in the preparation of Ganga River basin Plan and 65 villages have been adopted by 13 IITs to develop as model villages. UNDP has been engaged as the executing agency for rural sanitation programme and to develop Jharkhand as a model State at an estimated cost of Rs. 127 Crore.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (**NMCG**) endeavors to deploy best available knowledge and resources across the world for Ganga rejuvenation. Clean Ganga has been a perennial attraction for many international countries that have expertise in river rejuvenation. Countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Israel etc. have shown interest in collaborating with India for Ganga rejuvenation. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed with various Central Ministries viz.- Ministry of

Human Resource Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Ayush, Ministry of Petroleum, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation and Ministry of Agriculture for synergizing the Government schemes.

Why we need "Namami Gange" programmes?

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

Aim & Objective of NMCG

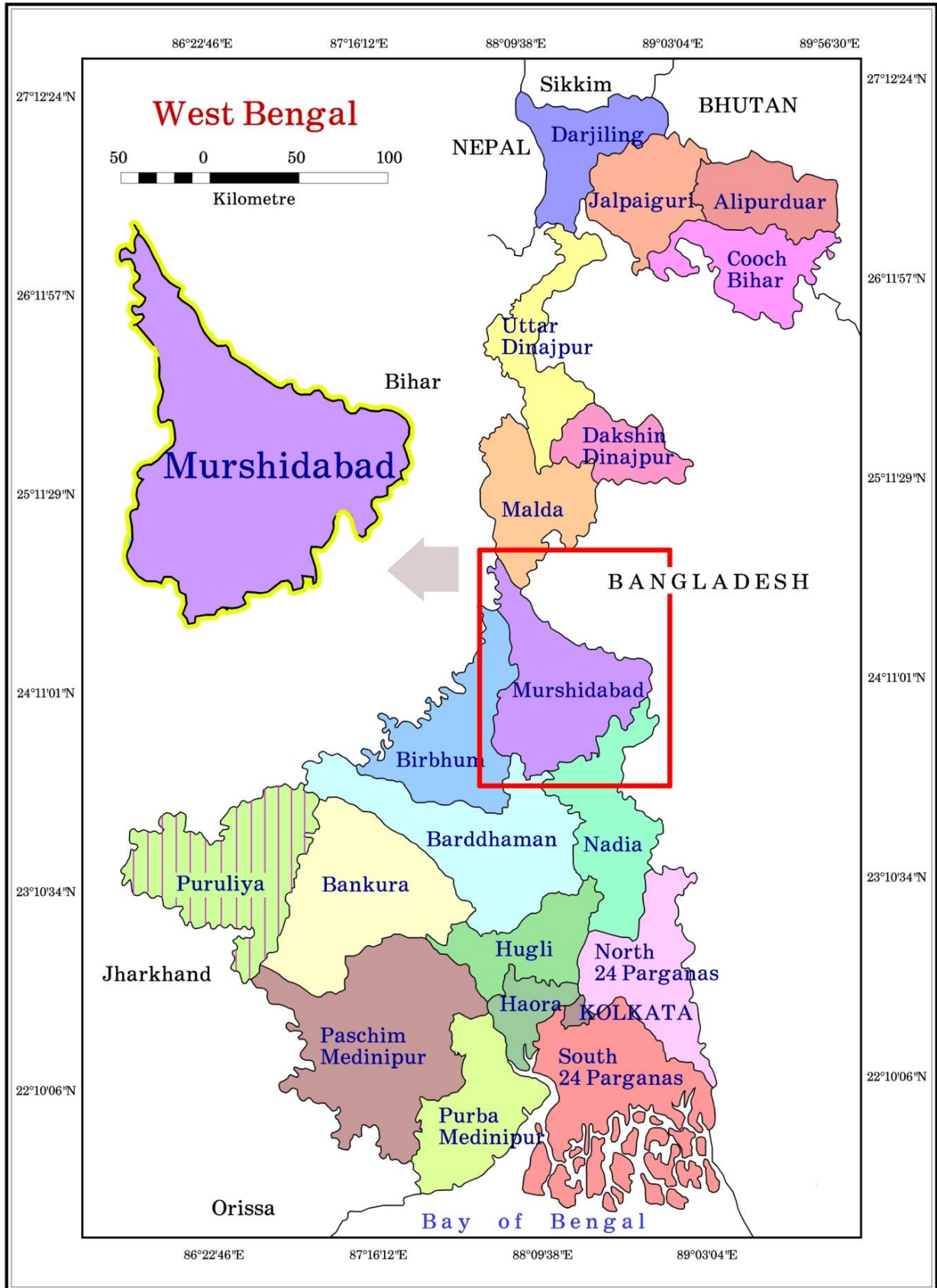
The aims and objectives of NMCG are to accomplish the mandate of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) are:

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

B. 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 5,25,020 million Cubic Meters (MCM).

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



Map No 1: West Bengal Map Showing The Location Of Murshidabad

2. MURSHIDABAD THROUGH AGES

Murshidabad remained the capital of Bengal for 74 years (1717-1790) with 3 major dynasties – **Nasiri, Afshar & Najafi**. Until the days of Mughal rule there is little distinctive in the history of Murshidabad, which, in fact, was, for the most part, merely the history of Bengal in general. A few isolated facts emerge from the general obscurity in which its early history rests, and there are many lacunae, which can only be linked together by the thin and uncertain thread of conjecture. It has been suggested by Mr. Beveridge that the present village of Rangamati, six miles south-west of Berhampore, marks the ancient site of *Karna Suvarna*, the capital of the kingdom of the great Gauda King Sashanka. According to the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang (or Yuan Ohwang), who visited Bengal in the first half of the seventh century CE. The city, which was 20 li, or about 7 miles in circuit, had by it a splendid monastery, called Lo-to-wei-chin, which is his phonetic rendering of Raktavitti or Raktamitti, a name meaning red earth, of which Rangamati is the modern equivalent. This theory is not accepted by other scholars.

No details of the history of the district are forthcoming for several centuries after this, but the rule of the Palas is commemorated by the large Sagardighi tank, which is said to have been excavated by Mahipala, who ruled in the early part of the eleventh century. His palace is said to have been not far off, at a village called after him *Mahipal*, which is situated to the north of the Barela railway station.

The district got its present name in the early eighteenth century and its present shape in the later half of the eighteenth century. Murshidabad town, which lends its name to the district, derived its name from its founder, Murshid Quli Khan. Travellers marvelled at its glory through the ages. The city, lying just east of the Bhagirathi River, is an agricultural trade and silk-weaving centre. Originally called Makhsudabad, it was reputedly founded by the Mughal emperor Akbar in the 16th century. Kartalab Khan was appointed as **Diwan of Bengal Subah** in 1701 CE by Aurangzeb. He shifted his office from Dacca (present day Dhaka) to Maksudabad in 1702 CE. In 1703 CE, Aurangzeb honoured him with the title of **Murshid Quli Khan** and granted the permission to rename the town as Murshidabad in 1704 CE after his newly acquired title. The Nawab Murshid Quli Khan made Murshidabad the capital city of Subeh Bangla, comprising Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. The family of Jagat Seth maintained their position as state bankers at Murshidabad from generation to generation.



Image No 1: Remains Of Karnasuvarna - The Capital Of Gauda Kingdom



Image No 2: Ruins Of Karnasuvarna Located At Kansona

Karnasuvarna (meaning 'made beautiful by Karna') was the capital of Gauda Kingdom during the reign of Raja Shashanka, the first important king of ancient Bengal who ruled in the 7th century. After Shashanka's death it was the *jayaskandhavara* (camp of victory) of Bhaskaravarman, the king of Kamarupa probably for a short period. This is evident from his Nidhanpur copper-plate grant. In the mid-7th century, it was the capital of Jayanaga according to his Vappa Ghoshavata copper-plate grant. The ruins of Karnasuvarna have been located at Kansona in the present Murshidabad district in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is 9.6 kilometres (6.0 mi) south-west of Berhampore, headquarters of Murshidabad district.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the town of Murshidahad, which then bore the name of Maksudabad, began to assume importance as a commercial depot. Its silk attracted the attention of two English agents, **Hughes and Parker**, who were sent from Agra to Patna to set up a trading station there - so much so that next year they reported that they had invested Rs. 500 in purchasing samples of silk from Makhsudabad.

When, at length, the English established their factories in Bengal, Cossimbazor was one of the first places selected for a station, which was subordinate to the agency at Hooghly. The East India Company's first representatives there were John Kenn, who was Chief on £40 a year, Daniel Sheldon, second member of Council, on £30, John Priddy on £20 and Job Oharnook, fourth member, on £20. Job Charnock was subsequently posted at Patna, but returned as Chief in 1680\$, and stayed there till 1686.

The French had also a factory at Cossimbazar at this time, and the Armenians had made a settlement at Saidabad under the authority of a *firman* granted by Aurangzeb in 1666; while the Dutch had a thriving factory at Kalkapur. The object of all was the silk trade, the importance of which may be gathered from the accounts given by both Bernior and Tavernier. The former says that "the Dutch have sometimes seven or eight hundred natives employed in their factory at Cossimbazar, where, in like manner, the English and otlier merchants employ a proportionate number." The latter says that Cossimbazar annually exported about 22,000 bales of silk (of 100 lbs, each). "The Dutch generally took, cither for Japan or for Holland, 6,000 to 7,000 bales, and they would have liked to get more, but the merchants of Tartary and of the whole Mughal Empire opposed their doing so, for these merchants took as much as the Dutch, and the balance remained for the people of the country for the manufacture of their own stuffs.

Murshid Quli Khan was succeeded by his son-in law Shuja –Ud-Daullah who ruled inbetween 1725-39. He was from a Turkoman family from Khorasan in the east of Persia. Dusing his time the administration was mostly under the Executive Council comprising of – Rai Raian, Alam Chand, hazi Ahmed and jagath Seth the triumvirate, as they were called. They soon entered a conspiracy with the Deputy Governor – Alivardi Khan to depose the natural successor of Shuja-Ud-Daullah, his son Sarfaraz Khan. In the battle of Giria, 1740, **Ali Vardi Khan** defeated and killed Sarfaraz Khan to ascend the masnad of Bengal Subah. Out of the accumulations which he found in the treasury, he sent large presents to the Emperor, and was forthwith confirmed in the government of the three provinces. It appears, however, that he never remitted the revenues to Delhi, for soon after this date the Mughal dynasty lost all semblance of real power. He ruled at Murshidahad for 16 years, during a most troubled period of Bengal history. The

commencement of his reign was disturbed by outbreaks in Orissa, and these were no sooner quelled, than the Marathas began their annual invasions, ravaging the entire country to the west of the Bhagirathi, and even penetrating to the suburbs of the city of **Murshidabad**.



Image No 3: Nawab Nazim Of Bengal, Bihar And Orissa – Murshid Quli Jafar Khan Bahadur Nasiri

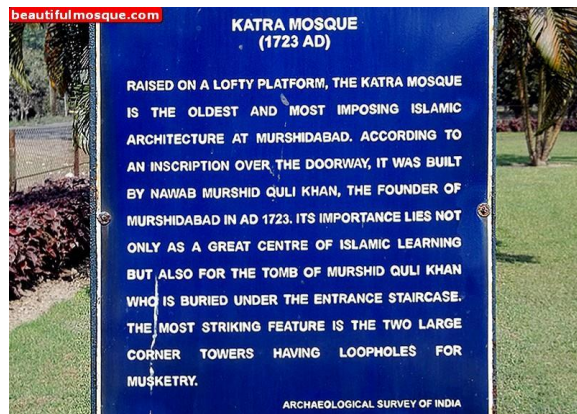


Image No 4: Graveyard Of Murshid Quli Khan Inside Katra Mosque & Sign Board



Image No 5: Murshidabad Painting Of Katra Mosque By William Hodges

In October, 1742, Ali Vardi Khan crossed the Bhagirathi by a bridge of boats, and defeated the Marathas, who were encamped at Katwa. Another raid on the district of Murshidabad followed. Bhaskar Pant, the Maratha general, sent a body of armed Bairagis towards Bihar, and Ali Vardi Khan hastened to follow them. The Bairagis then doubled back and swooped down on Murshidabad, but Ali Vardi Khan came upon them while they were busy looting Baluchar and drove them out. From 1742 to 1761, with scarcely a break, Ali Vardi Khan was hard pressed both by the Marathas and the Afghans, as well as by the rebellions of his own generals and relatives.

Siraj-ud-daula, or as the name is sometimes spelt Surajah Dowlah, was the grandson and spoilt darling of Ali Vardi Khan. The old Nawab had nominated him as his successor several years before, and in 1762 or 1763, when Siraj-ud-daula was only 16 years old, had even placed him on the *masnad*. Siraj ud-Daula, was the last independent Nawab of Bengal. He made Nizamat Imambara in Murshidabad West Bengal in 1740. The end of his reign marked the start of the rule of the East India Company over Bengal and later almost all of the Indian subcontinent. Betrayed by Mir Jafar, the commander of Nawab's army, Siraj lost the Battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757. The forces of the East India Company under Robert Clive invaded and the administration of Bengal fell into the hands of the company.

Siraj ud-Daulah's nomination to the Nawab ship aroused the jealousy and enmity of his maternal aunt, Ghaseti Begum (Mehtar un-Nisa Begum), Mir Jafar, Jagat Seth, Mehtab

Chand and Shaukat Jang (Siraj's cousin). Ghaseti Begum possessed huge wealth, which was the source of her influence and strength. Apprehending serious opposition from her, Siraj ud-Daulah seized her wealth from Motijheel Palace and placed her under confinement. The Nawab also made changes in high government positions by giving them to his own favourites. Mir Madan was appointed Bakshi (paymaster of the army) in place of Mir Jafar. Mohanlal was elevated to the rank of peshkar (courtclerk) of his Dewan-khane and he exercised great influence in the administration. Eventually, Siraj suppressed Shaukat Jang, governor of Purnia, who was killed in a clash.

During this period, the British East India Company was increasing their influence in the Indian subcontinent, particularly in Bengal; Siraj soon grew to resent the politico-military presence of the East India Company in Bengal. In particular, he was angered at the Company's alleged involvement with and instigation of some members of his own court to a conspiracy to oust him. His charges against the company were broadly threefold. Firstly, that they strengthened the fortification around the Fort William without any intimation or approval; secondly, that they grossly abused trade privileges granted them by the Mughal rulers – which caused heavy loss of customs duties for the government; and thirdly, that they gave shelter to some of his officers, for example, Krishnadas, son of Rajballav, who fled Dhaka after misappropriating government funds. Hence, when the East India Company began further enhancement of military strength at Fort William in Calcutta, Siraj ud-Daulah ordered them to stop. The Company did not heed his directives; consequently, Siraj retaliated and captured Calcutta (for a short while renamed Alinagar) from the British in June 1756. The Nawab gathered his forces together and took Fort William. The British captives were placed in the prison cell as a temporary holding by a local commander, but there was confusion in the Indian chain of command, and the captives were left there overnight, and many of them died.

The Battle of Plassey (or Palashi) is widely considered the turning point in the history of the subcontinent, marking the start of British rule in India. After Siraj-ud-Daulah's conquest of Calcutta, the British sent fresh troops from Madras to recapture the fort and avenge the attack. A retreating Siraj-ud-Daulah met the British at Plassey. He had to make camp 27 miles away from Murshidabad. On 23 June 1757 Siraj-ud-Daulah called on Mir Jafar because he was saddened by the sudden fall of Mir Mardan who was a very dear companion of Siraj in battles. The Nawab asked for help from Mir Jafar. Mir Jafar advised Siraj to retreat for that day. The Nawab made the blunder in giving the order to stop the fight. Following his command, the soldiers of the Nawab were returning to their camps. At that time, Robert Clive attacked the soldiers with his army. At such a sudden

attack, the army of Siraj became indisciplined and could think of no way to fight. So much of this army retreated. Betrayed by a conspiracy plotted by Jagat Seth, Mir Jafar, Krishna Chandra, Omichund, etc., he lost the battle and had to escape. He rode away and went first to Murshidabad, specifically to Heerajheel or Motijheel, his palace at Mansurganj.



Image No 6: Painting Of Clive Meeting Mir Jafar After The Battle Of Plassey

(Francis Hayman, C. 1762)



Image No 7: An Artist's Impression Of The Battle Of Plassey.

Photo Courtesy: Britishbattles.Combattle

Siraj-ud-Daulah was executed on 2 July 1757 by Mohammad Ali Beg under orders from Mir Miran, son of Mir Jafar in Namak Haram Deorhi as part of the agreement

between Mir Jafar and the British East India Company. Siraj-ud-Daulah's tomb is located at Khushbagh, Murshidabad. It is marked with a simple but elegant one-storied mausoleum, surrounded by gardens.



Image No 8: Siraj Ud Daullah And His Graveyard

3. CELEBRATED CITIZENS

A. Shashanka:

Shashanka also referred to as **Gaudeshwar Maharajadhiraj Shashanka Deva** was the sovereign Emperor of a unified polity in the Bengal region, called the Gauda Kingdom and is a major figure in Bengali history. He reigned in the 7th century, some historians place his rule between circa 600 CE and 636/7 CE, whereas other sources place his reign between 590 and 625 CE.



Image No 9: Coin Of Sasanka-Deva, Emperor Of Gauda, Circa 600–630

Shiva seated facing on bull seated left / Lakshmi seated facing on lotus; being watered by small elephants at either side.

He is the contemporary of Harsha and of Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa. His capital was at Karnasubarna, in present-day Murshidabad in West Bengal. The development of the Bengali calendar is often attributed to Shashanka because the starting date falls within his reign.

B. Murshid Quli Khan:

Murshid Quli Khan (1660 – 30 June 1727), also known as Mohammad Hadi and born as Surya Narayan Mishra, was the first Nawab of Bengal, serving from 1717 to 1727. Born a Hindu in the Deccan Plateau c. 1670, Murshid Quli Khan was bought by Mughal noble Haji Shafi. After Shafi's death, he worked under the Divan of Vidarbha, during which time he piqued the attention of the then-emperor Aurangzeb, who sent him to Bengal as the divan c. 1700. However, he entered into a bloody conflict with the province's *subahdar*, Azim-us-Shan. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, he was transferred to the Deccan Plateau by Azim-us-Shan's father the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah I. However, he was brought back as deputy *subahdar* in 1710. In 1717, he was appointed as the *Nawab Nazim* of **Murshidabad** by Farrukhsiyar. During his reign, he changed the *jagirdari* system (land management) to the *mal jasmani*, which would later transform into the *zamindari* system. He also continued sending revenues from the state to the Mughal Empire. He built the Katra Masjid

at Murshidabad where he was buried under the steps of the staircase after his death on 30 June 1727. He was succeeded by his son-in-law Shuja ud Din Muhammad Khan.

C. Iskander Mirza:

Sahibzada Iskander Ali Mirza (13 November, 1899 – 1969), CIE, OSS, OBE, was a Pakistani and Bengali general, businessman and civil servant who was the first President of Pakistan. He was elected in this capacity in 1956 until being dismissed by his appointed army commander General Ayub Khan in 1958.

D. Siraj-Ud-Daullah:

Mirza Muhammad Siraj-ud-Daulah, (1733 – 2 July 1757), commonly known as Siraj-ud-Daulah or Siraj ud-Daula, was the last independent Nawab of Bengal. He made Nizamat Imambara in Murshidabad West Bengal in 1740. The end of his reign marked the start of the rule of the East India Company over Bengal and later almost all of the Indian subcontinent. Siraj succeeded his maternal grandfather, Alivardi Khan as the Nawab of Bengal in April 1756 at the age of 23. Betrayed by Mir Jafar, the commander of Nawab's army, Siraj lost the Battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757. The forces of the East India Company under Robert Clive invaded and the administration of Bengal fell into the hands of the company.

E. Rakhaldas Bandopadhyaya:

Rakhaldas Bandopadhyaya (12 April 1885 – 23 May 1930), also known as R D Banerji, was an Indian archaeologist and museum expert. He was the Manindra Chandra Nandy Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture at the Banaras Hindu University from 1928–30. He is best known as the discoverer of the antiquity of Mohenjo-daro, the principal site of the Indus Valley Civilisation through excavations. Bandyopadhyay was born on 12 April 1885 in Berhampore of Murshidabad District in present-day Indian state of West Bengal to Matilal and Kalimati. He passed his entrance examination from the Krishnath College School in Berhampore in 1900. Soon he

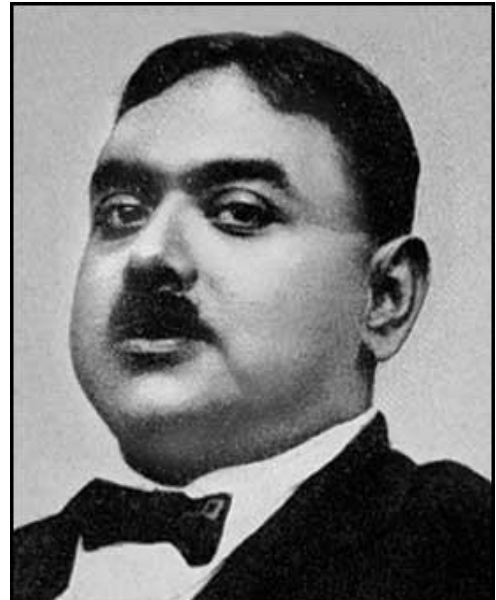


Image No 10: Rakhaldas Bandopadhyaya

married Kanchanmala (1891–1931), the daughter of Narendranath Mukhopadhyay. He passed his F.A. examination in 1903 and graduated from Presidency College, Kolkata with Honours in History in 1907. He obtained his M.A. in History from

the Calcutta University in 1911. Bandyopadhyay joined the Indian Museum in Calcutta as an Assistant to the Archaeological Section in 1910. He joined the Archaeological Survey of India as Assistant Superintendent in 1911, and was promoted to the rank of Superintending Archaeologist of the Western Circle in 1917. In 1924, he was transferred to the Eastern Circle and took part in the excavations at Paharpur. He took voluntary retirement in 1926. After teaching at the University of Calcutta, he later joined the Banaras Hindu University in 1928 and held the post till his premature death on 23 May 1930.

Bandyopadhyay is popular for unearthing pre-Buddhist artifacts at the ruins at Mohenjo-Daro; for noting similarities between the site at Mohenjo-Daro and Harrappa. Those discoveries lead to excavations at the two sites that established the existence of the then-unknown Bronze Age Indus Valley Civilisation. His interpretations of this civilisation were published in a number of articles and books: "An Indian City Five Thousand Years Ago"; "Mohenjo-Daro" (in Bangla, Basumati, 1331 BS); Prehistoric, Ancient and Hindu India (posthumously published, 1934) and Mahenjo-Daro – A Forgotten Report.

Bandyopadhyay's first major independent professional work was in the fields of palaeography and epigraphy. He won the Jubilee Research Prize of the Calcutta University for The Origin of the Bengali Script published in 1919 (and reprinted in 1973). He was the first to study the proto-Bangla script, the original form of Bangla script. He wrote the classic historical works on medieval Indian coins, and the standard works on the iconography of Indian art, in particular Gupta sculpture and architecture. His best-known work was Eastern Indian Medieval School of Sculpture, published posthumously in 1933.

F. Ram Brahma Sanyal:

Ram Brahma Sanyal (1858 – 13 October 1908) was the first superintendent of the Alipore Zoological Gardens in Kolkata (then Calcutta). He was a pioneer in captive breeding, and was one of the first zookeepers trained as a biologist. He was a corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London and wrote a handbook on keeping and breeding animals in captivity – A Handbook of the Management of Animals in Captivity in Lower Bengal (1892) which was reviewed in the



Image No 11: Ram Brahma Sanyal

journal Nature (4 August 1892). This was the standard handbook for zookeepers for over 50 years until Lee Crandall published *The Management of Wild Mammals in Captivity* in 1964. His scientific methods led to the rare birth of a live Sumatran rhinoceros in 1889, an event that was not seen in captivity until 2001.

G. Prabhu Jagadbandhu:

Prabhu Jagadbandhu was a Krishnait Vaishnava mystic and author of kirtan songs of Bengal. He spent much of his life meditating and preaching in the Sri Angan ashram in Faridpur, British India (present day Bangladesh). His teachings inspired the founding of a revival movement within Bengal Vaishnavism in the last decade of the 19th century and later the Mahanam Sampraday denomination. His devotees believe that he is Lord Sri Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Prabhu Jagadbandhu was born on 28 April 1871 in Dahapara, Murshidabad or Gobindapur, Faridpur, Bengal Presidency, British India to family of a Sanskrit scholar. His birthday on the auspicious day of Sita Navami is celebrated as Bandhu Navami. He was devout and would always sing the kirtans of Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

He stressed the importance of God as means of remembering and drawing close to the divine. He urged the followers to follow the life of avoiding temptation. His teachings were mainly based on-1.Harinam 2.Brahmacarya

H. Jagat Seth:

Murshidabad history remains incomplete without mentioning– Jagat Seths. There is a very interesting element associated with Jagat Seths. The Jagat Seths were a Baniya banking family and the title of the eldest son of the family. The family sometimes referred to as the House of Jagat Seth, were a wealthy business, banking and money lender family from Murshidabad, Bengal region in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, during the time of Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah Jagat Seth was a title conferred by the Nawab of Bengal and can be interpreted as "banker or merchant of the world". House of Jagat Seth Museum contains personal possessions of Jagat Seth and his family including coins of the bygone era, muslin and other extravagant clothes, and Banarasi saris embroidered with gold and silver threads.

Jagat Seth, also the title for the powerful moneylender family he belonged to, looked after the mint and treasury accounts of Bengal during the Nawabi period. He played a key role in the conspiracy involving the imprisonment and ultimate killing of Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah. His house, complete with a secret tunnel as well as an underground chamber, where illegal trade plans were hatched, is what has been converted into the

aforementioned museum. It is said that the amount of wealth he had back then was greater than the wealth of all banks of England put together.



Image No 12: House Of Jagat Seth



Image No 13: Painting Of Jagat Seth

I. Kandi Raj Family:

Kandi Raj Bari was made by **Ganga Govinda Singha** of the 'Lala Babu's Family' of 9th Century Bengal when the Kingdom of Gaur was flourishing. This family were ardent followers of Ballal Sen & the also the Pathan Kings of Delhi. **Many notable members belong to this**



Image No 14: Front View Of Kandi Rajbari

family like Bikash Sinha, Atish Sinha etc

Bikash Sinha (born 1945) is an Indian physicist, active in the fields of nuclear physics and high energy physics. Bikash Sinha was the director of the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics and Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre and the chairman of the Board of Governors of the National Institute of Technology, Durgapur in June 2005. He retired from service as the director of Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre and the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics in June 2009. Presently he is the Homi Bhabha Chair Professor of the Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre. He is also a member of scientific advisory board to the Prime Minister of India. He received Padma Shri in 2001 and Padma Bhushan in 2010.



Image No 15: Bikash Ranjan Sinha

Sinha studied Physics for his bachelor's degree at Presidency College [now University], Kolkata from 1961-1964, graduating with high honors. He then proceeded to King's College, Cambridge, for higher studies in his subject. He is the recipient of S.N. Bose Birth Centenary Award of the Indian Science Congress Association in 1994. Sinha joined Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai in 1976 after returning from England and was Director of Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre. He is a Fellow of the prestigious Indian National Science Academy as recognition of his outstanding research in Physics (1989).

He is also a Fellow of National Academy of Sciences, Allahabad (1993) and the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore (2004). Currently, he is the chairman of board of governors, National Institute of Technology, Durgapur (NIT Duragpur).

Sinha was nominated as a Member of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister from 27 January 2005. He has been re-elected for the second time as a Member of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister from December 2009.

Atish Chandra Sinha : Atish Chandra Sinha (11 July 1940 – 4 March 2010) was a minister and Leader of the Opposition in the Indian state of West Bengal. Physicist Bikash Sinha is his cousin. The son of Bimal Chandra Sinha, scion of the Kandi Raj family and a minister in the Bidhan Chandra Roy cabinet, Atish Chandra Sinha was born in the Kandi Raj family on 11 July 1940. A brilliant scholar of Presidency College, Kolkata, he specialized in Geophysics from the Imperial College in London. He joined politics in the 1960s. He was elected to the state assembly as a Congress candidate from Kandi in 1971, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1991, 1996 and 2001. He was elected to the Indian Parliament from Baharampur (Lok Sabha constituency) in 1984.



Image No 16: Atish Ranjan Sinha

He was minister of small scale and cottage industries from 1972 to 1977. He was Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly from 1996 to 2001 and was leader of the Congress legislative party in the West Bengal assembly from 2001 to 2006. As a result of differences with Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury within the Congress Party, he joined Trinamool Congress in 2008.

From 2002 onwards, he was ill off and on but did not give up active politics. He was involved in many social activities. He established the Bimal Chandra College of Law in Kandi in the memory of his father, Bimal Sinha. He died at his Kolkata residence on 4 March 2010.

J. Kasimbazar Raj:

Kasimbazar Raj one of the biggest zamindaris of Bengal which sprang up under the impact of the early British colonial rule. The founder of the Kasimbazar raj was **Krishnakanta Nandi of Kasimbazar**, commonly known as **Kanta Babu**.



Image No 17: Front View Of Kasimbazar Raj Bari

Kanta Babu was a Banian to WARREN HASTINGS. Originally a grocer, then a trader of multiple commodities like silk, salt and cotton and finally a banian to Warren Hastings, Kanta Babu began his landed career with the acquisition of the Baharbund pargana (mainly comprising present Gaibandha and Kurigram districts). Under Hastings's farming system (1772-1777) many parganas including Baharbund was farmed to Kanta Babu. Later the pargana was permanently settled with him at an advantageous revenue demand. Immediately after the Permanent Settlement Kanta Babu bought some more estates. He died in 1794.

Kanta Babu's son Loknath Nandi was equally a competent man and extended the zamindari to some other parts of Bengal. Loknath Nandi managed to obtain the title of 'Maharaja' from the nawab of Murshidabad before he died in 1804.

Maharaja Loknath Nandi, left his minor son Harinath as his successor to the estate. Harinath Nandi being a minor, the zamindari was managed by the Court of Wards from 1804 to 1820. From 1820 to his death in 1832, Harinath looked after the management of the estate. The Court of Wards again managed it from 1833 to 1840. Thereafter Harinath's son Krishnanath took the charge of management of the zamindari. But after his death in 1844 the zamindari was taken over by the Court of Wards again and managed upto 1847.



Image No 18: Raja Manindra Chandra Nandi

The most remarkable person of the family was Manindra Chandra Nandi who managed the zamindari from 1890 to 1920. During his time the Kasimbazar estate made investments in industry and business. He was chairman of the Berhampur municipality for about 15 years, and held important position in the British Indian Association, the Bengal Landholders' Association, and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, etc. He died in 1929. The last zamindar of the Kasimbazar raj before the abolition of the zamindari system was Srish Chandra Nandi (1897-1952) who entered the Bengal

Legislative Assembly from the landlord's quota in 1937, and became a minister in the cabinet of AK Fazlul Huq (1937-42). [Sirajul Islam]



Image No 19: Manindra Chandra College, Kolkata Run By Murshidabad Kandi Family

K. Manish Ghatak & Mahasweta Devi:

Manish Ghatak (1902 - 1979) of Berhampore was a leading poet- litterateur of the Kallol era. He often wrote under the pen name Jubanashwa. Among his famous work are *Pataldangar Panchali* (a book of short stories), *Kankhal* (novel) and books of poems like *Shilalipi*, *Sandhya*.

Mahasweta Devi (1926), daughter of poet Manish Ghatak, writes short stories and novels. She writes mainly about the downtrodden and the tribal people of Bengal, Bihar and Orrisa. She won the coveted **Jnanpith Award** for her literary accomplishments and also the **Magasassay Award** for her social activities.

Devi wrote over 100 novels and over 20 collections of short stories primarily written in Bengali but often translated to other languages. Her first novel, titled *Jhansir Rani*, based on a biography of the Rani of Jhansi was published in 1956. She had toured the Jhansi region to record information and folk songs from the local people for the novel.

Mahasweta Devi's specialisation lay in the studies of Adivasi, Dalit and Marginalized citizens with a focus on their women. They were associated as protestor in the face of British colonialism, the Mahajanas and upper-class corruption and injustice. She lived in the Adivasi villages in West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh years after years, befriending them and learning from them. She has embodied their struggles and sacrifices in her words and characters. She had claimed that her stories aren't her creation, they are the stories of the people of her country. Such an example is her work "**Chotti Mundi Ebong Tar Tir**"

Mahasweta Devi raised her voice several times against the discrimination suffered by tribal people in India. Devi's 1977 novel **Aranyer Adhikar** (Right to the Forest) was about the life of Birsa Munda. And in June 2016, consequent to Devi's activism, the Jharkhand State Government finally saw to the removal of the manacles from the figure of Munda, which had been part of the commemorative sculpture of the notable young tribal leader due to its having been based on a photograph dating from the era of British rule.

L. Paban Das Baul:

Paban Das Baul (born 1961) is a noted Baul singer and musician from India, who also plays a *dubki*, a small tambourine and sometimes an *ektara* as an accompaniment. He is known for pioneering traditional Baul music on the international music scene and for establishing a genre of folk-fusion music. Born in Mohammedpur, a small village in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, where his early musical influences were his father, and wandering baul singers. In 1988, Das Baul started collaborating with Sam Mills, a London-born guitarist who had performed with experimental, avant garde group 23 Skidoo between 1979 and 1982. Their collaboration resulted in the acclaimed album *Real Sugar* (1997), a Peter Gabriel's Real-World Records release, it marked one of the first fusions of Bengali music and Western pop music. He has also collaborated with the London-based State of Bengal and Susheela

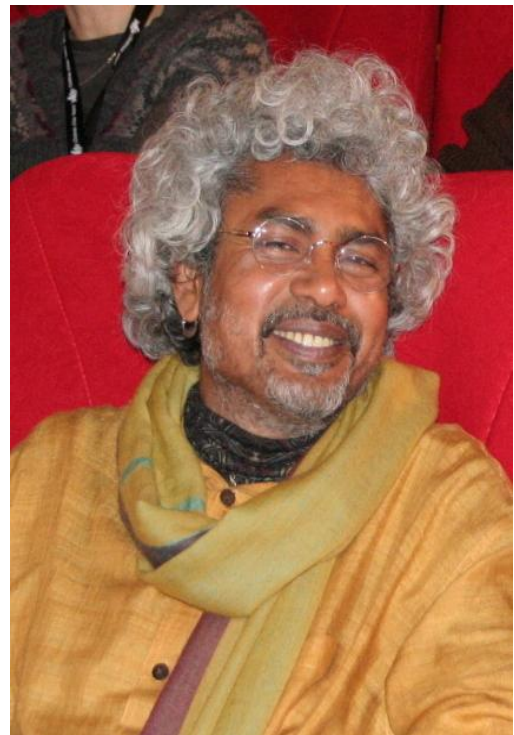


Image No 20: Paban Das Baul

Raman. In 2005, the Baul tradition was included in the list of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO. He also performed at the Jaipur Literature Festival and the "Nine Lives" Concert, 2009 in London, of William Dalrymple.

M. Mir Afsar Ali:

Mir Afsar Ali or Mir is an Indian radio jockey, television anchor, singer, comedian and actor. He is the host of Mirakkel, a Comedy show on Zee Bangla and Hi Kolkata on Radio Mirchi. He also appears on a show in which suspenseful stories are read named Sunday Suspense on Radio Mirchi .

N. Shreya Ghosal:

Shreya Ghosal (born 12 March 1984) is an Indian playback singer. She has received four National Film Awards, four Kerala State Film Awards, two Tamil Nadu State Film Awards, seven Filmfare Awards and ten Filmfare Awards South. She has recorded songs for films and albums in various Indian languages and has established herself as a leading playback singer of Indian cinema.

4. THE ART AND CRAFT OF MURSHIDABAD

A. Murshidabad Art:

Murshidabad Miniature Painting a new school of painting with traditional mughal qalam at its root developed in Murshidabad, the capital of the far-flung Mughal province of Bengal during the first quarter of the 18th century. This province was earlier a great centre of art and culture during the Pala and Husain Shahi period. The Mughals too patronized art and culture of the area. Murshidabad School was established under the direct patronage of its governors when dispersed court artists of the crumbling Mughal Empire took refuge at the court of Murshidabad in search of their livelihood. During 18th century Murshidabad emerged into a new era of prosperity as a result of European trade and settled government. It is not certain whether any royal atelier of Murshidabad was formed under its first Subahdar **MURSHID QULI KHAN** (1716-1727). He was a pious ruler who despised all sorts of luxury. Yet some paintings of his time - Murshid Quli Khan holding darbar by the Bhagirathi River (c 1720), Muharram processions, festivals on Khwaja Khizir - are preserved in a folio of Clive Album now housed in the India Office Library, London. The real Murshidabad style of painting came into vogue under the next ruler **ALIVARDI KHAN** (1740-1756). A contemporary historian Ghulam Hussein Salim is of opinion that Alivardi Khan was an avid patron of art and culture. Some of the paintings of his court, entitled 'Nawab Alivardi Khan hunting Roe Buck' (c 1750-1755), 'Alivardi Khan seated on a Garden Terrace in conversation with his nephews', are now preserved in the India Office Library.



Image No 21: Water Colour Painting Of Nawab Alivardi Khan Hunting Roe Buck

These are evidence of the early Murshidabad atelier and this aged ruler favoured



Image No 22: 'Alivardi Khan Seated On A Garden Terrace In Conversation With His Nephews' San Diego Museum Of Art

darbar and hunting scenes, somber moods, chilly palette, dominant whites and grays in both hunting and court scenes. Under **SIRAJUDDAULA**, the grandson of Alivardi Khan, Murshidabad painting reached its highest apogee. His liberal views widened the horizon of Murshidabad court painting. Apart from formal court scenes and scenes of conversation his painters were encouraged to portray the cosy scenes of the zenana and also ragamala scenes. Thus, a renewed vitality is noticed in the art activities of Siraj's brief reign. Like the pleasure loving later Mughal rulers' scenes portraying women in romantic love scenes, as well as scenes portraying women in

various activities in the zenana, and also women outside their precincts were favoured by Sirajuddaula. Among the numerous raga and ragini scenes were depicted by the court artists. Among the ragas, hindola raga, gujari ragini, kakubha ragini, madhumadhavi ragini, bangali ragini etc are noteworthy. Lovers amidst a romantic landscape or on a royal terrace or on a river cruise are the most favourite scenes of this period.

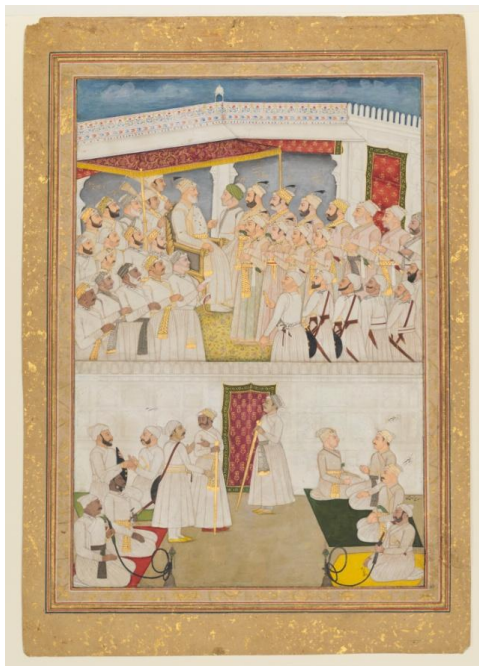


Image No 23: Darbar Of Alivardi Khan At Murshidabad's Courtyca. 1750–1753

Like their Mughal precursors, the Murshidabad artists painted on hand made papers in gouche. They worked on Mughal qalam. The motifs of semi-circular bushes bordering the terrace, the placid river with storks dotted on its banks overlooking the terrace; also, far away vistas of undulating hillocks with schematically arranged semi-circular shrubs are indicators of Murshidabad provenance.

The painting depicts the darbar, or courtly gathering of Alivardi Khan, (r. 1740–56) ruler of the Indian state of Murshidabad. Alivardi Khan is seated at center left, beneath a canopy in a courtyard. He is surrounded by thirty-three members of the court, including noblemen and attendants. The lower part of the painting depicts the area outside the courtyard wall, which contains another eleven figures, who are chatting and smoking huqqa. Most of the figures in the painting are identified by small inscriptions near their likeness.



Image No 24: 'ALIVARDI KHAN AND A COURTIER, MURSHIDABAD, CIRCA 1745 AD. Gouache Heightened With Gold On Paper, The Ruler Seated On A Terrace Holding A Gold Ring With A Courtier, An Attendant Standing Behind Him, Mounted On An Album Leaf. Miniature 13³/₄ X 9³/₄In. (35 X 25cm)



Image No 25: Chandni Chauk and Munni Begum's Mosque, Murshidabad Style of Painting, Watercolour, 1790-1800.



Image No 26: Firework Display On A Bright Moonlit Night Outside The Agra Mahal, Part Of The Nawab's Palace Beside The River At Murshidabad; A Painting C.1790-1800

Under the next ruler **MIR JAFAR** (1757-1760), Murshidabad atelier witnessed no remarkable change in the style of painting except losing vitality and charm of Siraj's period. During this period Puran Nath, alias Hunhar, a renowned artist from Lucknow joined the Murshidabad atelier. A beautiful painting by Puran Nath, now preserved in

the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, depicts Nawab Mir Jafar and his son Miran inspecting armies amidst a vast field. Other miniatures representing single portrait of the nawab amidst barren natural settings, formal court scenes, etc recall the style of Alivardi Khan's atelier for their similarity of themes and choice of somber atmosphere and pallid colour scheme. The Lucknow painters who worked under Mir Jafar continued to work in the atelier of the next ruler **MIR QASIM** (1760-63).



Image No 27: Procession Of A Ruler, C 1770

Among them the most renowned painter was Dip Chand, from whose meticulous brush came the famous portrait of Gurgan, a courtier of Mir Qasim, which is now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Formal court scenes of the nawabs were also painted during this period, which are reminiscent of the paintings of his preceding rulers.

By the time of Mir Qasim, the arrival and predominance of Lucknow artists brought in a remarkable change in the Murshidabad style, when the prevailing Mughal qalam was replaced by the Lucknow qalam. Portraits of nawabs and courtiers overwhelmed by exaggerated emotion, with fine stipplings of grey and brownish ground, the flower beds at the back drop of the portraits, yellow palette of the lily pond are indicators of Lucknow qalam.

The defeat and deposition of Mir Qasim by the English and the ascendancy of the aged puppet Nawab Mir Jafar for a second term to the masnad of Murshidabad, disturbed the congenial atmosphere needed for the promotion of art and culture. The patronage now passed on to the opulent zamindars, Muslim nobles, Hindu and Jaina businessmen and British officials residing near Murshidabad, who employed the disbursed artists to illustrate popular Hindu-Muslim manuscripts as well as muraqqas (picture albums) containing portraits of Mughal rulers, nawabs, courtiers, representation of ragamalas etc. Among those manuscripts and albums Dastur-i-Himayat, Razamnama, Nala Damayanti, Nabwa Daman, Ragamala, and Nayaka-Nayikabheda miniatures received the patron's favour. In the illustrations of Hindu gods and religious themes the artists represented local varieties of Hinduism in Bengal, such as Vaishnavite and Tantric mode. While depicting those miniatures, the artists faithfully represented the flora and fauna of Bengal in a rather naive and folkish manner. However, the famine of 1769 dealt the final blow to the last vestiges of Murshidabad painting when the famine-stricken poor artists took shelter at the British master's atelier where they adapted themselves to the European influenced company style of painting. [Najma Khan Majlis]

Murshidabad artists in this school divided their work into three principal categories: festivities, topography and gentlemen's houses. Their work has survived principally in large albums or portfolios of drawings collected by British patrons such as the Marquess Wellesley and Col. James Chicheley Hyde.³³ Their festivity scenes encompassed Hindu and Muslim festivals equally. An exceptionally ambitious painting represents the climax of the Muharram festival by night in the old wooden Imambara at Murshidabad and includes the central mosque or Madina, the only part of the structure to survive a disastrous fire in 1846. The taziyas have been deposited in the central Madina and the standards in the surrounding arcades, after they had been taken in procession through the streets. The artist has successfully pictured the brilliant illuminations with light from the candelabra, lamps and girandoles reflected in mirrors and the pieces of glass sewn into the black hangings. Like the durbar scene it is depicted from the artist's viewpoint on the ground but without the excessive elongation of the figures. It perhaps also is based on a Farington original. Many other of these large landscape format Murshidabad paintings would seem to have been worked up from Farington's and other artists' drawings. They revert to a more traditional elevated viewpoint than the D'Oyly durbar scene and the Muhurram scene. This new viewpoint allowed Murshidabad artists to create both an interesting foreground of Indians going about their business and also a meaningful architectural

or landscape background, as in a fireworks scene at night opposite the old palace at Murshidabad, presumably during Diwali.

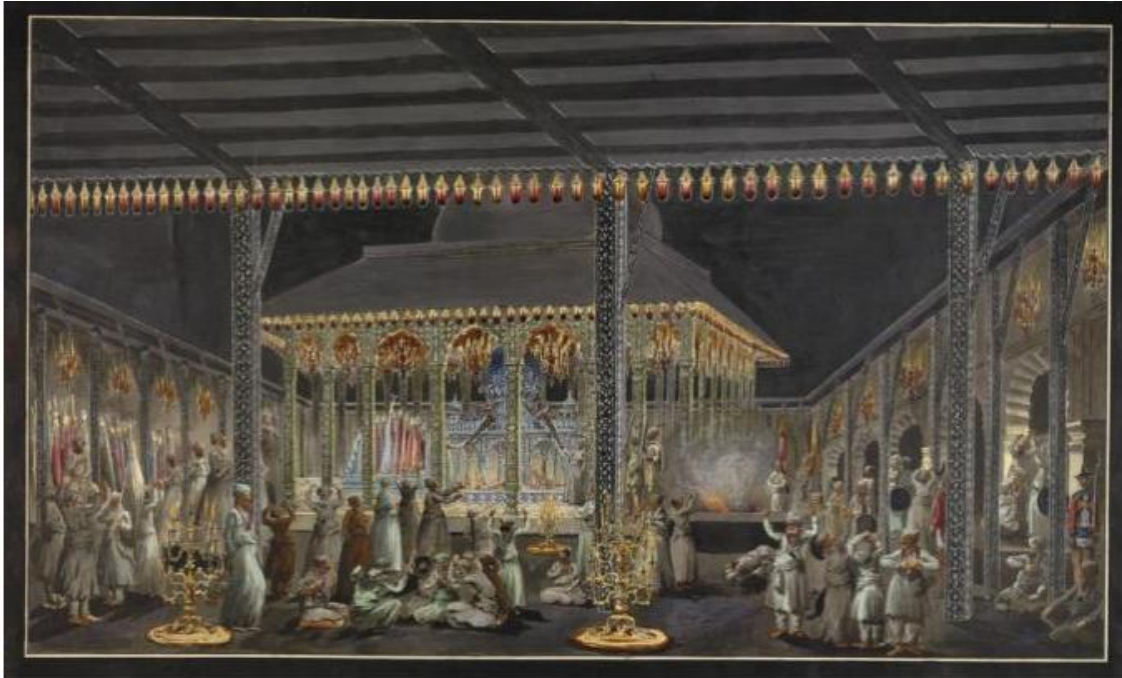


Image No 28: The Climax Of The Muharram Festival By Night. Murshidabad, C. 1790-1800. Watercolour And Bodycolour On Paper. 41.6 X70.3 Cm; Page 45.5 X 74.2 Cm. British Library, London,

So far 'Murshidabad' has been discussed as a stylistic criterion, rather than as an actual place of production of these paintings. The large paintings linked with the buildings and personalities of the city of Murshidabad were presumably actually painted in that city, but it is also clear that other artists had moved downriver to Kolkata and worked there in the same sort of style. By about 1810, there must have been few artists left in Murshidabad proper and many more in Kolkata itself. It is in that city that we find the greatest artist of the later school of Murshidabad, Sita Ram, the artist in residence for Lord and Lady Moira (afterwards Hastings, as he will be referred to here) from 1814 to the early 1820s. Lord Hastings was the Governor General of Bengal, and he and his wife employed Sita Ram to record views of places which they saw on their journeys, and also to record the flora and fauna of India. Sita Ram is referred to occasionally in Lord Hastings' journal as a Bengal draftsman, one of those many artists who worked in the official establishments in and around Kolkata. At some stage unknown he was picked out for the superiority of his work and was given training in pure watercolour technique that suggests access to the work of George Chinnery and his pupil Charles D'Oyly. His principal work survives in ten volumes of drawings recording Hastings' journey from Kolkata to Lucknow, Haryana, Agra and back in 1814-15. We can close this survey of Murshidabad painting with two of Sita

Ram's finest works. Sita Ram normally drew what he saw, although clothing it in picturesque garb, but for one painting from the first of his ten volumes of views, he created a fantasy. Lord Hastings had been struck by the Nawab's newly built morpankhi when visiting Murshidabad, as much by its inconvenience as by its magnificence. Sita Ram has created a fantasy, showing not just this boat but other similar state boats as well and placed them, not on the relatively safe Bhagirathi at Murshidabad, but instead 150 km upstream on the Ganga itself below the Moti Jharna, the famous waterfall in the Rajmahal Hills, and this in July with the river in full flood.⁴⁰ Being a typically Indian artist as well as a picturesque one, to create this fantasy he has made use of earlier Murshidabad studies of pleasure and state boats such as those in the drawing owned by Mrs Pattle and placed them in the same positions as in that painting. Note also the small promontory with figures on it in the foreground, another earlier device that he borrows here for good use as a distancing effect.

In addition to the ten volumes of views on the 1814-15 journey of Lord Hastings, Sita Ram produced two volumes of views of upper Bengal and adjacent parts of Bihar to accompany Lord Hastings' expeditions in 1817. An individual painting of a scene at Murshidabad that does not come from any of the known albums shows the gateway leading to the lakeside palace at Moti Jhil, the horse-shoe shaped lake south-east of the city. Sita Ram shows us the view looking north-west. The gateway leads to the pleasure-park and to the Sang-i Dalan palace behind the artist and hence unseen, while the Kala Masjid is situated between the gateway and the River Bhagirathi beyond that. Oddly he shows us the back of the mosque, which then makes it orientated in the wrong direction. This view has until recently been unidentified, but an earlier view from a Murshidabad artist can be used to place it. At the inner bend of the horse-shoe this earlier artist shows the Sang-i Dalan pleasure palace, taken over after 1757 by the Company's Residents at the court including Warren Hastings

The gateway stands opposite the two curved arms of the lake and the mosque is beyond, here shown facing the right direction. The palace itself is not shown in Sita Ram's paintings, but he does include the Kala Masjid which was built opposite the two ends of the lake. Only the mosque and lake remain today. The striking differences between the two views illustrate how far Sita Ram had travelled from his 28 earlier roots. The earlier painting from about 1800 employs a naive overhead view of the site with its buildings clinging awkwardly to an apparently sloping surface. Scarcely a dozen years later Sita Ram's sophisticated approach to the rendition of landscape

places the buildings not only in their physical context but manages to convey as well the life of the Bengal countryside that was going on around them. Sita Ram disappears from view along with his patrons in 1822. Only one other artist trained in the Murshidabad style can in any way compare with him, an anonymous artist who worked for Walter Raleigh Gilbert in Orissa and Bihar. British patrons in Kolkata thenceforth seem to have preferred the harder style associated with Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karaya to record their houses, dogs and servants, and to disengage themselves aesthetically from the real India all around them, as indeed did the Nawabs with their patronage of a purely European type of art.



Image No 29: The State Boats Of The Nawab Of Murshidabad Passing The Moti Jharna Waterfall. By Sita Ram, 1814. Watercolour On Paper. 45.5 Cm X 64 Cm. San Diego Museum Of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.1376.

B. Ivory Art of Murshidabad:

The principal centre of ivory-carving in Bengal has always been the district of Murshidabad. There are a number of interesting traditions current in the district regarding the introduction of the art. It is said that once the Nawab of Murshidabad asked for an ear-prick or ear-scratcher, and a grass one was brought to him. The Nawab ~ aid it was certainly not worthy of the Nawab-Nazirn of Bengal, and he wanted one of ivory. An ivory-carver was at 'once brought to Murshidabad for preparing an ivory ear-scratcher for the Nawab. Girish Chunder Bhaskar, who may be

said to be the head of the present ivory-carvers of Berhampur, highlighted the life of **Tulsi Khatumber**, the son of the man who cunningly obtained the secrets of the art from the unsuspecting Muhammadan artist, who was brought from Delhi by order of the Nawab by prying through a small aperture in the wall of the room in the Nawab's palace where the latter used to work. Tulsi learnt the art from his father and excelled him. In fact, Tulsi is reputed to be the best master of the art Murshidabad has ever produced, and is regarded as the father of the art there. All the ivory-carvers of Murshidabad to this day bend their heads and raise their joined palms in veneration whenever his name is mentioned.

Tulsi was a devout Baisnav or worshipper of Srikrishna, as all his followers are to this day. As a pious Baisnav he had a great passion for pilgrimages, and on that account the Nawab always kept him under a strict guard, so that His Majesty might derive the fullest benefit from the celebrated artist's wonderful genius. Tulsi, however, managed to elude the watch, and one day, while bathing in the Bhagirathi, which flows past the city, swam across the stream and fled to Rajmahal. But he had no money with him, and so contrived, with such tools as he could borrow from the local carpenters, to construct a wooden horse which fetched him Rs. 5. With this money he went to Gaya. Here he manufactured some idols, and with the money he obtained by their sale, he left for Benares. At the latter place he purchased some ivory, which he took with him to Brindaban, where he got a few tools for carving, made by an oldsmith. Thus, he was able to turn out some articles of ivory, which he sold, and then proceeded to the temple of Radha Govindji, the tutelary deity of the Maharaja of Jaipur. There Tulsi presented the Maharaja with what has ever since been regarded by his followers as the best product of his genius. He also reproduced, under orders of the Maharaja, his favourite goat in ivory, the sight of which is said to have sent the Maharaja into raptures, who then and there made a present to the artist of all the valuables on his own person, together with Rs. 2,000 in cash. Tulsi was induced by his illustrious host to stay in Jaipur for some time.

After 17 years' wanderings to different places of pilgrimage, Tulsi returned to Murshidabad, and was forthwith summoned to the presence of the Nawab then on the musnud, who had already heard of his genius. Nawab ordered him to reproduce from memory a likeness in ivory of his Majesty's father, who had died during the years of Tulsi's pilgrimage. It is said the statue he made was so exact and life like that the Nawab ordered that the whole of his salary for the 17 years of his absence on

pilgrimage should be paid at once, besides granting him a good dwelling-house in Mohajantuli near the city of Murshidabad.

Tulsi Khatumber had two favourite pupils, Manick Bhaskar and Ram Kishore Bhaskar. The latter was the uncle of Lal Behari Bhaskar, of Enaitullah Bagh nearby. Baluchar, who died leaving his son Nilmoni, now does carving-work to order at the Nizamut.

So, the Ivory craft of Murshidabad developed during the time of Nawabs. However according to many arts historian its root goes back to Srihatta or Sylhet (present Bangladesh). When the capital got shifted from Dhaka to Murshidabad, the craftsmen also moved here in this part.

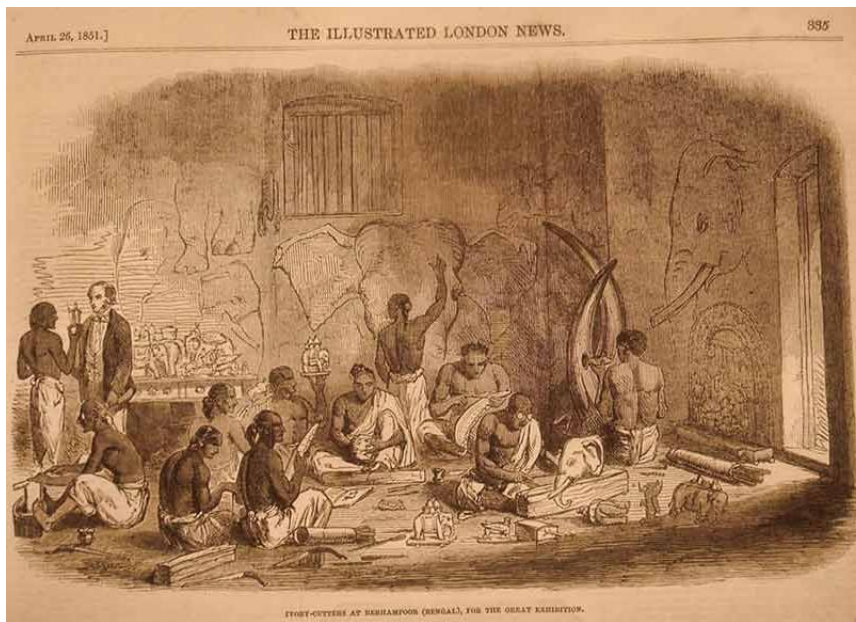


Image No 31: During The “Great Exhibition Of 1851” In London, A Variety Of Specimens Of Carving In Ivory Were Sent From Different Parts Of India, Particularly Those From Murshidabad, And These Were Much Admired For Their Minuteness And Elaborate Of Details. Source: <https://www.coulborn.com/>



Image No 30: Ivory Craft

In 1888 again, the **Murshidabad** carvers were declared to be perhaps the best in India, fully displaying the finish, finesse and innovative ivory carving that had new designs like the Mayurpankhi boat that is so intrinsically related to Bengal. When Berhampore rose to importance as chief military station in the province, the art flourished there but began to wane with the decline of the military importance of the town. If not for the trade depending on the railway communication, the ivory art would have died out long ago. Earlier the ivory

carvers used to get large orders from Government for supplying specimens of their work for various exhibitions in England and other European countries, as also in India. But this was later discontinued when arrangements were made to collect the exhibits on loan from noblemen and zamindars, like the Nawab of Murshidabad and the Maharaja of Cossimbazar, who were in a position to supply the best specimens under their possession. Mathra, Daulatbazar and Ranshagorgram were once noted for the industry but altogether forgotten in later years owing to decay of the industry. However still in Jiagunj this art flourishes and most of the ivory carved artefacts made are exported.



Image No 32: Mayurpankhi Boat & Chess Set

Social position of the ivory-carvers of Murshidabad.

As is well known, every industry among the Hindus is in the hands of a particular caste or trade-guild. The Ivory-carvers of Murshidabad are all Hindus and belong to the **Baisnav sect**. The caste is called **Bhaskar**, or image maker, and is a branch of the carpenter caste. This proves that the caste is much older than this particular art. Before the introduction of ivory carving, the Bhaskars of Murshidahad had as their caste occupation the making of clay and stone images, wood-carving and wall-painting. Like other castes, or, perhaps, even more than they, the ivory-carvers of Murshidabad are very exclusive, and would not on any account impart their knowledge to another of a different caste.

Source: A Monograph on Ivory Carving in Bengal, G.C Dutt, 1901.

Nimai Chandra Bhaskar: President Awardee, ivory artist Nimai Chandra Bhaskar is the resident of Baharampur, Murshidabad. He is the successor of the ivory carving legacy which his grandfather Ganesh Bhaskar started. Shashi Bhuan Bhaskar, his father was a master craftsman who was felicitated twice by the President of India. His creations are found in different national and international museums. After the banning of the ivory usage, they shifted to Sandal Wood as their medium of art. But because of high price, Nimai Chandra Bhaskar now uses Gambhar Wood which is locally available.

Present Scenario – The Indian Wild Life Protection Act (1972) banned domestic sale of ivory and its products in 1986. In 1991, by an amendment aimed at stopping sale of Asian ivory under cover of African ivory, the import, carving and sale of the latter were also banned. As a signatory of CITES, import and export of ivory had already been banned in India since 1976. Naturally, with this ban the ivory carving industry died in Murshidabad and is replaced by Wood Carving & Sholapith Carving. Even Cow bones are also used for the carvings. Japan has introduced a fibre which has now become more affordable medium.

C. Sholapith Carving:

Sholapith craft is one of the primordial handicrafts of the District Murshidabad (Ghosh, 2015). Probably influenced by the Mughal court, craftsmen in Murshidabad (capital of the independent Bengal province prior to the decisive Battle of Plassey) had mastered the fine art of ivory carving. But the lack of patronage after the capital's fall from grace and later the ban on ivory trade may have led to the end of this craftsmanship if the artisans had not chanced upon a substitute, the shola. Owing to the whiteness of the material and the fine craftsmanship, you may mistake the shola handicraft for ivory. Some of the typical



products made here that hark back to the ivory carving days are decorated elephants, 'mayurpankhi' or the peacock shaped boat, palanquins, flowers, etc.

Image No 33: National Awardee (2006) Samir Kumar Saha With His Creation, Source: Daricha Foundation

Sholapith Craft of this district recognized as one of the best examples of craftsmanship. Sholapith items form an integral part of the major religious rituals in the district as well as State of West Bengal. A particular community popularly known as **Malaker** is involved in making such beautiful craft. They are very skilful and artistic secrets by profession and earn their livelihoods. Here we aim at identifying the preparation of this unique handicraft requires specific techniques within different method such as Malar Kaj and Daker Kaj, with particular tools used. It also gives the detail idea of the indigenious knowledge-based techniques used for making such beautiful handicraft and the artisans socioeconomic status.

Sholapith, also referred to as shola or Indian cork, is a plant which grows wild in marshy waterlogged areas of Bengal, Assam, Orissa and the Deccan. The biological name of shola is *Aeschynomeneaspera*. From the planta dried milky-white spongy plant matter is extracted which in Bengal is used to make beautiful objects of art. The white colour of the shola is suggestive of purity and sacredness, shola handicrafts are therefore used on religious occasions for instance, at the time of Durga Puja, the biggest annual religious festival of Bengal. The Goddess Durga is generally attired in shola. Decorative hangings made out of shola are also used outside the rooms for worship (thakurghar). Objects made of shola are also used in marriage rituals of Bengal. For instance, the bridal headgear (mukut) and the groom's triangular hat (topor) are necessarily made out of shola. Shola, therefore, from a very early period, has been intimately connected to the socio-cultural as well as the religious life of Bengalis.



Image No 34: Shola Plant Grows Wildly In The Paddy Field

Raw Material: Two types of shoals are used for the making craft are Kath Shola (*Aeschynomene indica*) and another is Bhat shoal (*Aeschynomene aspera*). Kath shoal

is rather hard than the bhat shoal (Ghosh, 2015). Good quality pith is white. The best time to harvest the shoal plant is in winter when the plant is mature. If the plant is cut down before the flowering period, it affects the whiteness of the pith. On the other hand, if the plant is cut down after a long period of flowering it became hard and reddish in colour. The uprooted plants cut by *hansuli or catari* and these are then dried under bright sunlight for 3-4 days. The pith gradually turns brown and became lighter. After that the brown outer skin is peeled off to reveal the soft core and is ready for processing.

Tools Used and Process of Craft Making: The tools used for making craft by artisans are simple. They used a special iron blade known a 'kath' fashion intricate objects out of the shoal. The soft core is first cut into pieces of various lengths as required. It is then sliced into paper then strips termed 'paturi' or shaved into sheets termed 'kaap' and then shaped by the artisan. Shapes of different size are cut and joined together to make various objects. Flat sheets are rolled together tightly to form a block. Using their creativity, the artisans then make serrated block of shoal which can be further cut to create geometric shape. The process is simple but the craftsmanship requires a steady hand and great dexterity.

Techniques Involved in Making Craft: Initially the segmented shoal stems each with 75-90 cm long are allowed having sun drying under bright sunlight for 3-4 days until lush green colour of stems turn to become brown, which are then ready either for storing or for immediate processing for making decorative items. One bundle containing dry segmented shoal stems is called Jhapi, which has 300 pieces and costs around 200 rupees.

Method: There are two types of method involved in processing of shoal pith from stem as; (i) Malar Kaj, (ii) Daker Kaj. 'Malar kaj' is mentioned to be a crude method that usually does not require quality shoal pith and skilled artisan as well. For 'malar kaj', hard brown cover needs not to be peeled off from shola stem during processing (Mandal et al, 2014). The product of 'malar kaj' have cheap rate of price and take less time spent for their manufacturing. 'Daker kaj' is another one as mentioned to be a sophisticated method that requires both skilled artisans and quality shola pith.



Image No 35: Shola Piths Or Cortex, The Main Ingredients For Shoal Craft



Image No 36: The Bark Is Taken Out To Use Them For The Craft



Image No 37: Sholapith Saaj In Baharampur, Murshidabad Ornamental Elephant, Artist Sanjoy Das



Image No 38: Every Member Of The Family, Mostly Women Folks Help In Making Ornaments From Shola Pith During Puja Time



Image No 39: The Essential Shola Headgears Used In Marriage

D. Bell Metal (Kansa)

Brass and bell industry, an indigenous and traditional one, has had a glorious past since when civilization started in our country. Brass and bell industry, a cottage industry in nature and mainly concentrated in the Central and Eastern part of India, due to the availability of raw materials (zinc, copper, tin) in the plateau region of Eastern India. Bell Metal is an alloy with high proportion of tin to copper, and was the material used for making utensils for ritual and household use. Bell Metal did not tarnish easily and was suitable for serving dishes. Traditionally, utensils were forged out of a lump of metals on anvils and steel shapers by a team, heating and beating the metal simultaneously. Bigger pots are shaped and forged in parts and joined or brazed with soldering paste finished and polished. In the picture above, workers are hammering the bell metal into discs. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, in proportions which can be varied to achieve varying mechanical, electrical, and chemical properties. It is a substitutional alloy: atoms of the two constituents may replace each other within the same crystal structure.



Image No 40: Khagra, Murshidabad Is Famous For Bell Metal

In the year of 1944-45 there were 180 factories in **Khagra**, Murshidabad (Murshidabad Zilla Gazetteer 2003). The demand of the bell products of Khagra was very high due to their unique compositions of raw materials i.e. the proportion of copper and tin used to be 7:2 for bell, and for brass the proportion was 10:4 for copper and zinc respectively. (ibid) Daily usages, religious rituals, gifts, and sculptures made from this alloy, which has been higher from the ancient past but the demand is decreasing in present (Chattapadhyay 2017). Brass and bell industry is found in Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh serves local as well as national market. In West Bengal, brass and bell industry has been located mainly in two regions, i.e. in Bankura and in Murshidabad. Khagra area of Berhampore, and Kandi, 30 km away from Berhampore (district headquarter of Murshidabad), are the two places in Murshidabad district, where this industry has been flourishing. In specific, Khagra used to hold a prestigious position in local and national market for producing excellent bell products, especially dishes. But with time, in one hand the price of the raw materials of bell products has increased and on the other hand the shop and factory owners as well as artisans have moved towards others income opportunities excluding brass products due to losing its long lasting reputation.

Location Of The Factories: Khagra is one of the oldest parts situated in the north-west of Berhampore Municipality. Berhampore Municipality has 28 municipal wards among which Khagra area is spread over the Ward Number 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12,

13, 14, 15 and 19. Brass and bell factories are mainly located in Wards Number 4, 12, 7 while shops are scattered in Ward Number 11, 12, and 14.

Based on the survey data, this industry is male dominated in nature as it requires lots of physical energy. The age structure of the workers denotes that the average age of the workers is 40 years while 26 per cent among the total belong to the age cohort less than 30 years. 19 per cent are within the age cohort of 30-39 years, 32 per cent belong to the age group 40-49 and the rest are of above 50 years age. These figures are the provocative of the fact that the average age of the workers is quite high and ageing among them is common and nowadays youths are not engaging themselves in this industry. Only a few are newcomers in this industry, i.e. near about 18 per cent have less than 5 years of work experiences while 12 per cent have been working in this industry for more than 35 years



Image No 41: Brass And Bell Metal Shops, Khagra

Brass and bell industry of Khagra has had a good reputation for the production of quality bell products like dishes, bowls, daily used utensils, sculptures, and various kinds of products needed for ritual practices nationally. Though at present only a very few factories are producing bell products and remaining are now engaged with the production of brass items. This deceleration, as per the workers and the owners, is mainly due to the increasing price of raw materials followed by the decreasing demand of bell products.

Though, Kandi, a small town, located beside the River Dwaraka and 30 km away from Berhampore, has maintained its tradition of producing bell products. Presently, Kandi region supplies the raw materials of bell production to Khagra region if needed. And on the other hand, brass producers themselves do not produce brass rather they use to buy brass sheets from different areas of Nadia and Bankura districts. The main products of the brass nowadays industry in Khagra are utensils, things for daily usages, sculptures and goods required for ritual practices. A single factory might be engaged in the production of one kind of product mentioned or might produce more than one kind of product and most of them are engaged in utensil production

followed by the other daily usage products I have found that 47 per cent and 77 per cent of the owners respectively, said that the average cost of the products they produce ranges from Rs. 500- 1000/- and Rs 1000-5000/-. 23 per cent of the owners have said that the average cost of the products they produce worth more than Rs. 5000/- and only 10 per cent have also said that they produce small things that do not cost more than Rs. 100/-. 57 per cent shop/factory owners have confirmed that on an average they produce 10 to 20 products daily while 37 per cent have confirmed that they produce less than 10 products daily. In the past, Khagra used to supply bell products, in particular in all over the country; this study finds that only one among thirty owners has confirmed that still his factory serves national market. Otherwise, all the owners unanimously have confirmed that presently they have only access to local market and mainly they use their showrooms (shops) as the demonstration place for the produced products and they think that the lack of the capital is one of the major problems for this industry. 90 per cent of the total owners have invested their own capital. Only one owner has invested capital borrowed from bank as loan while two owners have lent money from their known to invest in this industry.



Image No 42: The Process Of Making Utensils, Workshop, Khagra

E. Balaposh:

Balaposh or silk quilts are steeped in history and deft craftsmanship, with Balaposh of Murshidabad being one of West Bengal's finest creations that has travelled near and far and has won appreciation for the sweet-scented warmth – spread by a layer of attar-scented cotton wool between two layers of silk cloth, using no quilting stitches at all apart from the stitches on the edges.



Image No 43: The Scented Quilt Of Murshidabad, Balaposh

It is said that a single sheet of Balaposh would cost thousands of rupees during the rule of the Mughals; if converted this would amount to millions of rupees in present times, thus proving the exquisite nature of these traditional works of art.

The mild scent of Balaposh – that waft through the quilted layers and lures one in, is often its main attraction, and the government is taking active measures – such as training to the younger generation of weavers, to ensure that this art is kept alive.

History of Balaposh

Finery and complexity are always intertwined as they set the standards for a high life. Take the faintly fragrant Balaposh for example; whether these silk quilts got the word posh into it for the same reason is for the user to decide. Actually, it's quite hard to differ after you have used one; you won't have too many options.

A surprising thing about the balaposh is its usage as an elegant shawl. This proves furthermore the fine craftsmanship that originated and still exists in Bengal, Murshidabad district. A sweet-scented warmth its characteristic, the balaposh is a spread of layered, attar-scented cotton wool between two layers of silk stitched at the edges.

The Nawabs of Bengal are to be given credits for the advent of the Balaposh in the 18th century. Nawab Sujauddin's sense of perfectionism (then ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) and his demand for an extravagant quilt is said to be what brought the

balaposh into existence. He wanted something that's *soft as wool, warm as the lap and gentle like a flower*" to wrap himself in. Needless saying, this tall order was way beyond the reach of the then craftsmen of the region, except for one **Atir Khan** who took a vow to create that exclusive piece. Following the King's specifications, the balaposh was quilted to perfection. Thus, it was born and in its initial years, they only served the Royals. Today as well, the art remains a well-hidden one – a closely guarded legacy carried forward by **Sekhawat Hussain Khan**, Atir Khan's great-grandson, the only true karigar (craftsman) existing in this near-extinct trade. His production technique is vastly different from the commercialised variety. How the three layers (a thin sheet of attar-scented cotton snuggled between silk two blankets of silk) should be laid is still a mystery to the rest of the world but to one person.

What sets Balaposh apart?

Quilts come and go, but the balaposh is forever! Born in adroit and artful hands, the unsurpassable aesthetics of these lightweight, hand-crafted, exquisite creations never cease to intrigue.



Image No 44: The Elementary Cotton Threshing Instrument, Dhunuri

It's the quality that distinguishes the balaposh from other quilts and that's more than the stitches along the edges. The real secret is how not to let the middle layer of cotton wool lump up into a ball; so, when you are looking at one, remember that just ornamental borders and contrasting colours are not the only defining criteria. They are not least responsible for the characteristic softness and its sublime fragrance wafting through the layers; a true balaposh must seep its sense of posh-ness into the

senses of the one who uses it. The art is, however, in a deplorable state as of now; close to dying and it's the deliberate conservatism of the artisans to blame.

All these years, the art of making balaposh has been passed on as a family heirloom; the only way to save the art is passing it on to the future generations. It's the only way to save the legacy from going extinct and the craft from fading into obscurity.

Sekhawat Hussain Khan: Featured in *Balaposh – A Fragrant Inheritance*, a beautiful film installation by designer Neishaa Gharat and acclaimed street photographer Vineett Vohra, Khan's role is crucial to preserving the balaposh legacy and ensuring its future.

Atir Khan, the grandfather of Sekhawat Hussain Khan came from Gazipur of Uttar Pradesh and settled down in the Dewanganj lane of Khagra, Murshidabad which is near to Cossimbazar station. About 6/7 family members are involved in making this hereditary art. In the olden days Mogol Dhunuri, Badal Dhunuri, Nimai Dhunuri, Anowar Dhunuri of Acharyapara (Khagra) were involved. According to him, during his father's time, Amir Hussain Khan, Balaposh making was in its golden period. Many workers were involved in the Balaposh making. Kamalalaya, the major departmental store of Kolkata used to directly buy the products from them.

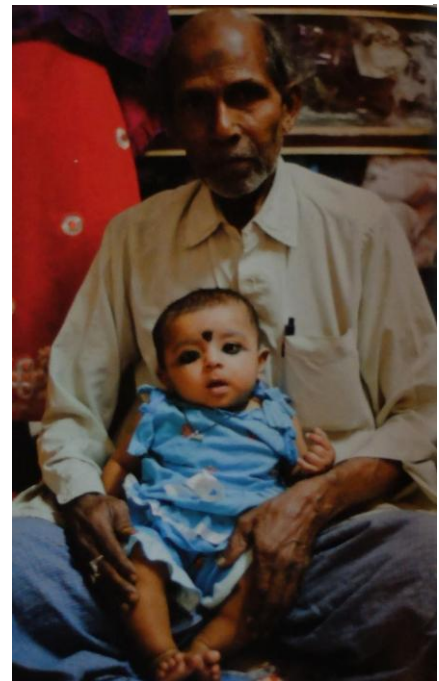


Image No 45: The Master Craftsman Late Sekhawat Hussain

The making of Balaposh goes through different stages like – Kapash Cotton from the different trees will be bought and then will sundried. Then the bulk will be threshed for 25 to 30 times. The threshed cotton will be layered in 4 parts. Each layer will be jacketed by muslin or mulmul. The outer layers will be by very fine quality silk at one side and cotton on the other. All the layers are hand set and handstitched. The cotton is scented in such a way that the fragrance will stay forever.



Image No 46: Amir Hussain Khan Working With Dhunuris To Prepare A Balaposh

After **Sekhawat Hussain Khan** death, the Balaposh legacy is being carried forward by his son and daughter.

F. Khadi:

Murshidabad Khadi Gramodyog Samity is a household name in the district of Murshidabad. Its reputation is not confined to the district itself; its presence is felt in the vast family of Khadi Gramodyog Samity all over the country.

Son of late Hemendra Narayan Choubey, a freedom fighter and a person of repute in the vast area of Jangipur sub-division of the historical district of Murshidabad, Sri Swapan Kumar Coubey is the secretary of the samity which was founded following the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi's boycott movement of foreign clothes. Other than being a strategy in his struggle for the freedom of India, Gandhiji used to promote the production of khadi clothes. It had the potential for employment of the poor people of India. Afterwards, he took initiatives for establishing khadi commission. Khadi movement got its momentum through his disciple Vinoda vave. Khadi cloth is of four types: (i) cotton/muslin, (ii) silk, (iii) wool and (iv) polyester. The society is mainly devoted to the production of silk clothes with some muslin and cotton cloth. A brief history of Murshidabad silk: the history of sericulture in Murshidabad is as old as 2000

years. E-tsing, a chinese traveller, mentioned in his travelogue about karnasubarna exporting a large quantity of silk and silk clothes to all over india. There are mentions of the glorious period of murshidabad silk during the pal dynasty, especially the period reigned by maharaj mohipal. It was supplied to the weavers in Burhampur (Berhampur) and Varanasi to prepare clothes mainly for mughal royals. Sericulture spreaded to other places of india from Murshidabad. Murshidabad silk attracted the portugese, the dutch, the french and the british to India for trade. In the deccans, mainly in Mysore, sericulture was started by tipu sultan who, in 1796-97, sent 12 leading farmers to the nawab of bengal to learn sericulture, livestock development and preparing silk. In the middle of the 18th century, around 222 thousand maunnds (1 maunnd = 40 ser) of silk was sent to markets of england from cossimbazar. The boom, with the passage of time, however, came to a low ebb.



Image No 47: Khadi Garad Saree

The people of Murshidabad, known for their association with sericulture for centuries over, are determined to bring back its past glory through their diversified and innovative activities relating to the craft of sericulture. We are proud to say that Murshidabad Khadi Gramodyog Samity has always been in the march to this direction, modestly but firmly, and are sure to make a mark in the field of khadi.

Recently, in 25th February ,2021 The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) empowered nearly 1,650 artisan families engaged with Khadi spinning, by distributing machines and charkhas, encouraging self-sustainability and self-reliance. The Chairman of the KVIC, VK Saxena, distributed 825 new model charkhas, 50 silk charkhas, 235 modern looms, 120 Reeling Basins and 95 readymade garment machines to artisans in Khadi spinning and weaving activities.



Image No 48: Fabric And The Weaving Techniques

G. Silk Industry /Resham Shilpo:

Murshidabad is the second largest traditional silk producing district in West Bengal, which bears a golden legacy of producing superlative silk in India since seventeenth century. Cossimbazar / Kassimbazar was one of the major hubs of silk purchase for the British silk merchants. The industry went into great decline as the Industrial Revolution in the West set in. In the post Independence period attempts were made to revive this home-based artisanal industry in India to expand employment and income opportunities in the rural economy. However, during 2002-2012, there was an exodus of more than 23 thousand silk farmers and 10 thousand silk weavers from the industry.

Pre-Independence: George C. M. Birdwood, the renowned art referee for the Indian Section of the South Kensington Museum in his book 'The Industrial Arts of India (1800)' said - "The City of Murshidabad is still famous all over the world for its gold brocades or Kincabs." This single statement reveals the significance of the silk

manufacturing hub of Murshidabad on the then time, which was once principal centre famous of the silk- weaving. Muslin, Jamdani and Baluchari Butidar Sarees from Murshidabad can be found in the Art Galleries of the Indian Museum in Kolkata, too. These clothes used to be carried out to faraway places across the globe.



Image No 49: Cassimbazar Factory Along Cassimbazar River, Murshidabad,1758

In the seventeenth century during Mughal period, the foreign merchants, whoever came to India got attracted with Bengal Silk. Eventually, the Mughals opened their "Arangs" or purchasing centres in different places of Bengal. At that time Bengal was a bona fide storehouse of silk and Murshidabad was undoubtedly the beating heart of this artisanal industry, with a large chunk of production of silk (in the tune of £ 2.5 million) in Kassimbazar (Guha, 2003).

In 1658, the East India Company opened a "Kuthi" at Cossimbazar and started purchasing silk fabrics. By that time the Dutch, the French and the Portugees had also opened their "Kuthis" at Kalikapur, Farashdanga and Saidabad respectively. In the beginning, they started their operations on a small scale. According to Bernier, the Dutch employed 700 or 800 persons in their factories at Kassimbazar, and the English and other merchants as many more (Mukhopadhyay, 1987; Roy, 2014). It soon began to develop with Europeancapital and organization. In 1670, a factor "well skilled in silk" was sent out from England to Kassimbazar, and in 1681, when the chief was Job Charnock, the future founder of Calcutta, out of£ 230,000 sent out by the East India

Company as "Investment" to Bengal, £ 140,000 was assigned to Kassimbazar. From this time forward the company made unremitting efforts to foster sericulture and extend the trade in silk, until 1776 "Bengal silk drove out all competitors, except Italian and China silks, out of the English market" (Rahaman, 2009). In 1757, Robert Clive found Murshidabad as prosperous as London. EEIC started the business with trading concessions and slowly they revealed their true colour especially after the Battle of Plassey (1757). The weavers of Bengal had no choice left but to bear the brunt of their success. They were paid far less than the market price and were forced to work in the Company's factories. They were fined, imprisoned and whipped if they failed to deliver the requisite order. The EEIC left no stone unturned to monopolise the business of Bengal silk by coercing the weavers to sell their products only to EEIC instead of Dutch and French companies. This inhuman pressure and torture in turn pushed many of these weavers to leave their own places as well as profession. Still the numbers of destitute and miserable artisans were not less in number. Gradually with the uprising of Manchester Silk, the company understood that fortune of Bengal silk was one of the major obstacles in their own business expansion. In 1769, they changed their policies and declared that the manufacture of silk fabrics would be discouraged in Bengal and that of raw silk encouraged (Mukherjee,1994)

Post World War II Period: The village Chak-Islampur in Murshidabad came to be known as a big silk reeling and weaving centre. Besides, Chak-Islampur few other principal centres of Silk Industry had made some historic efforts for the resurgence of Murshidabad Silk. During the first half of the 20th century, Bengali silk merchants of Chak-Islampur, Berhampore and Meerzapur attempted in their own way to resurrect this artisanal Industry. They engaged some reelers, spinners and weavers of the villages of Chak-Islampur, Harharia, Dangapara, Chhayaghor and few other neighbouring places in the producing of Silk and Matka fabrics and other allied work under their supervision. Incidentally, it is interesting to note how the famous silk industry was integrated with the Khadi industry and was saved. The Bengal silk merchants succeeded to bring fame for this industry before the First World War. But the position became worse in the post-war period specially due to Bengal famine of 1950's.

Present Status: Silk industry presently going through a difficult phase. Large numbers of silk farmers as well as weavers are leaving the industry. In 2002, the total number of silk farmers and weavers were 38,040 and 25,778 while in 2012 it brought down to 14,593 and 15,160 (DoTSericulture, Govt. of West Bengal, 2001-02 & 2011-12).



Image No 50: Silk Threads For Preparation Of Sarees

Process of making silk saree: The process of making silk is known as Sericulture. The silk threads are made from the cocoons of the silkworm. It requires approximately 8 cocoons to make 1 thread of approximately 200 meters. Once the silkworms reach 30 days, they start making the cocoons. They take about 48hours to weave a cocoon around their body. The cocoons are brightly yellow in colour. Once the silk cocoons are completed the cocoons are plucked and kept in the sun for 1 day. The cocoons are dried under the sun. Then the cocoons are boiled in the water for approximately 1-2 hours. During the boiling process, the cocoons become soft. Automatically the thread comes out. This part is extremely important as the silk threads are pulled out from anywhere part from this end the cocoon breaks up and a single thread can't be used to weave the silk saree. The threads are rolled up in bobbins. These bobbins are then used for weaving machine to prepare Murshidabad Silk Sarees.



Image No 51: Silk Threads Are Rolled In Bobbins

The Silk sarees are weaved in a loom. The most commonly used loom is called as PitLoom. Since the silk sarees are weaved with hands on the loom its often called Handloom Sarees. It takes approximately 5-7 days to weave a saree. The Murshidabad Silk Sarees are weaved by intersecting silk threads. The major components of a Pit Loom are – Warp Beam, Heddles, Harness, Shuttle, Reed and takeup roll. There is a pit seat where the weaver sits to weave the Murshidabad silk saree. It takes about 4-5 days to complete one full silk saree. The sarees are passed through punched cards which gives individual designs.



Image No 52: Weaving Is Done In Pit Looms

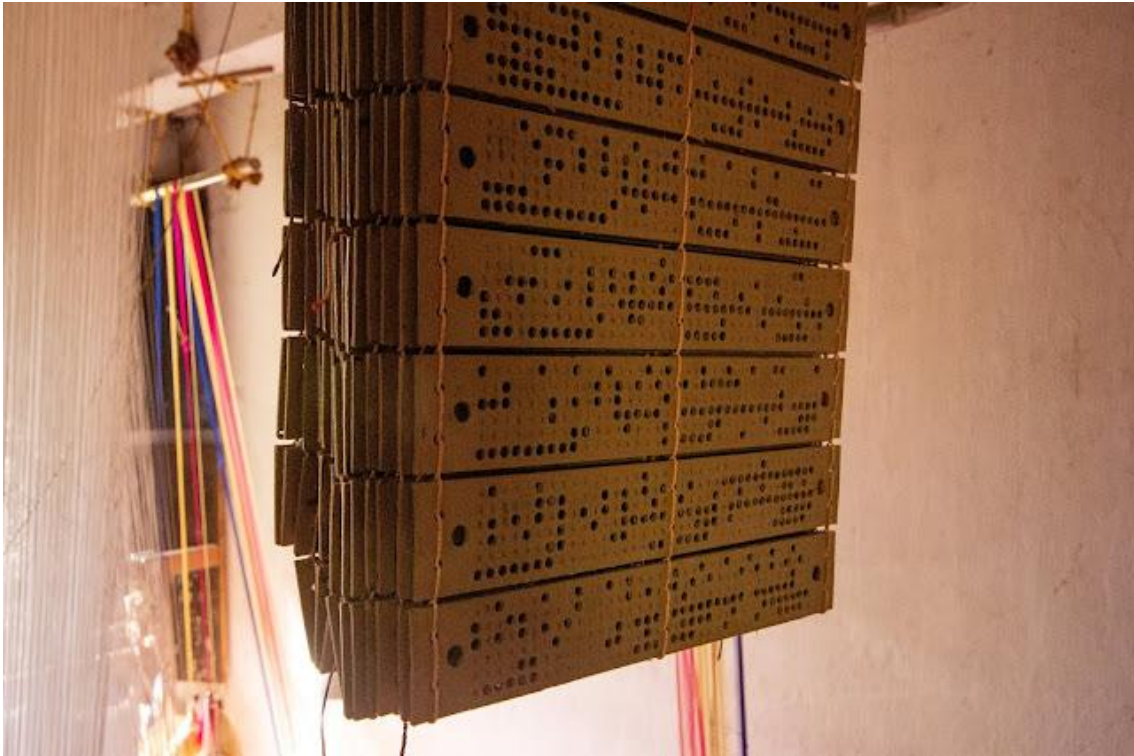


Image No 53: Punched Cards Gives Designs To The Sarees



Image No 54: It Takes About 4-5 Days To Complete One Full Silk Saree.

Causes of degradation: According to the experts, degradation of silk worm races, various administrative and organizational problems are responsible for the subsequent decline of sericulture. Due to physical conditions like climate change, which would often lead to drought and flood, the production of mulberry declined. Similarly, the

poor farmers who fail to mobile easy loans from banks are bound to produce raw silk in lower volumes. It has also been observed that rivalry between ruling party and political parties create chaos among silk producers in this region. The influential factors include attractive job opportunities in metropolitan cities, good and timely wage and the other opportunities of living standards.

Past studies in Murshidabad silk producing region also reveals that sericulture industry in Murshidabad lacks innovation and diffusion technology. The sericulture farmers of this region are more prone to using outdated silk farming and cultivation technology, which is neither fruitful nor as per the expectation new market demand bounded with tough

Baluchar Sari: The Baluchar sari derives its name from the village of its origin, which is situated on the banks of the river Bhagirathi in the Murshidabad district of Bengal. Patronized by the aristocratic Jain traders and merchants who settled and flourished there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Baluchar style acquired a special place among the traditional saris of India. The uniqueness of this sari is as much in its design concept as in its weaving technique. Multicolored motifs emerge on the ground through the introduction of extra wefts of floss silk with the help of small shuttles. The weavers could create the desired pattern on the draw loom (*naqsh* loom) with the help of several draw boys, who would lift the thread with harness cords, to pass the extra weft.



Image No 55: Baluchari Saree Design

Later, these looms were replaced by the jacquard. What distinguishes the **Baluchar** from other brocades is the complexity of its design, executed in silk on silk without gold or metal thread, setting it apart even among the various rich brocades of India. The most distinguishing feature of the Baluchar sari is the intricate design of its large *pallu* (end of the sari). Most saris produced and worn in Bengal have a comparatively simple *pallu*, which is arranged vertically from the shoulder when draped. The Baluchar, on the other hand, has an elaborate *pallu*, more like the heavy *pallu* of the saris from Gujarat, where women preferred to exhibit the richly decorated *pallu* in the front, and where the Jain patrons of Murshidabad had originally lived. These saris were also exported to Gujarat. The plain or *butidar* (with a small floral motif) ground is bounded by a floral border along the entire length of both sides. The *pallu*, at the end, is decorated with an elaborate design, arranged in rectangles around a row of large *kalga*, or paisley motifs. The decorations on these rectangles consist of human figures, such as noblemen smoking a *huqqa*, a king or a nobleman riding an elephant, or a lady holding a flower; some even depict couples, wearing European dress, seated in a railway carriage, or European soldiers carrying cannons, revealing the influence of European trade contacts. In some cases, the row of figures is repeated on all four sides of the rectangle; the figures change direction so that they will be in the correct position when the sari is worn, involving a great deal of work on the part of the weaver, who had to retie the leashes of the pattern harness. One of the central paisleys is sometimes a different color from the rest, functioning as a *nazarbattu* to ward off the evil eye. Generally, these saris are purple, maroon, red, blue, or yellow, but occasionally they are made of two tones, using different colors of warp and weft.

Later, other important centres of Baluchar saris also developed at Kasimbazar, Ajimganj, Jiaganj, and Baharampur in West Bengal. The tradition of the Baluchar sari almost disappeared in the early twentieth century after the death of the famous master weaver Dubraj Das and his contemporaries. However, it was revived in the late twentieth century with incentives offered by the government. A much-simplified version of the Baluchar sari is now in vogue. Bishnupur, in Bankura District has now emerged as a primary Baluchari Saree making centre.



Image No 56: Traditional Baluchari Saree

5. PERFORMING ART

A. Baul/Fakiri Music:

The Bauls and Fakirs are an ancient group of wandering minstrels from Bengal, who believe in simplicity and sing about love, lives and devotion. They are influenced by the Hindu Bhakti movements and Sufism of the seventeenth century. Although Bauls comprise only a small fraction of the Bengali population, their influence on the culture of Bengal is considerable. In 2005, the Baul tradition of Bangladesh was included in the list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Wearing a simple attire and carrying an Ektara in one hand and sometimes a small



Image No 57: Bauls Of Jalangi

drum called Bnaya around their waist, the Bauls and Fakirs engross themselves in their music which represents a long heritage of preaching mysticism and celebrating celestial love. Did you know Bauls never even bothered to write down their songs? It is believed that Lalon

Fakir (1774 -1890), one of the greatest Baul composers, kept on

composing and singing for decades without ever stopping to make any corrections or even put it down on paper. It was only after his death that people thought of collecting and compiling his repertoire.

Undoubtedly, the Bauls and the fakirs influenced a large swath of Bengali culture; be it music or literature. Bauls left their imprint on Rabindranath Tagore's own compositions as they were powerfully influenced by Baul ideology.

Bauls form an essential part of the culture of Murshidabad. Their songs depict the story and lives of the locals. The origin of the word *Baul* is debated. Some modern scholars, like Shashibhusan Dasgupta have suggested that it may be derived either from Sanskrit word *vātula*, which means "enlightened, lashed by the wind to the point of losing one's sanity, god's madcap, detached from the world, and seeker of truth", or from *vyākula*, which means "restless, agitated" and both of these derivations are consistent with the modern sense of the word, which denotes the inspired people

with an ecstatic eagerness for a spiritual life, where a person can realise his union with the eternal beloved – the *Moner Manush* (the person of the heart).

B. Alkap :

Alkap is a type of theatrical derivative of the 'Jatra' form of rural folk theaters of Bengal popular in the districts of Murshidabad, Malda and Birbhum in West Bengal and Chapai Nawabganj, Randajshahi in Bangladesh. It has also spread to the adjoining areas of Jharkhand and Bihar such as Dumka and Purnia. Kaap means 'kavya' (verse) and Aal means 'part of the verse'. Another meaning of the word Aal is 'sharp'. The word Kaap is also one of the many meanings of 'sam' - a distorted form of gesture in the arena, or an image of a humorous comedian or social ugly subject. Alkap is an amalgamation of music, dance and theatrical presentation. An alkap group of ten to twelve performers is led by a *sarkar* (master) or *guru* (leader) and includes two or three young men called *chhokras* one or two *gayens* or singers, *dohar*, choristers, and musicians. Alkap is presented in five parts: *Asar Vandana*, *Chhora*, *Kaap*, *Baithaki Gaan* and *Khemta Pala*. The programme is a reflection of rural society and puts the focus on the prevailing socio-economic condition of the rural masses.



Image No 58: The Alkap Team

This entire form of musical theater, Alkap, has lost its populist relevance, as a form of entertainment, while electronic media and the film industry is now the main source of entertainment. The present Alkap artistes have become vulnerable and think the only way to save their form is to enter the urban sector and find a means to present this form as a museum piece for the globalized urban minds. Karunakanta Hazra, a very famous Alkap writer, performer and director, laments that he doesn't have any other options than wading through the urban sophisticated cultural tastes and the Victorian Puritanism when he is asked to design and perform in the Government sponsored

programmes, the initiatives were taken by the Government of West Bengal to preserve the intangible cultural heritage of Bengal.

Mystery, sarcasm and pain surround the male performers called "Chhokras" who play the woman characters in Alkap. Reality or truth regarding their sexual identity goes through a transformation, as they join Alkap at a very tender age. They go through the emotional and physical training process to become a true artist to aptly showcase the character of a woman. They start identifying themselves as good actresses. They take pride if they are not recognized as men in the role of women. The present time though is not playing fair with their transformed performance-sexual identity. A very senior artist of Karuna Kanta Hazra's group who has been performing the woman characters through out his career, secretly gulps out in pain that the women are coming to perform Alkap now in front of urban audiences, while artists like him are suffering a nonidentical psychological turmoil. The main distinctiveness of the Alkap performances like the sexual references and the men performing as women are the targets of disturbance. Either Alkap as a form to survive, has to discard the sexually charged up dialogues and body movements to suit the city aesthetics, or they have to divulge that erotica in cheap entertainment forms in local rural taverns and casinos to earn bread and butter.

Alkap had always been a reference to low culture for the urban elites. The original form of Alkap, with its distinction, is almost on the verge of extinction. The mass appeal of this form though is still luminescent and is tapped by many corporate and the Government for social awareness means. It is only learned people like Karuna Kanta Hazra and his team, who are still fighting with keeping this legacy alive. They still argue with their whole heart when anyone says, "Alkap is dead". Karuna Kanta Hazra participates in academic sessions of university departments where he argues that a folk form cannot die, it just transforms. The one-sided view of the urban intelligentsia looking at the rural has to be altered. It is only then probably Alkap can be preserved along with its process of going through transformations.

Subed Ali Shaikh: A very senior Alkap Artist who resides in Raghunathganj Block, Natunganj Village. According to him Alkap originated in Maldah and slowly migrated to Murshidabad. Jhaksu or Dhononjoy Mondal brought Alkap in Murshidabad. Initially he started in Jhaksu's Group but then started independently as "Kalika Operai" Group. He performed throughout Murshidabad district and even performed in presence of Kazi Nazrul Islam.

At present Alkap has been transforming into "Pancharas ". Previously only 7/8 people used to perform but now about 30/40 people are engaged. Many more sophisticated instruments are getting used now like banjo, synthesizer, drums etc and most importantly women are now taking part in this performance.

Mahatabuddin (Alkap Artist): A very senior Alkap artist of 82 years. Residence: Raghunathganj though his birthplace was Mirpur, Rajsahi, present Bangladesh. Because of the shifting of the river Ganga, his family got displaced and came to settle at Raghunathganj. He mostly performed as a woman in the Alkap Performance. Previously he used to play in other groups but now he has started his own group called **Mahatab Pancharas**.

C. Muslim Marriage Song:

Traditionally in a Bengali Muslim family, neighbours, relations and community women, locally called **biye gauni**, were invited by the head of the family to come and join a wedding and perform during the marriage rituals and ceremony. Their performance included songs, dance and kaap (comic performance). Women were and are the sole practitioners of this tradition. In part these were ritual songs rich in cultural motifs; but the themes of these songs were not restricted to just the ceremony of marriage; it revolved around the everyday reality of a common Bengali Muslim woman. These orally composed songs unfold a broader socio-cultural scenario, as reflected in the mind of a woman confined within the boundaries of family and community. Today, this traditional performance is in practice mostly in a few remote villages in West Bengal and Bangladesh. Occasionally, stage performances in outskirts and theatre productions in urban areas contribute to the overall social impact of this tradition. This module will focus on the living traces of traditional Muslim wedding songs in West Bengal.

Bulu Bibi is a very senior Muslim Marriage Song performer. She resides in Elahiganj of Murshidabad-Jiaganj Block of Murshidabad district. She has her group of 5 other women.

D. Bolan:

Bolan Gan a regional folk song sung on the occasion of Shiva's GAJAN (a festival associated with the worship of the god SHIVA). These songs are widely sung in Nadia, Birbhum, and Murshidabad districts in WEST BENGAL. Performers move in groups from house-to-house dancing, singing and acting different characters of tradition.

The bolan gan group comprises singers, dancers, and musicians and is led by an *ustad* (teacher). Teenaged boys play the roles of women and sing and dance. Thus, it is similar to ALKAP GAN, though alkap is performed on the stage while bolan gan is not.

Bolan gan was usually composed in the form of a narrative play based on mythological stories. However, the themes of these songs have expanded to include social and contemporary issues. Bolan gan may be both light and serious: songs based on serious issues are known as *khanda giti*, while light and humorous songs are known as *rangpanchali*.

The songs are prefaced by a *bandana* or hymn followed by the main song in PANCHALI. The main theme is then presented through dialogue, argument and counter argument. The final part of the song consists of rangpanchali which is aimed at amusing the audience through jokes, dances and songs.

The performers of bolan gan are non-professional. Usually, village youths form bolan gan groups when there is no work in the fields. They then get someone to compose a song for them. Musicians are hired if they are not available in the group. However, the whole arrangement is temporary. Bolan gan is gradually losing its popularity due to lack of patronage and changes in taste. [Wakil Ahmed]

Mrityunjoy Ghosh: A very senior Bolan artist Mrityunjoy Mondal resides in Bindarpur Village of Bharatpur Block, Murshidabad. He has his own troupe called Bindapur Yuva Kalyan Samity. According to him a Bolan performance can be divided into 5 parts – Bandana, Porichiti, Panchali, Main Bolan (from bol) & Hapu. Traditional Bolan performance requires 2/5 to 3 hrs. About 25 to 26 performers are required. The instruments like Sanai, Dugi Tabla, Dhol and now synthesizers are used for the performance. They have performed in Bongo Sangskiti Mela in 1971.

E. Raibenshe Dance:

Raibenshe, is one exceptionally unique type of folk-dance form originally from West Bengal that reflects its folk heritage. 'Rai' which means royal and 'bansh' meaning 'bamboo'; is a unique martial arts dance in which the performers use a long bamboo stick and enact acrobatics and movements like waving a sword, drawing an arrow and throwing a spear. This dance form is usually performed by men who belong to the depressed castes of the Hindu community like Domes, Bauris etc. Raibeshe is distinctive because of the expression of the military power and depiction of martial arts which serves as a memoir of the military expertise of the Bengalis. You

will be surprised to know that this dance has never been associated with any song or verse, instead men yell loudly while performing which is the very essence of Raibeshe. It is often accompanied by Dhols (drums) and Kanshis (cymbals) whose rhythmic beats help the dancers to perform exceptionally.

Since this dance form requires free movements of the body, the performers usually wear comfortable clothes. Dhotis with a strip of red cloth is worn which signifies spirit and valour with a brass anklet on their right ankle. Traditionally, this dance involves vigorous and manly movements of the body along with the acrobatics of a *raibansh* (a long bamboo stick), from which its name originated. During the performance, the performers enact the actions of drawing a bow, throwing a spear and waving a sword. The performers wear a brass anklet (*nupur*) on their right ankle. This dance is accompanied by dhols (drums) and *Kanshis* (cymbals). This dance was traditionally performed by Bagdi community, who worked as the bodyguards of the landlords in medieval Bengal.

Some historical references of “Raebenshe”:

“King Manshigha” (21 Dec.1550 to 6 July 1614) was King of Amber, Rajasthan, who was patronised by Mughals. He was crowned with Subadar of Bengal, Bihar and Jharkand in 17 March 1594. He defeated Nasir Khan on 9 April 1592 and rescued Orissa and Midnapur. The Mughal empire was expanded up to Orissa with his help and Manshingha was crowned with the Subadar of Greater Bengal. This history witnessed that ‘Raebenshe’ was in his crew. With this reference, Camels have might been bought by Mansigha’s soldier, thus we find gesture of Camel in Raebenshe dance, because it is hard to believe that they have travelled to Rajasthan from Bengal which is more than 1400 kilometre in late 1500 century in bare feet.

As a referential proof, Poet Bharatchandra expressed in his ‘Annadamongal’ that ‘Raebenshe’ troop helped Mansingha as soldier to conquer Kalinga (Presently Orissa) and a part of Andhrapradesh. ‘Raebenshe’ also helped king Lausen at Birbhum, Mayanagarh etc. In 1400 AD Bir Raja and others also used ‘Raibenshe’ troop for invasion of others land too. Description of courage and skill of ‘Raibenshe’ and glory also found in ancient literatures of Bengal at middle age. ‘Raebenshe’ clan regularly practiced different physical exercise as professional body-builders and flexibility were key point till today. This was their daily habit. They inherited it from ancestors. Record of Palasi Battle in 1757 AD proves that fire arms were started in India at that time. As a result, fighters with Bamboo arms became weakened and obsolete. ‘Raebenshe’ clan was accustomed to a long-term war and only to keep the practice running they joined

as clubmen to local feudal lords of Birbhum. Some of them joined local police station in the job of guard better known as 'thanadar'. This job of 'Thanadar' is a historical document. It has a social effect too. The pronunciation of 'Thana-dar' gradually became a dialect as 'Thandar' which becomes their surname in time. It proves that the ancestors of present 'Raebenshe' dancers were with the surname 'Thandar'. When this surname of 'Thandar' loses its importance and popularity the clan took their surname as 'Paramanik'.

They began to find other job for question of bread but did not give up practice and rehearsal of 'Raebenshe' and in spite of joining as Thanadar and clubman a part of their clan independently continued their practice and rehearsal of 'Raebenshe' fighting with 'Dhol' and 'Kansi' and this practice in time came to be known as 'Raebenshe' dance.

After 1757 'Raibenshe' became popular as dance and they found new way of their livelihood. In the history of dance in Bengal it was a new horizon.

The resurrection of 'Rai-bishe' to 'Raebenshe' the history of this dance form history must remain especially indebted to Gurusaday Dutta. In 1930 and next four years he moved from one place to another with the group and took different steps its development. First of all, he changed the name of pre-mentioned 'Chorkol' village to 'Charkol' by which he intended to abolish the defame of their 'thief' identity and he achieved so. Erstwhile they had to attend the locale police once in every month. He stopped it and brought them social and state recognition as folk artist. He included the Raebenshe in the Folk Culture of Bengal. Thus, they gain social admire in their life.



Image No 59: Performance Of Raibenshe By Male & Female In Different Cultural Programmes



Image No 60: Performance Of Raibenshe By Male In Different Cultural Programmes

6. LANGUAGE OF MURSHIDABAD

The language spoken by majority of the population of the district is Bengali. The spoken dialect (called Rarhi) is more or less the same as spoken in South Bengal, with some occasional local accents. At present linguistics have claimed that there is the existence of atleast 27 languages. Amongst them the major community languages are from – **Dravidian, Asio-Austic & Aryan Sub-Groups**. Another research suggests that at present there is a declining trend of other spoken languages like odiya, santhal or even urdu/hindi. There is more increase of Bengali in their place. In comparison to other districts, Murshidabad has less number of people speaking dual languages.

A. Causes of Different Languages of Murshidabad are:

According to A Statistical Account of Bengal, W. Hunter, Trubner & Co, London, 1876 and Bengal District Gazeteer of Murshidabad, ISS O Malley, 1914, Murshidabad has a “mixed population” with a mosaic of languages. This is because of -

- i. Murshidabad district has faced constant administrative boundary change. During Nawab’s time Murshidabad included portions of Maldah, Nadia, Birbhum (W. Bengal), Pabna, Rajshahi, Bagura (present Bangladesh) and Bhagalpur (present Bihar). British period changes in this territory many a times from 1793 to 1925.
- ii. Along with that there had been a recorded history of the changing of river course resulting in constant territorial shift.
- iii. The Bengal Subah was the wealthiest subah of the Mughal Empire. Bengal attracted traders from across Eurasia. Traders were lodged at caravanserais, including the Katra Masjid in Murshidabad; and the Bara Katra and Choto Katra in Dhaka. Dutch Bengali trading posts included the main Dutch port of Pipeli in Orissa; the Dutch settlement in Rajshahi; and the towns of Cossimbazar and Hugli. The Danes built trading posts in Bankipur and on islands of the Bay of Bengal. Balasore in Orissa was a prominent Austrian trading post. Bengali cities were full of brokers, workers, peons, naibs, wakils, and ordinary traders. Naturally there was mixture of many communities giving rise to a variety of languages.

B. Some of the Significant Languages of Murshidabad:

A small dialect of Bengali language, Maldaiya (also known as Jangipuri, Shershahbadiya) is prevalent among the population of Jangipur subdivision of the district.

- a. Shershahbadia or Maldaiya or Jaungiipurii Bengali:** Most parts of Murshidabad District, the Pakur and Rajmahal subdivisions of Santal Pargana, Maldah District, Barsoi, the Ajmangar area and some eastern areas of Katihar District, west Dinajpur's Dalkola, and Rajshahi District's Nawabganj subdivision. This dialect has a very beautiful pronunciation and a unique intonation or manner of speaking. Moreover, a dialect of Bihari influenced by Bengali, Khotta Bhasha (largely spoken in Malda, some parts of Murshidabad and Birbhum and also in some areas of Midnapore) is also spoken by a substantial amount of population in the northern regions (specially Farakka, Samserganj, Suti, Jangipur areas) of Murshidabad district.
- b. Contribution of Murshidabad in the development of Urdu:** The people of Bengal were presumably introduced to Urdu during the mid-seventeenth century. In the 18th century dhaka was the centre for the rice trade. Marwari merchants used to speak with Bengali rice merchants in Hindustani. Hindustani was also commonly used in government and non-government offices and in the courts. In 1713, the capital of Bengal was shifted from Dhaka to Murshidabad. In 1772 the capital was again shifted, this time to Calcutta, which remained the capital of the whole subcontinent until 1912. From 1772-1912, intellectuals and poets settled in Murshidabad and Calcutta. In Bengal, the study of Persian and Urdu literature was first initiated in Murshidabad. During the rules of Murshid Quli Khan, Shujauddin Khan and Alivardi Khan, places such as Murshidabad, Azimabad, Hoogly and Dhaka became remarkable centres of Muslim culture and Persian literature. The study of Urdu gradually evolved along with Persian, the court language. Mohammad Fakih Daradmam (d 1747) wrote Urdu poetry under the patronage of Alivardi Khan.

Nawab Sirajuddaula (1733-1757) was a patron of Urdu and Persian literature. Kudratullah Kudrat and Farhatullah Farhat were his court poets. Mir Mohammad Sharaf, an Urdu poet, was patronised by Mir Jafar (d 1765). A number of valuable old manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Urdu are still preserved in the library of Nawab Mahal. Inshallah Khan Insha (d 1818) of Murshidabad earned fame as an Urdu writer and poet in the late eighteenth century. He wrote an Urdu grammar in Persian entitled Dariyaa-Latafat (1808) which is still widely known in the Urdu-speaking community.

In a case filed by the EAST INDIA COMPANY on 8 June 1775 against Maharaja Nandakumar, his advocate made an appeal to the magistrate that both the plaintiff and the defendant should be allowed to make their statements in Hindustani (Urdu), their native language. Urdu was the medium of instructions at ALIYA MADRASA (founded 1780) in CALCUTTA. From the beginning, the Department of Hindustani or Urdu coexisted with the Department of Bengali and Persian at FORT WILLIAM COLLEGE (founded 1800). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, workers from Bihar and Orissa came to work in the tea gardens in Bengal, bringing with them their Hindustani mother tongue. Employees of the Eastern Bengal Railways also came from Orissa. They too spoke in Urdu. Thus, Urdu spread throughout Bengal. During the early years of British rule, Urdu was the medium of religious instructions at MADRASAHS. Books on HADITH, *Fiqh*, and TAFSIR were mainly written in Urdu. The religious curriculum at the Madrassahs was chiefly responsible for the widespread use of Urdu in both parts of Bengal.

7. FOOD AND DRINKS OF MURSHIDABAD

A. Mughal Cuisine:

Murshidabad was the capital of the Bengal Subah in the Mughal Empire for seventy years, with a jurisdiction covering modern day Bangladesh and the Indian states of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Murshidabadi cuisine bears testimony to this. Unlike the



Image No 61: A Mughaliya Platter

rich Mughal food, it is lighter and the flavours are more subtle. Although it involves the trademark slow preparation, grounding of the masalas on a sil-batta, etc., it somehow mingled with the local flavours. It emerged at a time when 'Mughaliya' cuisine or the food that the Mughals brought with them to India was merging with different Indian tastes and giving birth to newer cuisines. The popular Awadhi and Hyderabadi cuisine were born during this

period, as were the cuisines of Rampur, old Delhi, and of course, Murshidabad.

The influence is quite apparent in dishes such as the *Dalchini Gosht* (mutton flavoured only with cinnamon), *boti seekh kebab*, and of course, the trademark *Biryani*—which is actually a poorer version of its richer Mughal cousin. Much has been written on the subject of the Calcutta biryani. The latter is really Murshidabadi biryani. The nawabs of Bengal, after all, ruled from Murshidabad ever since the town's founder Murshid Quli Khan shifted his capital from Dacca to this new headquarters. Unlike the delicate *Pulaos* of the Delhi Kayasthas and the fragrant Dum Biryani of Lucknow (dum was not a cooking style followed in Murshidabad, though all cooking was on slow fire), the *Murshidabadi Biryani* is more rustic. Adapted for poorer kitchens, it uses mutton and potatoes in a half and half ratio, so much so that without the tuber, the *Biryani* is not true at all. The *Biryani* comes with equal portions of mutton and potatoes and is

more rustic in its use of masalas, unlike the subtle aroma of the Mughal version. The *Tikiyas* that come in a variety of kinds from prawns, to mutton to beetroot are a firmer version of the typical succulent Mughal Kebabs. Unlike its Mughal counterpart, the most sought after Qourma in Murshidabad are vegetarian the Aoo Qorma and Yam Qorma.

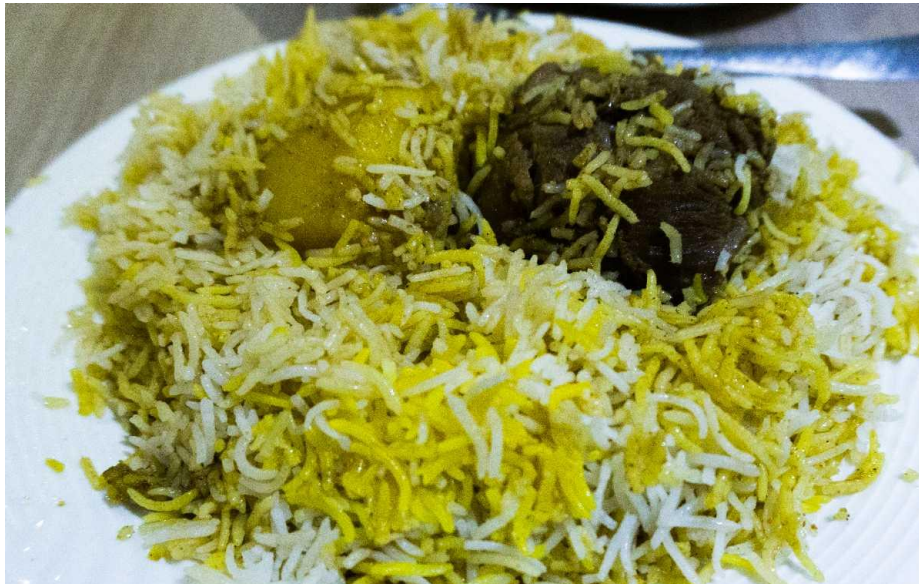


Image No 62: Murshidabadi Biryani

Mahi in farsi means fish and *Mahi Pulao* is a dish which is originally Persian. But Mahi or fish biryani is a delicacy which originated in the Murshidabad province of Bengal where fish is a staple food and its presence in food is considered auspicious and enjoyed by all. It inherits the richness from the Persian and Mughal cuisine and the simplicity of flavors from the Bengali cuisine with its emphasis on fish and rice.



Image No 63: Mahi Biryani

The Mughals did not introduce non vegetarian delicacies alone. They were also known for their breads. In Murshidabad, one type of bread stood out in its distinctiveness and that was *Chitua*. The Mughlai and Persian Noorjehan, after all, is said to have lived here with her first husband, the Governor of Bengal, in Akbar's times. The influence in the cuisine is distinct, meaning a slightly sweet palate is favoured here. This is equally true of other Mughal inspired breads, right from the *baqarkhani* of Delhi (supposedly invented by one Baqar Khan) to the sheermal of Lucknow. In Murshidabad, maida, the staple, however, gives way to Bengali favourite, Govindbhog rice.

Chitua is a unique bread in the repertoire almost like a thick, spongy appam (though no yeast is added to the batter that is nonetheless fermented overnight), it comes topped with fresh, molten jaggery. It's a delicious creation, whether one wipes it off with a non-vegetarian curry or just eats it for dessert.

Maincourse in a **Murshidabadi Mughaliya** platter at times begins with shukto, the traditional first, vegetarian course in a Bengali meal too. But here, the assorted veggies have the bitters missing. In their place, and in a tribute to the Persian/Mughlai roots of the fare, there is a generous mish-mash of rich dried nuts (cashews, raisins and pistachios) with the veggies. But it is really the Murshidabadi way of doing a qorma that is most astonishing.

What separates a *Mughlai Qorma* from any other generic curry, *salan*, or *Qaliya* is the fact that a qorma is far richer. As a special-occasion food, it not only has a base of cashew paste in its gravy, but also expensive dry spices (such as cardamom) and yoghurt, which is used as the souring agent. In Murshidabad, thanks to the Bengali influence and because of local availability, the Qorma undergoes a distinct change. Instead of yoghurt, the tanginess in the curry now comes from the somewhat more rustic tamarind. The end result is delicious. Red meat (not fish, as one would assume in Bengal) is the highlight of Murshidabadi food, and the fowl as well as other birds only came in much later into the repertoire.

Another unique dish from the Mughal times of Murshidabad is *Dalchini Gosht* (mutton curry flavoured with just cinnamon), and there is something called ***badi fulori***, which is a kind of a *kadhi* that is there all over India except that instead of yoghurt besan is added to tamarind water to make it.

The cuisine also boasts a fair amount of Bengali influence. There is the very traditional ***shukto*** (a milky mix of vegetables tempered with paanch phoron), albeit with fried

nuts and sans the bitters. There is also the **Bhapa Maach** (a steamed fish with curd, mustard and coconut). This amazing cuisine also includes **Tok Murgi** (a sour chicken curry), savoury rice pancakes, and of course, a host of posto or poppy dishes in keeping with its similarities with the Bengali cuisine. **Posto Halwa** is also a popular dish in this part of the country.



Image No 64: Tok Murgi



Image No 65: Shukto



Image No 66: Posto Halwa

According to Nawab Syed Reza Ali Meerza, the current Nawab of Murshidabad the dishes that reigned supreme in the kitchens of the Nawabs are: **Aam Pulao, Anaras Pulao, Mahi Pulao (fish pulao cooked with steamed fish) etc.** In Nawabi families, they prefer to call it a pulao, then a biryani. According to him, during winters, **Shabdeg** is cooked overnight. It's basically meat with **Shalgam. Rogni Roti** (mostly made with

semolina and finished like a crispy parantha) and **Roomali Roti** were highly used. Even during winters, **Neemus** was eaten with **Tunki**. Now, tunki is a variety of thin crispy bread which is used with neemus. Then over breakfast, there used to be **Makhudi** (some variation of Firni). Then there is Mitha parantha, where a seven layered parantha is dipped in a thick sugar syrup for 12 hours and finished with dry fruits and saffron. But most of these dishes are yet to be revived once more.



Image No 67: Fruit Custard And Sevaiyyan

B. Sheherwali Cuisine:

In the 18th century, Murshidabad was not only the capital of the Nawabs of Bengal, it was also an important trading hub. At this point in time, a few Jain families from Rajasthan settled mostly in **Azimganj** and **Jiaganj**, on either side of the Bhagirathi River. Since these men would go to the capital city (**Sheher**) of Murshidabad for business, they came to be known as '**Sheherwali**' or 'one who goes to the city'. However, with British coming to power and the capital being shifted to Kolkata, they too shifted to Kolkata but, the legacy that these families had built through palatial homes, temples and gardens, still survive.

As long as they had been in Murshidabad, the families had adapted to their second homeland with ease while retaining characteristics of the first. Apart from palatial homesteads and Jain temples, the Sheherwali-s also added a unique chapter to the culinary repertoire of Bengal. In a land of abundance of fish, poultry and meat they introduced a cuisine that was vegetarian to the core, even devoid of onion and garlic.



Image No 68: Sheherwali Cuisine

Now Murshidabad has the claim to a 300 years old cuisine, the ***Sheherwali Cuisine***, that is quite unique and interesting. It is said to be one of the best vegetarian cuisines in the country. Sheherwali cuisine is a strange amalgamation of Bengali, Nawabi and Rajasthani cuisine. It of course has all the ingredients of the Rajasthani kitchen with baked bread and a variety of pickles.



Image No 69: Sheherwali Thali

In order to make the food last longer and to compensate for the scarcity of water Rajasthani food had a liberal use of milk and ghee. This continued to remain the same in Sheherwali food. What they took from Bengal was the addition of a variety of vegetables like potol (wax gourd), jackfruit, kanch kola (plantain), bottle gourd, ridge gourd, cucumber etc. and fruits that were found here abundantly. They also included the typical Bengal spice paanch phoron (a collection of 5 spices including nigella, cumin, mustard, fennel and fenugreek) in their preparations. They

too, like the local Bengali people of Murshidabad, started using mustard oil liberally in their cuisine.

The Sheherwali cuisine as part of the Nawabi influence of the royal kitchens used some of the most rare and opulent ingredients like saffron, rose water and herbs. To top it all the Nawabi way of slow cooking adds a distinct taste to the food.

Snacks in Sheherwali Cuisine

Savory snacks are a norm for the Sheherwalis. They made *kachoris* stuffed with cucumbers (a local produce) and named it *khira ka kachori*. Sheherwalis had a particular liking for cucumbers which is why they prepared many dishes with it. Another example is *kheera ka pitod* where cucumbers were dunked in a batter made from gram flour and deep fried. Spiced gram flour balls are fried and dunked into a tangy tamarind syrup. This *khatte ka pakori* was provided refreshment during the summer months.



Image No 70: Khira Ka Kachori

Curries & Main Course

Kela Parwal ka Jholgiri is a delicious curry made using plantain and pointed gourds. Note the use of the word "jhol" which is a Bengali word for a thin gravy. *Kheera Shimla Mirch ka Tarkari* is a unique vegetarian curry made from cucumber and capsicum. Again, the word 'tarkari' is a Bengali word for 'curry'.

What we call as panch torkari or panch mishali torkari in Bengali (or simply mix veg), is milao ka tarkari in Sheherwali Cuisine. Locally grown vegetables are cooked using panch phoron and mustard oil. Tamarind is added to introduce tang in the dish.

Paniphal ka tarkari is a unique curry that most Bengalis never had in their lifetime. Murshidabad grows water chestnuts in some of the areas. They are sliced and cooked

to a simple curry using turmeric powder, chili powder and aamchoor powder. Innovation at its best!

Bengal gram or chana dal is adopted to cook curries by adding veggies like ridge gourds. This taroi boot ka dal uses hing like most other curries cooked in this cuisine.

Another interesting recipe from the kitchen of the sheherwalis is the ***Mattar ke Chhilke ke Tarkari***. The peel from fresh peas is stir fried with capsicum. Raw banana is a commonly cooked vegetable in Bengal. In Sheherwali Cuisine, these are simmered in a rich cashewnut gravy inspired from the Mughlai cuisine. The very humbly grown cowpea beans from Bengal (and called as barbati in Bengali) is cooked in a thin kadhi.



Image No 71: Curries , Dal And Tarkari

The Sheherwali Bread

Rajasthanis are known to cook a variety of breads that include a deepfried bread from urad (or arhar) dal, semolina and wheat flour called as kalai ka kachori, besni poori or puffed puris made from gram flour or besan, shallow fried bread stuffed with green moong dal called bedmi.

The most intriguing is however, the **Khichdi ka Roti**. This Sheherwali preparation is a rare example of wit and innovation. The first step is involves cooking a khichdi by pressure cooking rice, moong dal, salt and turmeric. Then wheat flour is added to it

along with salt, chili powder, coriander powder and ghee. The entire mixture is kneaded into a dough. The dough is then cut in shapes, made into a flat bread and roasted on a hot pan till half done. This is cooled and pinched, and directly roasted on fire till full done.

Rose Water and Its Usage

Use of rose goes back to ancient romans, who used to scent their wine with rose petals. However, a persian scientist, Aviscenna, invented the process for extracting rose water from rose petals. The distillation technique became popular in the Middle East in the early Middle Ages, and was brought to Europe by the crusaders. The fruits of the rosebush, known as “rose hips”, were harvested, too, and boiled down to make fragrant syrup. At medieval banquets roses were used to perfume the water for hand washing at table. Physicians praised roses for their supposed power to



Image No 72: Packed Rose Water Bottle

heal eye diseases. Thus, the rose water was used as the traditional medicine in Egypt, Greece, China, and India because of its remarkable healing properties. The most usage of Rose water is in religious ceremonies. It is used in mosques especially at mourning ceremonies, to calm and relax people.

With the Mughals the incorporation of rose water in different dishes and for washing hands became more widespread. They brought it along with them to Murshidabad too and when the Sheherwalis settled their, they included it in their cuisine before long. Gradually rose water started being produced locally and outsourced too. In the present times, there is only available at Ittar wala house at Nashipur. Asif and his family are producing and supplying rose water from the last two centuries. But sadly, they don't produce it here locally anymore and tend to get it done from Balia and other places in UP. A sharp fall in demand may be one of the reasons or the family members getting into other jobs. It is indeed sad that in such times when organically produced products are once again gaining prominence, they have to stop production.

Sheherwali Sweets

Sheherwalis had a knack of eating sweets before, during and after a meal. This sweet tooth is inherited from their Rajasthani roots and influenced by the Bengalis' love for sweets. One of the many breakfast customs include a glass of milk along with a sweet like malpua, chhana bara or raskadam. The Oswal Jains were in love with mangoes that grows in abundance during the summers. Kachhe aam ke kheer was a unique recipe of the Sheherwalis. They used unripe mangoes to prepare kheer! The mango was grated, boiled to remove the sourness and then cooked in milk, saffron, sugar, rose water.



Image No 73: Kacche Aam Ke Kheer

The bode ke boondiya which is a dish of deepfried sweet balls made from black eyed bean flour. This recipe uses kewra water which is a Mughal import. Sweet balls were made from wheat flour called as ghaal ka laddoo which used rose water. Pumpkin is another vegetable that features in regular Bengali cuisine. The Sheherwalis took this pumpkin, and inspired from the murabba culture of the Mughals, developed the kumra ka murabba.



Image No 74: Ghaal Ka Laddoo

Some exotic Sheherwali dishes include kheera shimla mirch tarkari (a preparation of cucumber and capsicum vegetable), maheen boondi (fine sweetened gram flour pearls flavoured with Murshidabad rose water and Pampore saffron), khatte ki pakauri (gram flour fritters in tamarind water), parwal dabdaba (pointed gourd tossed with homemade dry spices), barbati dahi (long beans cooked in sour yoghurt gravy) and bhutta khichdi (fresh corn kernels cooked with gobind bhog rice using dollops of ghee).

C. Sweets Of Murshidabad

Bengal is famous for sweets made from chana (cottage cheese). Sandesh, Chhanar Payesh and Rosogolla are a few of the very popular recipes found in every nook and corner of West Bengal. Bengalis learned to make chhana (Similar to Cheese; loose texture) from the Portuguese. The Bengali confectioners also learned the technique of making chhana and cheese from them.

SukumarSen wrote in his book 'KalikatarKahini' regarding the topic that, latex, butter, ghee, curd is the normal state of raw milk. These are not the distortion of milk. But chana is the artificial distortion of boiled milk. Bengalis have lacerated milk adding other ingredients to separate solid and aquatic parts of the milk. It was first known as "Chhena" in Bengali as milk was lacerated such way, and now it is known as "Chhana" in standard Bengali language. Chhana is not mentioned in Sanskrit or any other language. As it was unknown to all, there was no custom of offering Chhana to worship of the Gods.



Image No 75: Chhanabora

Maharaja of Cossimbazaar, Murshidabad. Being a maharaja, variety used to be his keyword and he ordered his sweet-maker to prepare something which is neither like Rasogolla, nor like Pantua. And after a lot of brainstorming, Patla Ustad came up with this item it's a crossbreed between both only much harder in nature and with a high shelf life and that's chhanabora for Bengal. It's deep fried and is filled with the flavour of cardamom.

Another sweet of Murshidabad that people do not know much about is the traditional



Image No 76: Roshokodom

in a layer of khoya/mava (solidified dried milk) which is further covered on the outer surface by poppy seeds.

The sweet shops of Murshidabad have their regular supply of Bengali sweets as well. But it also has something unique to offer when it comes to sweet. Chhanabora that is available in all parts of Bengal, right at this moment, had its origin in Murshidabad. It's said that the credit of the sweet goes to one

Patla Ustad and his employer Manindra Chandra Nandy, the

Khirmon sweet from Jiagunge district. It's a kind of rasogolla but hard in nature with the smell of 'elaichi' in it. Murshidabad is also know for the sweet **Roshokodom**. It is a sweet popular in Bangladesh and East India. It is one of the heritage sweets of Malda district which eventually travelled to

Murshidabad too. It consists of a small ball of Rosogolla covered

In the winters many varieties of sweets are made with Khejurer gur as the sweetener. Khejurer Gur or date palm jaggery is a highly prized winter produce of Bengal. It occupies a place of pride in Bengal's already accomplished sweet-making history. Back in 4th Century BC, Panini wrote, 'Gurasha auang desho goura', which means Gour is the place of gur. The old Pundra Bardhan in undivided Bengal, now Bogra in Bangladesh, became known as Gour for its high-quality gur produced from sugarcane. The fine quality of the date palm jaggery sold in haat (weekly market) is orally documented in the Piruli song of Farid Pir and also in the folk poems of Dakshin Kalikapur village. The reason why a more formal, 'Sanskritised' documentation of the origin of khejurer gur is unavailable is that the Siulis – the artisans — belonged to the lower castes.

The Siulis are spread across four-five major gur producing districts of Bengal and Murshidabad is one of them. Siulis belong to the nomad families who specialise in tapping the sap of the date palm tree and making khejurer gur. Siuli men scale the thorny trees to collect the sap and the people of this tribe are almost never acknowledged.



Image No 77: Nolen Gur Extraction

Obtaining the sap requires skill. The tapping is generally done at night, with an intervening period of rest for the tree. The Siulis climb the tree at dusk, cut the end of the inflorescence (flower cluster), and hang an earthen container from it, leaving it overnight to catch the dripping sap. The tree cannot be tapped if the weather is

foggy, drizzly or warm, as the sap will become turbid and sour. It's this that makes the gur so sensitive to climatic conditions. The fresh sap of the wild date palm is sweet, fragrant and as clear as drinking water. Rich in vitamins and iron and with 12-15% sugar, it is a delicious thirst quencher. However, it ferments quickly along with the rising sun to turn into the alcoholic tari, so the Siulis start work before the crack of dawn. The pots are brought down from the trees and the collected sap is filtered and poured into open troughs. This juice is then put to boil till the Brix value reaches 118-120%, a calculation that experienced Siulis make just by sight and touch alone, without any modern instruments.



Image No 78: Gurur Payesh

Sweets and Bengalis are inseparable. They are an integral part of the food culture of the Bengalis. Many changes may happen in the evolution of time but we hope the Bengalis' love for sweets will not change.



Image No 79: Gur Vendor

Jhuripata Doi: There is another speciality of Murshidabad district sweet is the Jhuripata Doi. We have seen doi or curd being settled in earthen pots or kulhars. But here they take a jhuri or bamboo made pot and the whole inside is smeared with kheer or dried milk. The holes are covered and leakage was prevented. And then, the curd was set inside it. The curd is generally less sweet in nature, but when one eats it along with the layer of kheer, it is delicious. The doi is super thick and yellow-ish in color. And this is something, I'll strongly recommend to anyone. Again, I'd say, looks can be deceptive, but ask anyone and they'll talk about this place for sweets.



Image No 80: Jhuripata Doi , Ananda Sweets



Image No 81: Ananda Sweets Is A Famous Sweet Shop In Gorabazar , Baharampur



Image No 82: Chaanabora Of Baharampur

8. FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN MURSHIDABAD

Our study area includes the blocks of Berhampur, Suti, Kandi, Sagardighi, Farakka, Jalangi Shamsheguange, Beldanga, Domkal, Lalgola, Raghunathguange, Nabagram, Bharatpur, Murshidabad Jianguange, Raninagar which all have their individual lists of local festivals and fairs.

A. Charak & Gajaan:

Among the many folk festivals of Bengal, Gajan festival, Charak Puja and Neel Puja has a special place even in today's modern age. It is celebrated predominantly in rural Bengal, particularly in Nadia, North 24 parganas, South 24 parganas, Haora, Hugli, Bardhaman and also Murshidabad. The **Charak & Gajan Festival** is one such folk festival linked to the Agricultural community where the devotees pray to Lord Shiva for good harvest and rains. Thus, it is a pre-harvest festival. **Charak Puja, Neel Puja** and **Gajan** are the three parts to the festival. It is said that it is related to Tantric Buddhism and it started as a celebration by the Buddhist Community which was known as "**Dharmer Gajan**" and later when this was adopted by the Hindus it was known as "**Shiber Gajan**".



Image No 83: Charak Puja Ritual Getting Performed In Kandi (Source -Murshidabad.Net)

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

Gajan Celebration

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

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



Image No 84: Performance During Gajan Festival (Source - Murshidabad.Net)



Image No 85: Performance During Gajan Festival (Source - Murshidabad.net)



Image No 86: Hindu Devotees Swing In Rope During An Acrobatic Performance At The Charak Festival



Image No 87: Street Performance In Murshidabad During The Charak & Gajan Festival

As mentioned earlier, the basic reason for the festival is to worship the deities of the respective devotees for the hope of a better rainy season and good harvest. Also,

people believe that the festival will provide them prosperity eliminating from any sorrow and sufferings which they suffered in the past year. Primarily arranged on the premises of different Shiva Temples, the festival is arranged mainly by mendicants (Persons begging or relying on charitable donations) who are referred as “Gajan



Image No 88: “Song Of Gajan”

Sanyasis”. The festival takes place in open grounds and not in anyone’s residence. In Bengal generally the festival takes place dominant by Scheduled caste Bengali people.

During Charak people dress up as Cosmetic Shiva, Parvati, Krishna and other deities. Usually, Rajbangshi

caste of persons is allowed to do such acts. They are locally known as “Song of Gajan” (Song in Bengali means jester). The word gajan in Bengali comes from the word garjan or roar generated by sannyasis during the festivities. Alternative theory says it is from the from two-word Ga (village) and Jan (People), indicating festival of the people.

B. Bera Utsav:

August-September; last Thursday of the Hindu month of Bhadrapada

Bera is a colourful and unique festival of Murshidabad. Taking place on the last Thursday of the month of Bhadra, it is an amalgam of history, folklore, fireworks and a very colourful spectacle. This year, however it was cancelled due the covid pandemic. The festival of Bera was first started by Nawab Murshidkuli Khan. Murshidkuli ‘s childhood was spent in Persia, where Bera was celebrated. So, when he shifted his capital from Dacca to Murshidabad, he started the Bera festival. Offerings are made to Kwaja Khijir, whereby small barges made with banana plants, and laden with gifts were floated in the river Ganges. The were decorated with paper lights and coloured lanterns. It also contained one golden lamp which was also cast to the

river. Nowadays the golden lamp is there, but it is returned to the vault. Khwaja Khijir is the saint who guided Moses. He is believed to be the righteous man possessing great wisdom. Originally the barges were cast from Jaffraganj, but now it starts from close to the Nizamat Imambara.



Image No 89: Celebration Of Bera Utsav During The Time Of Nawabs

Firework display on a bright moonlit night outside the Agna Mahal, part of the Nawab's palace beside the river at Murshidabad; a painting c.1790-1800* (BL); compare *"Fireworks at Moorshedabad--from a Native Drawing"*, Illustrated London News, 1858

It is said that this practice was to ensure safety of the taxes paid to the Nawabs at Delhi, which were sent by river. During this festival, Guests and Nobility were invited and were taken on a cruise in specially made ornamental boats. They were Also piled with gifts. These days, government officials and political bigwigs have replaced the nobilities of yester years. The festival is attended by around 40000 people who watch the lighted up barges and the fireworks display which takes place on the opposite bank. The festival is observed with magnificence celebration and splendor. The major attraction of the Bera Utsav is splendid fire works on the bank of river Bhagirathi near the palace. The multi-hued fire works of different types and sizes add to the jauntiness of the festival. The festival is the major tourist attraction for distant places in the country. The lighted barges against the night sky and river is a sight to behold. The barges are taken round with the help of motorised boats for about an hour before they are cast aside. If one is lucky, he can follow them in the river on a boat.



Image No 90: Bera Utsav, 2019, Source : <https://memoriesandmusings.in/2020/09/13/bera/>



Image No 91: Bera Utsav of Murshidabad, Source: <https://www.hellotravel.com/events/bera>



Image No 92: Bera Utsav, In The Banks Of Bhagirathi, Source: Flickr, Supratim Roy

C. Durga Puja:

Like every part of Bengal, Durga Puja is celebrated throughout the district of Murshidabad. The royal families of Cossimbazar still celebrates Durga Puja with much grandeur.

Roy Family of Cossimbazar Palace: Way back in time, when Murshidabad was the capital of the Nawabs of Bengal, Cossimbazar was a flourishing port on the Ganga, tucked inside a bend in the river. So, it was here around 1700 that Ajodhya Ram Roy of Pirojpur village decided to settle down with his family. Ajodhya Ram Roy and his son Dinobandhu Roy traded in silk and built up a sizable business in silk export. But after the English East India Company defeated the Nawab of Murshidabad and subsequently decided to straighten out the course of Ganga to facilitate direct passage of boats between Murshidabad and Behrampore (now Baharampur), Cossimbazar lost its strategic importance and dwindled away. The Roy family too began to look at other options. Dinobandhu Roy's son Jagabandhu Roy, became a 'dewan' of the East India Company but subsequently quit his service and purchased a 'zamindari' in Sarail (now in Bangladesh). Later generations, by dint of their educational prowess and business acumen, continued to prosper.



Image No 93: Durga Puja At Cossimbazar Palace, A Royal Affair. Source : Make my trip.com



Image No 94: Staute Of Durga Mata

In recognition of the family's benevolence towards the local people, the British government conferred the title of 'Rai Bahadur' to Annada Prosad Roy. They also wanted to confer upon him the title of 'Raja' but unfortunately Annada Prosad died on the eve of the ceremony. Later the title was conferred upon his son Ashutosh Nath Roy. Meanwhile, the palace was also rebuilt in parts or expanded through new buildings, temples, offices, gardens, tennis courts, etc. over time.

The Roy family used to hold the annual Durga Puja at their Pirojpur home, which they continued at Cossimbazar.

Even today the puja is observed at the renovated 'chandimandap' — a hall with an open courtyard in marble in the middle, a restored 'char chala' roof, the 'garbhagriha' or the sanctum sanctorum where the deities are housed; on the opposite lay the 'majlish ghar' (where musical programmes were held) with arched and frescoed two-storied viewing galleries on both sides. As Pallab Roy, scion of Cossimbazar Rajbari said: "Like our house, the Durga Puja

celebrated in Cossimbazar is also more than 250 years old. It started around 1735-1740." No wonder, such an age-old pujo will have rare customs and traditions that are worth a watch.

Their puja starts off on the day of Rath Yatra when a 'Sri Path' puja takes place. This is also an auspicious day when the first layer of clay is applied on the structure of the idol that would be ready by Mahalaya. The idol is still the Ek chaalar murti and the Rajbari has its own artisan family who have been giving life to the idol down generations. Undoubtedly, everything that Cossimbazar family does has a touch of royalty to it. Even the skin tone of Durga is exceptional. It has the hues of 'Atashi Pushpo' or the colour of Atasi flower and the demon or asura is green, while the Ganesh is red. The lion is unique as it is a Ghotok Singho (mixture of horse that signifies speed and lion that stands for power). "The actual puja rituals start off from Protipod, when clay pot (ghot) is filled with water to perform the Navaratri Pujo. On Panchami is the Adhibash, followed by Bodhon on Shashthi," added Roy. The Rajbari also holds a traditional Kumari Puja on Saptami, Ashtami and Nabami. Puja timings are as per their own handwritten punthi on palm leaves, which are near 300-years-old. Dashami is not just about immersing the idol, but also a special puja called Aparajito Pujo which is to mark the beginning of Kali Pujo. Aparajito Pujo is a special puja that is performed. It is a very ancient tradition that the Rajas used to perform seeking power from God before going out for conquest- Path Pujo of KALI is performed on the Kathamo of the Dwipannita Kali. Balyo Bhog consists of luchi, mishti fish, khichuri, while Madhyanno bhog is very elaborate with khichuri and different types of curry with variety of fish, bhaja, jhal jhol, chutney, payesh, mishti etc. on saptami and ashtami. On Nabami Pulao is offered in place of khichuri.



Image No 95: The Rituals Of Durga Puja As Performed At Cossimbazar Palace, Source : Get Bengal

Nimtita Rajbari: A dilapidated structure stands as testimony of a rich and glorious past of Bengal with the ruins of a grand terrace, a staircase full of weeds, rickety bricks jutting out on the banks of the mighty Ganges. This is the mansion where Chhabi Biswas in Satyajit Ray's *Jalshaghar* lost all – his wealth, his family, but probably not his pride. Despite negligence and decay, Nimtita Raajbari still stands as a mute spectator of its lost glory. Even today, the breathtaking architectural grandeur of the structure instills awe as time stands still in front of this majestic palace.

Two brothers, Goursundar Chowdhury and Dwarakanath Chowdhury, jointly built this vast and marvellous mansion. The palace became the epicentre from where the brothers conducted their flourishing business. The palace was built to display their wealth and grandeur. During Holi, the family hosted Jatra-pala (proscenium theatre) for a fortnight every year. News of the splendor and riches depicted during the annual Durga Puja would be the talk of the town and even reached far and wide till Murshidabad. The brothers were patrons of theatre. During Dwarakanath's son, Gnyanendranath's wedding, the entire team of Calcutta's Star Theatre was invited to perform.



Image No 96: Durga Puja At Nimtita Rajbari, Subrata Ghose, PKG

Renowned actor / director, Kshirod Prasad Vidya Vinod, visited Nimtita Palace and in his honour the zamindars built Nimtita Rangamanch (theatre hall) on the lines of public theatre halls of Calcutta. Many famous artistes, including Natyacharya Shishir Kumar Bhaduri, performed on this stage. But all these are memories of a glorious past. The *rangamancha* was destroyed during a massive flood in 1944. This was also the beginning of the gradual decay of the edifice. As decades went by, the erosion continued and now, the palace is in danger. Satyajit Ray shot his film, *Jalshaghar* (1957) in the backdrop of the Nimtita Rajbari. He went back to shoot two more films, *Debi* (1959) and *Samapti* (1960) here. The riches and grandeur of the palace is alive in the frames of these three movies. One cannot compare those exquisite vignettes with what one witnesses today. Instead, it is convenient to blame the colossal destruction to ravages of time. The descendants of the Chowdhury family are all based in Calcutta and visit Nimtita during Durga Puja. The annual Durga Puja is an integral part of family tradition. The condition of the Thakur-Dalan (the courtyard earmarked for Durga Puja) is comparatively better than the other portions and seems to bridge the gap between the past and the present. But for how long one will hold on to this heritage is not known. The fate of this palace itself is uncertain. The brick-and-mortar structure is crumbling gradually. After all, who can defy the power and ravages of time? The Ganga flows close to the palace and during high tide, its turbulent waves kiss the courtyard of the Rajbari. The scenic beauty of the surrounding area is as stunning as the Rajbari itself. Probably it can be turned into a heritage tourist spot.



Image No 97: The Dilapidated Mansion Of Nimita Rajbari, Subrata Ghose, PKG

Dhulian Rajbari: Dhuliyān is a municipality town in the Jangipur subdivision of Murshidabad district in the state of West Bengal, India. It is located between the Ganges and the Hooghly canal. Dhuliyān stands on the bank of the Ganges, which has been changing its course regularly. A large part of the town has been ravaged and new areas have come up. Dhuliyān Rajbari has escaped the fury of the river and boasts of a 300-year-old Durga Puja. The most important aspect of Dhulian Rajbari Durga idol is the presence of Maa Ganga on top of the Durga idol. The colour of the idol is red (colour of the parijat flower). This Rajbari is also known as Kanchantala Rajbari. Raghavendra Nath Roy of Baluchi Village of Bangladesh founded the Dhulian Rajbari. It is said that the Rajbari has withstood the fury of River Ganga and survived for 300 years. The rituals goes for 13 days and the worshipping of Maa Ganga takes place before the commencing of Durga Puja.



Image No 98: Dhulian Rajbari Durga Puja

D. Ganga Puja:

Every year, on the banks of River Ganga, in Azimganj under Azimganj Municipality, a fair is organized on the occasion of *Ganga Puja*. This 100-year-old *Mela* happens in the month of *Jyeshtha* (May-June). Local traders put up their stalls in this fair but people (belonging to all religions) from the districts of Birbhum and Bankura also visit this fair in large numbers.

E. Raj Rajeswari Puja, Banshabati:

Another very important and significant puja of Murshidabad is RajRajeswari puja. Almost all the blocks specially Suti, Jalangi, Farakka, Raghunathganj, Kandi celebrates Raj Rajeswari puja in winter month (Magh Maas) of January/February. Bangshabati Village of Suti Block is famous for it's Raj Rajeswari Puja. It is said that the puja is 250 years old. 7 days long fare takes place centering the puja. There are many lakes in the region like Shibsagar, Rassagar, Padmasagar, Krishnasagar, Ramsagar, Gangasagar and Jagatsagar which all are very old.



Image No 99: Statue at Raj Rajeswari Puja, Bangshabati, Murshidabad



Image No 100: Rituals During Raj Rajeswari Puja, Bangshabati, Murshidabad

F. Muharram, Nazamat Imambara:

A *hosayniya* or *hussainiya*, also known as an *ashurkhana*, *imambargah*, or *imambara*, is a congregation hall for Twelver Shia Muslim commemoration

ceremonies, especially those associated with the Mourning of Muharram. Hussainiya is a multitude hall for the mourning of Muharram and other commemoration rituals of Shia that its name gets from Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad. The **Nizamat Imambara** is a Shia Muslim congregation hall (*imambara*) in Murshidabad, India. It was built in 1740 AD by Siraj ud-Daullah and rebuilt in 1847 by Nawab Mansur Ali Khan after it was destroyed by the fires of 1842 and 1846. It is frequently mentioned as the largest *imambara* in the world. During Muharram, in the remembrance of Karbala huge congregation of Shia Muslims takes place. For 10 days the Imambara remain open for the public to visit the place. The Imambara contains lots of valuables and artefacts, which are the property of the Murshidabad Estate, which is managed by the Judicial Department of the Government of West Bengal. They are kept in safe custody, and displayed only during the period of Muharram.

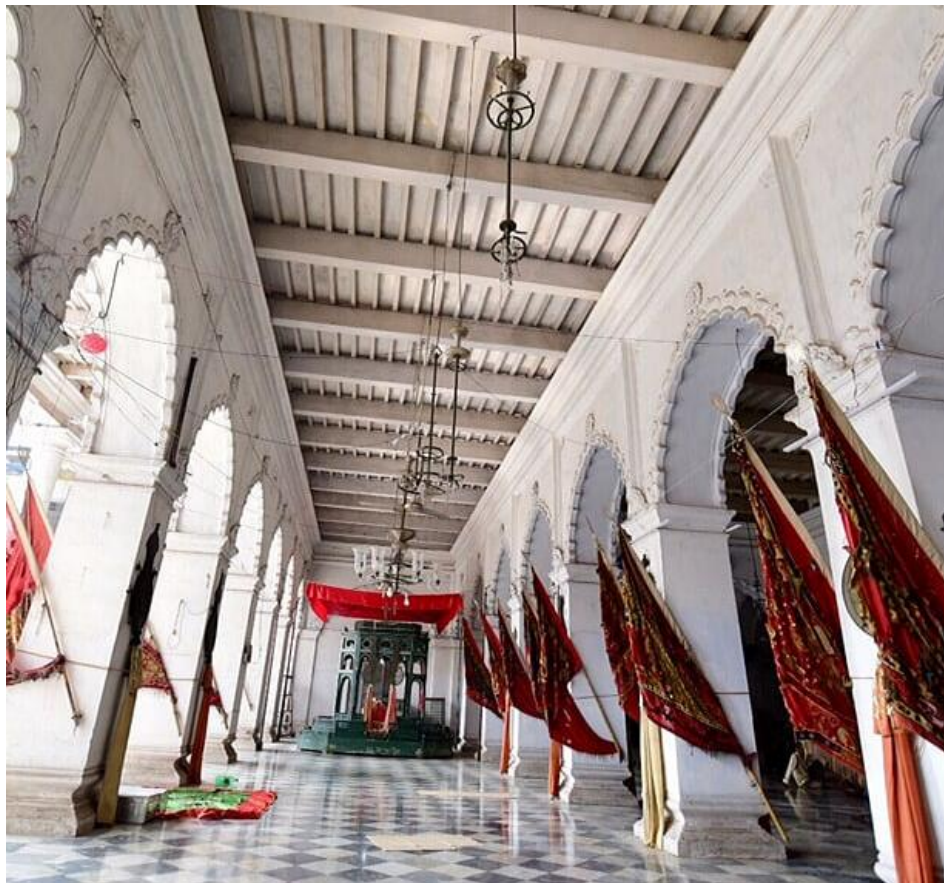


Image No 101: Inside The Nizamat Imambara

The main **festivals in Murshidabad** include **Eid-ul-Fitr** and **Eid-ul-Adha** (Bakri-eid, locally). The eateries and the bus stands wear a deserted look during **Ramadan**, the month-long festival of Muslims.

Dilalpur Village under Farakka CD Block has a one-day fair for the occasion of *Muharram*. They celebrate the other Muslim festivals like *Eid-al-Fitr* and *Eid-ul -Zuha*. In all these Melas villagers from the neighbouring villages also visit.

G. Holi:

Holi of Murshidabad Shaharwali society was an important and renowned event. Shaharwali society used to play Holi with great enthusiasm in both Azimganj and Jiaganj.

Earlier **Holi**, the festival of colour was enjoyed for a week in Murshidabad. It had been starting on the day of *Falgun Shukla Ashtami* (Eighth day of bright half in Indian lunar calendar) ending on *Chaitra Krishna Pratipada* (*Ekam*, first day of dark half in Indian lunar calendar). Holi was a part of "*Rais*" of *Shaharwali* society. They used Safron, rose water, *Tesu* (Herbal color) and other beautiful colors and *Abir* (Gulal) to play **Holi**. Pichkari (Piston like instrument to play Holi with liquid color). *Pua* and *Pakodi* were the special dishes along with *Thandai* (a soft drink). large number of people used to have some "*Bhang*" to enjoy. "*Holi ki sang*" and "*Holi ka Bhandu*" were popular humour creating events of Murshidabad *Sheherwali* community. People had been enjoying "*Holi ki barat*" with humour and enjoyment. "*Holi ki sail*" or feast was also very popular those days. Nirmal Kumar Singh Nowlakha, a famous Zamindar of Azimganj was very fond of Holi. Many stories about him are famous. Holi is still celebrated with a lot of pomp in Murshidabad.

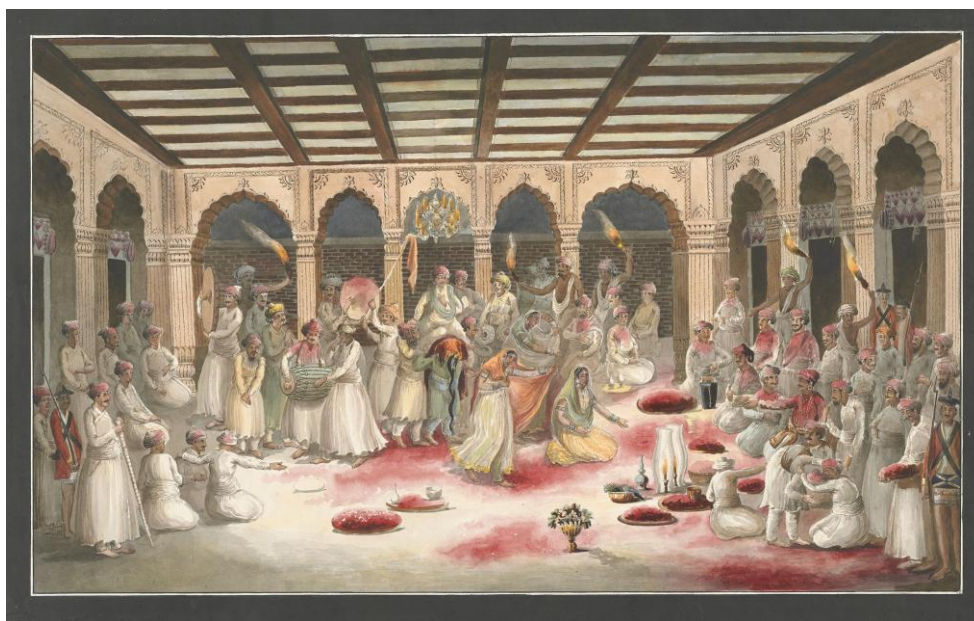


Image No 102: Holi Festival In The Palace At Murshidabad Before The Nawab, With Coloured Powder Flung Around. Bengal Sepoys Standing About., Murshidabad, 1795–1810. Watercolour On Paper

H. Hazarduari Mela:

It is conducted by West Bengal State Tourism Department along with the Murshidabad District administration. **Hazarduari Mela** is held on an open-air stage keeping the Hazarduari palace in the backdrop. Between the palace and the Imambara on southern flank of the palace ground, the stalls are set up with various handicrafts of Murshidabad district. The Mela also includes songs by local artists of Bauls and Fakirs of **Murshidi** and **Marfati** genre.

Festival, being an important factor of cultural tourism, has a crucial role to play for the growth of cultural tourism in host community. Festivals are taken into account to contribute significantly in promotion of cultural tourism, also festivals are used as a tool to boosting regional economy. Large numbers of tourists travel to attend many festivals in order to have some experience about the culture of the host community. **The Heritage Festival** of Murshidabad is on such festival that can contribute immensely towards the development of cultural tourism by showcasing the art and culture with the main focus of heritage walk, the folk lore dances and the *Sheherwal* cuisine. So, there can be a scope in promotion of cultural tourism in Murshidabad.

I. Others:

Every district of Murshidabad has its own share of fairs which are usually associated with some kind of religious festival. Fairs or *Melas* during religious festivals are generally very common in the villages of Murshidabad. In Ballalpur and Nayansukh under Farakka Development Block there are fairs both during *Durga Puja* and *Kali Puja*. Infact Ballalpur has a 60-year-old *Durga Puja* and a 100-years old *Kali Puja*. On both the occasions fairs are organized. Nayansukh has a 150- years old *Durga Puja*. Other than *Durga Puja Mela*, the village also has 100-year-old *Ratha Yatra Mela* and *Kali Puja Mela* for a day. Then again Dilalpur Village under Farakka CD Block has a one-day fair for the occasion of *Muharram*. They celebrate the other Muslim festivals like *Eid-al-Fitr* and *Eid-ul -Zuha*. In all these *Melas* villagers from the neighbouring villages also visit. In Jiyaganj Bazar under Jiyaganj CD Block every year **Jhulan** Yatra festival is organized. This *Shravan* month festival is 450 years. Every year, on the banks of River Ganga, in Azimganj under Azimganj Municipality, a fair is organized on the occasion of *Ganga Puja*. This 100-year-old *Mela* happens in the month of *Jyeshtha* (May-June). Local traders put up their stalls in this fair but people (belonging to all religions) from the districts of Birbhum and Bankura also visit this fair in large numbers.

Beside the above-mentioned major festivals here is an attempt to list down blockwise major fairs and festivals.

Block	Festivals and Fares				
	Durga Puja Mela/ Kali Puja Mela	Ratha Yatra Mela	Muharram Mela	Mansa Puja Mela	Miscellaneous
Farakka	Khejuria Village: Durga Puja Mela	Nayansukh Village	Dilwarpur	-	-
Samserganj	DogachhiNaparavillage: Kali Puja Mela	-	-	Dhusaripara	Jyotkundeshwari Mela on Jyotkundeshwari Puja in Jyotkundu Village under HasimpurMouja
Suti	Hilora Village: Kali Puja Mela	-	-	-	<p>Mela on Rajrajeshwari Puja in Hilora Village and Joran Bibi Utsav (Both for Hindus and Muslims)</p> <p>Harua Village: Charak Mela</p> <p>Aurangabad Village under Ichli Para Mouza: AnantaBrahma Pujar Mela</p> <p>Brahmakantapur Village: Jagadhatri Puja Mela and Raksha Kali Puja Mela</p> <p>Ahiron Village: Khetur Panchami Utsav, Lakshmi Puja Mela, Basanti Puja Utsav</p> <p>Alampur Village Mahamaya Puja Mela</p> <p>Ramakantapur Village: Jagadhatri Puja Utsav</p> <p>Alampur Gram: Mahamaya Devi Puja</p> <p>Hilora: Shyamsundar Thakurer Utsav</p> <p>Bangasbati Gram:</p>

					Rajrajeshwari Devi Puja Utsav
Raghunathgunj	1.Sekandarpur Village: Krishna-Kali Puja Mela 2. Giria Village: Kali Puja Mela 3. Bhairabtola under GiriaMauja: Kali Puja Mela	-	-	-	Mithipur Village: Saraswati Puja Mela and Muharram Utsav Gosaipur: Muharram Mela Barala: Charak Mela, Jagadhatri Mela Mirzapur: Karthik Puja Mela, Sitala Puja Mela
Sagardighi	Naopara: Kali Puja Mela	Naopara	-	-	Banyeswar: Shivrtari Mela Athua: Gajan Mela Pauli: Charak Mela Manigram: Basanti Pujo Mela Chandanbati: Dol Utsav, Badhan Porob, Eid Utsav, Muharram Utsav, Sabebarat Utsav Samasabad: Shyamsundar Ji r Mela Bishnupur Village: Shyamsundar Ji Mela
Nabagram	-	-	-	-	Panchgram: Goshthashtomir Mela, Shyamsundar Ji Mela Amarkundo: Gangaditya Puja Mela Kiriteswari: Kiriteswari Puja Mela
Jalangi	-	-	-	-	Kumarpur: Shiv Puja Mela Baromashia: Durga Puja Mela, Charak Mela, Sadikhanr Diar: RakshakaliPujo Mela

Berhampore	-	-	-	-	<p>Andarmanik: Sitala Puja Mela</p> <p>Jagannathpur: Mada PinerUtsab Mela, Shivratri Mela</p> <p>Aaroya Village under Araji Madhupur Block: Bonokali Puja Mela, Shiber Gajan Utsav</p> <p>Katalia: Dharmaraj Puja Mela, Gajan & Charak Utsav</p> <p>NaodaPanur Village: Mansa Puja Mela, Charak Mela</p> <p>Kaya: Gajan and Kali Pujor Mela</p>
Kandi	-	-	-	-	<p>Bahadurpur: Charak Mela</p> <p>Gatia: Pir Syed Hussein Utsav</p> <p>Asua: Charak Mela</p> <p>Bhatpara: Basanti Puja Mela</p> <p>Jiadara: Charak Mela</p> <p>Chandnagar: Shiv Ratri Mela, Gram Devi Puja Mela</p> <p>Jasohari: Shivratri Mela</p> <p>Mahadevhati: Bamandeb Pujo Mela, Charak Mela, Kali Puja Mela</p> <p>Ruppur: Shivratri Mela, Gajan Mela</p> <p>Rasora: Charak Mela</p> <p>Andulia: Sitala Puja Mela, Charak Mela</p>

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**Murshidabad
Heritage
Festival 2019**



Murshidabad
Heritage Development Society



**MURSHIDABAD
HERITAGE FESTIVAL
16TH - 17TH FEBRUARY, 2019**

The vision of Murshidabad Heritage Development Society is to inspire preservation, conservation and revival of India's heritage, both tangible & intangible, starting with Murshidabad.

The Society takes pride in bringing back the historical region of Murshidabad onto the tourism, cultural and heritage map of the world by hosting annual Heritage Festivals.

*The next Murshidabad Heritage Festival will be held on 16 & 17 February 2019.
(18th February Optional)*

*The mega event will showcase art & culture in all its splendour for you to enjoy with family & friends.
The Heritage Walk will take you on a memorable journey through time. The experience in the Festival is sure to leave you asking for more.*